

Discussion on Set up and Snippet **by Wen Spencer**

When I start a novel, I know the threads I want in the novel. In T2, the threads are the "oni" dragon, the tengu, the lost colonist, and the elfin political system. Because each thread at the beginning of the book lack the relational material, the initial order of these threads aren't highly important. Usually I start by writing little islands of story.

My initial set of scenes ran something like this:

- A. Dragon Attacks
- B. Tinker dreams of lost colonist
- C. Tinker discovers someone stole her equipment (to keep focus off building gate)
- D. Riki kidnaps Tinker to show her something. He takes her to his village where she meets charming tengu children.
- E. Tinker is digging through her grandfather's things and comes across evidence that Lain's sister, one of the colonists, is her mother and goes storming off to confront her.

This run of scenes takes me about 10,000 words into the novel before I realize a couple of things. The first that the robbery doesn't make a whole lot of sense. The second is that I'm scattering the elements too widely. I've lost any way to move from one element to the next in an order that seems to make the order logical instead of random.

I tweak it then to this:

- A. Tinker notices black willow and the dragon attacks
- B. Tinker dreams of lost colonist
- C. Wounded by the dragon, Tinker suffers mothering from Windwolf's staff and decides to go visit Lain, her real mother figure
- D. The black willow has been transported to Lain's house. Tinker now has to deal with it.
- E. Tinker finds info on her mother while trying to find way to keep black willow refrigerated.
- F. Dragon unleashes the black willow and Riki saves Tinker from black willow
- G. Tinker meets the charming tengu children.
- H. Riki tells sob story of tengu and asks for protection. Tinker delays answer.

This is all good, but I've lost the elves. And why the delay in answering? Because I need time in the plot before dealing with them. I need to introduce elves before moving to this point. Also the tengu have nothing that Tinker needs, and her last contact with them was with them on the other side. Argh. I loose track of where I'm going in the story and jump ahead. Where DO I want to go? I decide to focus on the mess in Turtle Creek.

- A. Windwolf teaches magic to Tinker.
- B. Tinker uses search lights to flash Morse code into the discontinuity and gets

reply.

C. Prince True Flame arrives

D. Windwolf warns of his ex-girlfriend is coming

Which makes me start thinking - how does Tinker save the colonist? After thinking about it for a while, I realized my biggest impasse in the story was that I was having trouble dealing with the colonists being ON the planet. If they're still in space, everything changes.

A. Tinker is fishing for data at Turtle Creek and finds kappa. Riki shows up to talk - identifies the kappa - but ex-girlfriend disrupts the conversation.

B. Tinker arrives in deep space with colonist

This takes me up to 30,000 words but now I'm starting to need to order things.

A. Tinker notices black willow and the dragon attacks

B. Tinker dreams of lost colonist, Windwolf makes first mention of coming elves

C. Wounded by the dragon, Tinker suffers mothering from Windwolf's staff and decides to go visit Lain, her real mother figure

D. The black willow has been transported to Lain's house. Tinker now has to deal with it.

E. Windwolf gives more info on coming elves and promises to teach magic.

F. Tinker and Windwolf discover that Turtle Creek is growing

G. Windwolf teaches magic - call fire.

H. Tinker is digging through her grandfather's things while trying to find way to keep black willow refrigerated and comes across evidence that Lain's sister, one of the colonist, is her mother and goes storming off to confront her.

I. Dragon unleashes the black willow. Tinker calls fire and sets building on fire. Riki saves Tinker from black willow and fire.

J. Riki explains the nature of dragons - WOW, I forgot I needed that.

E. Prince True Flame arrives - elves in force, tengu NOW need Tinker's protection.

F. Windwolf warns of his ex-girlfriend is coming

G. Show that the elves are in force, pass important info to Oilcan

H. Tinker is fishing for data at Turtle Creek and finds kappa. Riki shows up to talk - identifies the kappa - but ex-girlfriend disrupts the conversation

I. Dragon surfaces - Tinker now needs the tengu to translate.

J. Tinker meets charming tengu children -- discussion on the tengu/tinker alliance.

K. Tinker uses search lights to flash Morse code into the discontinuity and gets reply.

L. Dragons help Tinker to get to space over the dragon world.

M. Tinker arrives in deep space with colonist

Yeah! I now have the first third of the book plotted and mostly written and in a logical order. Of course, it's missing all the "Tinker left for Lain's" and "Tinker arrives from the enclave" kind of sentences that make the scenes appear that they're all linked

together.

Sunlight shafted through the discontinuity in rays of blue. Mists raising off the chill, drifted in banks of blue and existed momentarily as white before burning away in the summer heat.

Tinker scanned the camera over the valley, watching the screen on her workpad instead of looking through the eyepiece. In one window, the video feed showed the thermal picture, and in other windows, programs reduced the images into mathematical models.

"Something wrong, domi?" Pony asked.

She realized that she had made a slight noise a moment before. "Oh - this here - this looks like our gate. See, the ironwood ring and here is the ramp over the threshold."

"It is laying on its side?"

"Yes. The current probably toppled it, though I'm not sure what is causing the current. It might be simple" - her Elvish failed her. Did they have a word for convection? "Heat rises and cold falls. Basic science. It's what makes the winds blow. I think this is the same thing on a micro-scale - like a pot boiling."

"Why not like a pond freezing?"

"I don't know. Perhaps because there's a pool of magic below this, heating the bottom but its loosing massive amounts of energy before it hits the surface - thus the reason for the cold."

"Hmm."

She left the camera on the tripod, feeding data into her workpad, and moved on to the next experiment.

"Pony, do you see this point here? It is right where the gate is lying. Can you shoot this arrow to that point?"

"With the line and weight attached?"

"Yes."

"I think I can."

The arrow soared straight and true as if it had nothing weighing it down, nor trailing behind. The reel whizzed as the line snaked out after the arrow, the numbers on the meter blurring as they counted up the feet. The arrow struck the heart of the blue above the gate, appearing on her screen as a dot of red heat compared to the arctic cold of the land. The reel fell quiet and the line ran taunt out into the discontinuity.

She clicked on her mouse and meter feed its number into the computer: 100 yards.

"What is the arrow for?"

"I'm trying to see how deep the discontinuity runs. I figure it is deepest at the gate." The reel started to click out as arrow sank out of sight.

"Why does it matter how deep it is?"

Tinker shrugged. "Because I don't know what else to do at the moment. I'm just fiddling around, poking at it until something comes to me."

"Will not the current effect this measurement?"

"Oh, damn." She muttered in English, and then dropped back to low Elvish. "Yes, it will. I'll have to measure the drift and correct the measurements."

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This wasn't going to work. There was no way to know what was drift and what was the weighted end sinking. There might not even be drift at the heart of the gate, so she would be making blind assumptions.

The winch started to reel in the line. It came loose and quick at first and then jerked and line went taunt.

"Well, I'll be damned."

"Domi?"

"Something is caught on the line. I didn't think anything would be solid enough to catch on the line."

"The line is solid."

"Yes, it is." She gasped as implications dawned on her. "Pony, you're a genius. The line is solid."

"I can not be that smart, domi, because I do not understand why that excites you."

"Well, it is an important observation. An object from this reality stays in this reality even after sinking into the discontinuity."

"How is this important?"

"I do not know, but it is something I did not know before."

"Ah. I see."

The object appeared on the thermal scan, an oddly shaped mass of slightly lighter blue. By the naked eye, she could make out a boil of disturbance beyond the where the line cut into the earth, creating a sharp v-shaped wake.

"It is big, whatever it is."

Pony unsheathed his sword.

"I doubt if it is anything living." Tinker backed up regardless. Gods knows what she was dragged in from between realities. "It is at zero - zero" she had to teach Pony English or learn more Elvish. "It is frozen. And if it is hooked on our line, from our reality, it is probably something that came from here. A tree, an animal that stumbled into --"

The thing hit shore. For a moment she thought it a large turtle, and then line kept reeling, rolling it. Long fingered webbed hands and a vaguely human-looking face heaved out of the earth, rimmed with frost.

"Oh gods!" She leapt back.

The reel protested the sudden heavy load as the frozen body hit solid earth, the line going taunted, then vibrating and suddenly snapping. Pony stamped down on one of the stiff arms, trapping it against the shore so it couldn't slide down into the liquid earth.

"I think it is dead." He had the sword at its throat just in case.

"Get it out." She kept her distance. The sekasha hauled it out a few feet and then let it drop, backing away.

The creature was half her size, had turtle shell but long scaly limbs, webbed feet and hands. Long straight black hair fringed a bare, depressed spot on a human-like head, and its face a weird cross of a chubby monkey and a turtle. It wore a harness of leather with various pointy things that could be weapons attached to it.

Pony pricked the creature with his sword, eyed the wound. "It does not bleed. It is indeed frozen."

"Okay. It is probably safe to assume that it will stay dead, even if it thaws out."

"An elf would." Pony sheathed his sword.

"What do you think it is?" Tinker asked.

"It's a kappa." A voice called from above them.
(turn, look up, pull weapons)

Riki perched branches of the ironwood, high overhead. He ducked back, behind the trunk.

"Wait, don't fire." Tinker shouted. "Riki! Riki, what the hell is this?"

"I told you." He peered out around the trunk. "It's a kappa. Ugly little brats aren't they? In Japan, it's believed that they get their great strength from water in that brain depression and if you can trick them into bowing and spilling out the water, they have to return to the water realm to regain their strength."

"It's a oni? Or an animal?"

"That's a blurred line with the oni. I think you would call it oni - they're fairly clever in a homicidal way. The greater bloods made them by mixing animals with lesser bloods, just like Tomtom did with Chiyo. Legend has it that they used monkeys and turtles - a pretty sick mix if you ask me."

"I didn't see any while we were making the gate."

"There aren't any in Pittsburgh. They're fairly clever in a homicidal way, but not in the way of passing for human long enough to cross the globe."

"So you're saying it came through the gate?"

"The oni use them for special ops; they're strong swimmers and wrestlers."

Tinker look back into the discontinuity, the slow drift of blue mist. What were the oni up to? Were they just testing these strange waters to see where they led - or were they trying to salvage the gate?

Then again, was Riki telling the truth that there were no kappa in Pittsburgh?

"What are you doing here, Riki?"

"I need to talk to you."

"Talk? Talk about what? How can I even trust anything that comes out of that lying mouth of yours?"

"Damn, you owe it to me to at least talk to me."

"How do you figure that?"

"I pulled that dragon off you."

"Domi!" Stormsong shoved Tinker suddenly behind her and activated her shields with a shout. At the movement, Riki jerked back out of sight. A second later, a bullet

struck the tree trunk where Riki had been standing, ricocheted, and struck Stormsong's shield.

(scramble to pull weapons - Pony into defense, other offense)

"Hold! Hold!" Came a shout in Elvish.

"Show yourself." Tinker shouted.

Sekasha merged out of the shadows, their wyvern armor and tattoos the black of the Stone Clan. Five in all - a unit, the back two acting as blades, which meant they had a (noble) traveling with them. They halted some twenty feet off, tense and watchful.

Only after a full minute of tense silence did the (noble) step into the clearing.

The domi was short for an elf, several inches shorter than her Sekasha, but willowy graceful as any other high caste female Tinker had ever seen. She wore an emerald green underdress and an overdress with a forest of wildly branching trees over it. Her hair was gathered into elaborate braids, dark and rich as otter fur, twined with emerald ribbons and white flowers. Two small gleaming orbs circled around her, like tiny planets caught in her gravity.

Tinker felt hard bitter resentment at this perfect stranger who had to be Jewel Tear of the stone clan.

"Put your weapons," the domi called. "We are not your enemy."

"You fired on us!" Tinker snapped.

Jewel Tear motioned and one of the blades bowed curtly.

"I fired on a tengu in the tree," the blade said. "I did not see you. Forgiveness."

Stormsong made a noise of disgust in the back of her throat. "He would not have fired on an enemy without release of his domi."

"Patience," Pony whispered. "Is there is another of their (unit) nearby?"

"I can not tell."

Tinker doubted an apology would come from her. "What are you doing here?"

"I arrived by gossamer this morning," Jewel Tear picked her way gracefully toward her. Despite the sweltering heat and her long gown, there was no sweat on her creamy white skin. "Prince General True Flame asked me to see what I can do to correct this mess you Wind Clan made of this place. You're Windwolf domi, are you not? What was your name? Twinkle? Twitter?"