



HYPERSEA
QUARTERLY REPORT

Quarterly Report

The marketing campaign and product launch of Kraken Inc.'s latest liquor, Hypersea, requires an inquest due to its unprecedented unprofitability. As is tradition on the island, any and all official reports must be presented in a narrative form. The complete story can be accessed at

danielkraken.com

Chapter 1

Flight from Leviathan Bread

Fawn Bobapple looked up from the silver bowl on Terry Blanchard's desk.

In the bowl were two ants spinning at the cool end of a still smoking matchstick that floated in a thin, bubbling pool of Kraken Light. Blanchard, who was Fawn's legal counterpart in the service of Leviathan Bread, had advised her that this matchstick was the closest thing they had to a fruit garnish, but she knew it was just a negotiating tactic meant to intimidate her. She licked a black, freshly bubbled up blister on her top lip before reaching down to wipe her mouth on her sassafras cravat.

"My father?" she asked. "He's hanging right there." Fawn turned to look at her father's head, stuffed and mounted near the entrance of the foreman's office. Every point on his gigantic rack of antlers punctured a stack of "PAST DUE" notices sent from Daniel Kraken's collection service. Her father, Buck Bobapple, still had the jerked heart of his closest friend and law firm partner glued to his lips. It had been the last thing Buck had bobbed for, and he had done so under extreme duress. Now he hung as a macabre bouquet of crêpe carbon copy carnations of dismissed financial obligations.

This was the second round of negotiations with one of Daniel Kraken's most shameless debtors. Each round took a generation to discuss and its risks were astronomical.

Buck had been a tenacious representative for Kraken, Inc., the holly berries in his lapel still held a mirror shine, even in death, even in the flour choked office of Leviathan Bread.

“Do deer sweat?”, asked Blanchard, as he pointed a desk fan back at his sweating face. “You don’t seem to.” The brass fan blades threw bright circles around the room, sometimes catching Blanchard’s narrowed eyes, causing him to blink.

"Ahh brass. The glint of civilization."--Daniel Kraken

“Only the details,” said Fawn. Which I’m about to do, with you, right now.”

The contract between Kraken, Inc. and Leviathan Bread lay on the long low table between them. It was several inches thick, with heavy, pressed cotton broad sheets filled from edge to scalloped edge with immaculately crisp cursive, written ten years ago by her father. Deer lawyers traditionally hold the pen in their mouths when drawing up contracts—it’s difficult to hold a pen steady in your hooves. Bucks can strap pens to their antlers, which match their mouth’s movements as they lean over the writing desk, and allow young bucks to write documents in triplicate, and patriarchs like her father could lay up to thirteen sheets across the desk and fill them out all at once. Fawn would spend many nights up with Buck, stacking the completed sheets into separate piles as her father sat back, meditatively trimming candle wicks and refilling his pens. Now, as head of the family practice, Fawn just made do with her hooves. And she wrote fast.

Blanchard wore a bleached linen suit, lined with snow white silk, with large, shimmering buttons of polished whalebone. All the workers at Leviathan Bread were dressed entirely in white to keep the pervasive clouds of flour blowing around the factory floor from making them look unprofessional. Blanchard was no exception, the leathers of his boots, belt, and a limp pair of driving gloves lying at the corner of the desk were made of a menagerie of slaughtered albino exotics.

“Brass tacks, and why we should get down to them,” said Blanchard. He removed a whalebone switchblade from a pocket within his coat, deftly flipped it open, and began to sharpen the nibs on each of the three quills laid out on his desk.

“Well we’ve agreed on the apportionment of the next five years’ worth of wheat production,” said Fawn. “Kraken Inc.’s distilleries will get seventy percent of threshed output.”

“An unheard of increase over the last settlement,” remarked Blanchard. He dipped a pen into the inkpot and began to languidly sign and date the contract in a fine, entitled hand.

“For an unheard of increase in price,” said Fawn. “That’s economics. That’s how it works.”

“I agree. But the people need bread. They need nourishment so that they can suckle their children. They need teeth, for heaven’s sake,” said Blanchard.

“Reports of the mewling toothless, be it babes dangling at the breast or dedicated connoisseurs of our product line, have been greatly exaggerated by temperance cultists and luddites who want go back to the time when we offered those infants to the sea,” said Fawn. “They may need bread, but they don’t get what they need. They get what they pay for. And right now they’re paying for Hypersea.”

“Please,” said Blanchard. “Don’t use brand names. It’s just more distilled swill.”

“It’s an intoxicating inoculation against the fear of the endless depths,” said Fawn, sliding the signed contract broadsheets into a monogrammed leather folio. She rolled delicately from the settee and stood on all four hooves, shaking off some of the flour that had blurred the fine auburn fur between the last of her fading fawn spots. She nuzzled the portfolio towards Blanchard and bowed.

Blanchard, bemused, lifted the portfolio onto her back and bound it around her torso with two leather straps.

“I wonder,” said Blanchard, cinching the last strap around her midsection, “what your father would have thought of this.”

“Why don’t you ask him?” said Fawn, her tail flying up and driving flour up and into Blanchard’s nostrils. She hopped out of Blanchard’s office and through the foyer, clattering over the floorboards, and out the front door.

Fawn flitted through the surrounding corporate gardens of Leviathan Bread, her spots creating a strobe effect between the deep green stems and the delicately curved petals of the innermost circle of orchids.

The gardens, meant as a pun on the prized white flour folded into whale sized loaves that browned in the massive iron ovens in the belly of the bakery, were planted according to a strict hierarchy. The most common flowers were in the largest outer ring, with each subsequent ring becoming more and more expensive to maintain. To the outsider, it started with a briar choked froth of white wildflowers, moving on to charming plots of daisies tended to by local school children for extra credit, then to crisp tulips as immaculate as the habit of the prioress that had buried every bulb, and finally to the fanatically manicured ring of orchids, planted in secret, and only between midnight and dawn, by someone who just now jolted awake screaming, and feverish, as Fawn decapitated three of these orchids with a single kick.

“How did it go?” asked Fawn’s faithful page, Saison Bygone, unstrapping the contract from her back. Fawn was drawing rapid breaths at the edge of the wild flower field. Her small frame had been weighed down by the gigantic legal document, and the briars had drawn tear drops of blood from her ankles during her escape.

“I survived,” said Fawn.

Chapter 2

Daniel Only Cries At Night

This would be the second time that Fawn would catch Daniel Kraken crying.

He cried only at night, and only when he was poring over bad balance sheets. He wept huge, mucosal, bright green phosphorescent tears that you could see almost push his eyeballs up into their socket as the oozed out and over his hollow cheeks.

“Hypersea,” said Daniel, swirling a tumbler of the deep blue liquid in his right hand. “A resounding failure.” He sniffed and dabbed at his eyes with a canvas handkerchief in his left hand. Fawn focused on Daniel Kraken’s starched, precisely pinned collar, which peeked over his soot black smoking jacket. His pin? A grinning silver pig with bejeweled hooves.

“It’s still turning a profit,” said Fawn as she walked across Daniel’s study. In fact, Daniel Kraken had never lost money when he debuted a new ale or liquor. But Daniel always wept over his ledger—it would never be enough for him, and a modest profit to him was a compete defeat.

“It’s not about the money this time Fawn,” said Daniel. “This is about giving you the will to sail all over the world.” Every product line that Daniel Kraken had introduced since he had arrived on the island was meant to inoculate the populace against

behavior or superstition that Daniel felt was hindering the advancement of civilization.

His first ale, Regicide, had turned the tide of public sentiment against the monarchy that had ruled every aspect of the citizenry's life since recorded history. For a blood soaked decade after its introduction there had been riots in the streets as the besieged monarchy waged war on its own people, until Daniel Kraken himself had drawn up the charter for a new government. A cask of Regicide was still ceremonially guillotined open at the beginning of every parliamentary session.

His first liquor, Hard Martyr, had helped to wean addicts off of the soporific excretions of the now banned Oberon Lotus. For generations the lotus had enslaved the sensations of half the island's population, and Fawn's mother had been one of them. After Buck's death she had been inconsolable, and had turned to smoking crushed Oberon every day. She had left a swaddled Fawn in one of Daniel Kraken's many foundling wheels that had been dotted across the capital—most of the teeth had rotted out of her mouth by then, and Doe Bobapple's emaciated neck was shaking with the effort of keeping even the newborn Fawn aloft long enough to drop her into the wheel.

But Hypersea was barely breaking even, and Daniel Kraken's ego was in tatters.

"Your people will always fear the sea," said Daniel. He motioned towards the corner of his study. There were no lights on in the room—Daniel detested the expense of candles and lanterns. The only light Fawn could see by was her own moon—a small, pale circle that had embarrassed her since she had declared it.

"Hello Fawn," said a crisp gurgle from across Daniel Kraken's extravagantly appointed study. Fawn turned to see her personal moon glisten across the condensation beading on Merlot Bot's glass barrel chest. This was an exceedingly intimate interaction between them. Wearing shiny jewelry at night was taboo in a business setting—to see your own personal moonlight reflected back at you was

almost disorientingly erotic, and to see it come back to you, unbidden, from the torso of a ruthlessly enigmatic red wine automaton, was, to say the least, off-putting.

“Hello MB,” nodded Fawn. Merlot Bot’s eyes, which had, up until now, been dark and dormant in the front of the brass dome that was his head, glowed with an appropriately burgundy word:

CHARMED

Merlot Bot was the last of the red wine automatons that had landed with Daniel Kraken on the shores of Hypersea. He stood a full 6’5 inches tall, his thick glass torso framed by brass arms and legs, and topped with a brass helmet for a head. His mouth was a brass speaker, from which boomed a voice somehow both deep and tinny, his eyes two electric red coals glowing in between his periodic LCD sentiments. His torso gurgled with his daily vintage, which filled his insides at the dawn of every day, and was periodically poured from the spigot that sparkled where his bellybutton would be were he human, and not, as he appeared to be, an artificially intelligent robot animated by a technological, magical, or some other eccentrically thaumaturgic means known only to Daniel Kraken.

Merlot Bot plucked a crystal, brass rimmed gauntlet in his right claw and brought it up to his belly, and used his left hand to squeak his spigot open and decant the day’s last dram of gut wine into the moonlit glass. He offered it to Fawn, his eyes fading and replaced with a question:

A DRINK?

Merlot Bot knew that Fawn didn’t drink—she was ashamed about how her mother behaved on Hard Martyr, but to refuse what could be the last glass of robotic red of the day, to turn up one’s nose at what was technically the longest aged wine possible

from the sole surviving red wine robot on the planet was an almost unthinkable faux pas. Saison Bygone, who had been biding time in the corner of the study, almost unseen, reached in to swipe the glass from in front of Fawn and downed it in a single gulp.

“I’m sorry, Fawn,” said Saison. “I’ve never had one before. A last dram. I couldn’t resist.”

OUTRAGE

Glowed Merlot Bot’s helmet as he rose to his full height, the brass dome nicking the whale ribs that served as the ceiling beams of Daniel Kraken’s study. Dust fell down from the chandelier and onto Daniel’s balance sheet.

“To be losing money,” said Daniel, softly, almost under his breath. Merlot Bot immediately stood stock still, as if he had been a sculpture winched into Daniel’s study just this morning. Fawn bowed her head.

“To be losing money and then to have—this dust settle on top of the balance sheet, so that I have to roll up my cuffs, dirty my hands, and brush it away from figures I’m already upset over, because the people in my employ, who I’m paying money to, are about to come to blows over the only source of intoxicant that I am not trying to profit from, is an exquisitely infuriating cocktail that you’re forcing me to choke down right now.”

SORRY

Glowed Merlot bot.

“Sorry,” said Fawn, airily fluffing her cravat.

"It's fine," said Daniel. "Merlot Bot, you were out of line. You know Fawn's aversion to alcohol is one of the main reasons, besides her fierce intellect and exquisite taste in clothes, that I retain her as counsel. A clear head. A level temperament. And you've openly undermined these intensely cultivated traits."

Merlot Bot clanked across the floorboards of Daniel Kraken's study. As he passed in front of the window overlooking Kraken Bay, Fawn's moon became a bright, blood red blob bobbing inside of him. He walked behind Daniel's desk and the hydraulic pistons in his knees hissed him down into his equivalent of a kneeling position.

■ *"Refused by a girl still-spotted! The nerve!"--Merlot Bot*

"I'll be good," said Merlot Bot.

"Good," said Daniel. "Now Fawn, I know you've just come in from a very tense negotiation."

"To say the least," said Fawn.

"But I need you to retrieve something for me, as quickly as possible," said Daniel.

"The journey, I expect, will be arduous," said Daniel.

"The rate?" asked Fawn.

"Sumptuous," said Daniel.

"And what am I to retrieve?" asked Fawn.

"A weapon from the top of Mt. Oligarch," said Daniel, handing a sheaf of Hypersea reports to Merlot Bot to file.

"There are thousands of weapons on that mountain," balked Fawn. "It attracts them from all over the world. Even from the depths of the sea."

“But it has only one top. And at its top will be a weapon without peer. An apex predator. And you need to bring it to me. Along with your page over there, you’ll be accompanied by a sherpa/bodyguard who will meet you at the Foundling Wheel tomorrow morning. From there you’ll take an available ship from our fleet to the center of the island.”

“A ship,” said Fawn.

“It’s the fastest way,” said Daniel. “It’s time for you to get your sea legs. You are my counsel and you can’t be afraid of the sea like every other semi-literate island roustabout stricken by suspicion, shackled by superstition, gibbering at every ankle-high wave as if it were coming to collect a primordial debt.”

“Absolutely,” said Fawn.

“And Fawn, please,” said Daniel. “Drop in and see Doe before you go.”

“There’s always a chance I’ll run into her,” said Fawn. “Even that early in the morning.”

“Set sail, with Hypersea!” shouted Daniel, before finishing the last dram of the blue liquor. He shooed Fawn and Saison out of the study.

Chapter 3

Bolide Rodeo

Fawn awoke next morning to a loud banging on the door of the Foundling Wheel's executive suite. Originally an orphanage designed to handle the rapid influx of motherless castoffs that had been created since Daniel Kraken had introduced alcohol to the island, it had been expanded to include luxury suites for esteemed employees and visiting dignitaries. Staffed by an endless supply of grateful orphans, the hospitality arm of the Foundling Wheel had always turned a handsome profit. For Daniel Kraken, turning a profit was nothing new.

Though it was just past Dawn, Fawn had already been awake for several hours, double-checking her supplies. She already had on her exquisitely tailored houndstooth travel coat when she opened the suite's door, where instead of a face, she stood staring at what would have been Comet Heartbreak's bellybutton were it not plated with armor polished to a mirror shine.

Comet Heartbreak was at least 8 feet tall.

"Talk about Amazon Prime," said Fawn, breaking the literary walls that kept our world separate from hers.

"Could we not talk about my body?" asked Comet. "I'll be your escort. From here, to the top of Mt. Oligarch, and back to Kraken HQ. May I come in?"

"Of course," said Fawn, stepping aside. Comet ducked her head under the doorway and clanked into the room. Her right braid swung against Fawn's muzzle with a light "papf."

"People always talk about my body," said Comet. "Mostly men. It's awful. On the way over here a roofer said he wanted to make a motorcycle out of me."

"One of those driving machines with two wheels?" asked Fawn, only passingly familiar with the motorized contraptions that Kraken Inc.'s transport arm was beginning to crank out.

"Don't talk about my motherfuckin' body."--Comet Heartbreak

"The very same," said Comet. "The nerve! He thought that'd he'd be safe, being on the roof and all."

"What happened?" asked Fawn.

"You can ask him yourself," said Comet, nodding over her shoulder to a man crawling down the hallway. He looked back, bedraggled, his left ankle at an odd angle, it having been the handle that Comet had used to drag him down the cobblestone streets, past the protestations of the clerk, and finally up five flights to Fawn's suite, where Comet had only let his leg fall when she had reached up to knock on Fawn's door.

"Catch and release," said Comet, settling onto the couch. "When do we leave?"

"Momentarily," said Fawn. "Let me wake my page."

Chapter 4

An Embrace by the Saltlick Jukebox

As they walked down to the docks Fawn heard the opening strains of a drunken lullaby.

“Lord have mercy,” said Fawn to herself. “It’s her.”

They were across the street from The Beak. Being dockside, it catered to sailors, the rowdiest possible clientele. And by rowdy, I mean that they were all clinically insane. Well, those in charge, the captains and first mates, were clinically insane. The rest were still insane, to be sure, but not in a way that had yet to be defined in an academic setting.

Inside, Fawn could see her mother, Doe Bobapple, leaning heavily against the saltlick jukebox and drinking deeply from the champagne filled Ulshanka bubbling between her forehooves.

After a long day of nail grazing, Doe was relieved to have the chance to alternately hydrate and dehydrate herself—pausing after almost indecent gulps of Kraken Champagne Number 5 from the fizzing fur lip of the tattered hat to slick back the rough crystalline top of the jukebox. She was glad that her daughter, Fawn Bobapple, would never have to see her this way.

The fact that Fawn, so delicate, so proper, would never normally set hoof over the threshold of this husband-beaten face of a bar gave Doe the only comfort she could have that wasn't salt, alcohol, or the odd addictive nail she'd manage to pry from the blinding surface of the copper gondola in the city's administrative building.

Her daughter had everything that had made Doe Bobapple so alluring to every bachelor buck on the island—a shiny coat, wide black eyes, and crisp, silken ears that matched the dapper fabric that so frequently clothed the sartorially minded Bobapples.

Doe had thrown that all away of course—her looks dulled by drink, her thin black lips calloused by prying nails from the smooth rooftops, her only clothes a faded black t-shirt with the phrase, “Nail Grazin’ and Hell Raisin’” daubed in crude puffpaint along its shoulders.

"Nail grazin' and hell raisin'!"--Doe Bobapple

Though Kraken Inc. didn't make champagne anymore, only Doe ordered it, so there was plenty for her. She bought champagne with what little money she could get from scrap copper because its bubbles made it so she couldn't see the reflection of her emaciated face.

“Hello Mother,” said Fawn.

Doe took a beat to turn her head towards Fawn and focus on her daughter. Her ears didn't even flip forward, which was a sign of acute intoxication in deer; rather, they remained flopped over the thinning fur on the top of her head.

“My lawyer daughter!” shouted Doe over the din of the drinking sailors. Disturbed by her shout, one of the sailors, reflexively terrified, threw a full bottle of Hard Martyr over Doe's shoulder and at Fawn's face. To be bigger than a fawn is nothing special, to be faster than a fawn is no mean feat, and Comet Heartbreak was both of these. Her gauntleted fist caught the bottle like a rattlesnake snagging a fat bat.

Comet flicked the bottle back at the gibbering sailor, hitting him square in the forehead. Finally, after what had been weeks, he could sleep.

Fawn and Doe Bobapple embraced by the light of the saltlick jukebox. Designed to both attract proto-anthro-ungulates and increase their thirst, saltlick jukeboxes were installed in every Kraken bar. Each one was a rainbow of compressed layers of increasingly exotic salt.

Blood red salt wrung in secret from the sullen sea. Neon green salt from the dried tears of Daniel Kraken, said to be collected by Merlot Bot on the nights when Daniel wept over his ledgers. This attribution is a complete fabrication, as Daniel's tears never dry, they only cause the people tasked with drying them to cry upon contact with their skin.

And because it's impossible to dry them, the debtors assigned to dry them weep at the futility of their task. They wear a silver thimble around their neck, and once they fill this thimble with the salt from dry Kraken tears, they can go free. But because they can't, their own tears drop into a sub-bucket tied around their waist. These are then marketed as Kraken tears. They're dyed green.

Finally, in the center of the saltlick jukebox is an arc of indigo. Night Pharaohs, who in centuries past had ruled over the island with iron fists, had their corpses arranged in the fetal position on giant obsidian disks, and were packed all around with this deeply blue and solemn salt in order to preserve them. Daniel Kraken had seen to it that every one of these tombs was ransacked and that this salt was rightfully repurposed to encourage music, conviviality, and commerce.

"I'm going on a quest Mom," said Fawn, brushing a stray bristle of Ulshanka fur from her mother's shoulder. "I can't say where." She kept sentences short and simple for Doe when she was drunk, to avoid confusing her, and making her cry.

"I'm going on a ship," continued Fawn. "Daniel can give you money if you run out." She had meant to say, "if I die," but didn't want to upset her mother further.

“Okay baby,” said Doe, patting Fawn on her shoulder. “I don’t want you to go, but I can’t tell you anything, even though you’ve still got your spots.”

Doe playfully turned Fawn’s head between her hooves, pretending to look for spots. Once Fawn had learned that losing your spots meant that you were an adult, she had shown her mother every time she’d thought she’d lost one.

“Pick a strong ship,” said Doe.

“I will,” said Fawn. “Well actually my page will. What do you say?” asked Fawn, taking the local ships manifest out from under the face of a passed out sailor who had been trying to chat up Doe before being drunk under the table. She slid it over to Saison while wiping tears from her wide eyes. “Which ship looks good to you?”

Chapter 5

Putting the Boar in Boardroom, Amirite?

I think sending Fawn to retrieve the weapon is a long shot,” said Merlot Bot as he refilled Daniel’s glass.

“Fawn Longshot is her cousin,” joked Daniel, exceedingly pleased with himself. The boardroom at Kraken HQ was filled with the sounds of panting from the hunting hounds—Daniel adored dogs, and had insisted on inspecting them personally. Two stalwart huntmasters, Stalwart Huntmaster and his assistant, Mitsubishi Galant, sat at Kraken’s elbows and mulled over their contracts for bringing down the Butterfly Boar.

“Regardless,” said Daniel, “we need whatever weapons that Fawn can retrieve to bolster these gentlemen’s efforts.”

Stalwart looked up from his contract.

“Not to say we doubt your ability to slay this beast,” continued Daniel. “But you don’t gain total control over the fabric of an entire society without reinforcing the seams.”

“That’s not a problem,” said Stalwart. “We have every confidence that we can kill it. It’s not immortal by any stretch, we’ve seen it limp, we’ve watched it sleep. It’s enormous, but mortal.”

“It’s even been carved,” added Mitsubishi.

“John Carver got to it?” asked Daniel, looking over to Merlot Bot. John Carver had carved the tusk of every lesser boar on the island since the ivory supplies had dried up. He had been in charge of carving the taps of every ale on the island out of whale ivory, and because there were now no more whales, he had been dismissed.

“Don’t think of it as being fired,” Daniel had advised at the time. It was rare thing when Daniel fired people face to face, but John had been in his employ for decades. John had held his calloused hands together in his lap, and had his head down, as if praying. His hairy nostrils were still rimed with ivory dust from the last batch of taps, which had been completed just this afternoon. Thatches of twirled together hair hung from his left nostril like walrus tusks, or crab claws.

“Think of it as a cetacean vacation,” quipped Daniel, but by that time it was too late, because John had been described in too much detail since the opening line of his firing, and the joke died quietly, like the island’s last guillotined king. “It’s not a reflection of your performance. There are no more whales John. We got them all. I had to pillage every asylum on the island to get enough sailors. Now they can go free.”

John nodded obediently. His disgruntlement, at this point, was merely a cloud of spermatozoa swimming in the dark, seeking an egg of resentment. Now, years later, it was fully grown—his disgruntlement was repairing the control arm on his Ford Focus himself in order to pass inspection, and was paying an extra 100 bucks a month on his mortgage against the principal.

Since his dismissal, he had begun carving boar tusks. Unlike Daniel and his whales, John didn’t kill the boars. He tracked them throughout the day and snuck up to lay beside them at night. He hid under a cloak of boar hide—a silvered sow, a thick hide of bristles cut from an asthmatic matriarch who had died peacefully in her sleep. He could carve a single boar for months, shaving slivers from their tusks until chess pieces appeared. He used the same steel tools that Daniel Kraken had provided for him—these tools were circled in red ink on the debit side of a special ledger, because Daniel fully expected John to reimburse him.

Boars have razor keen senses, and despite smelling like a respected member of the group and being preternaturally silent, sometimes John's tools scraped a tusk at twilight, or he nudged a piglet awake during the finer scrollwork, and the entire group would rush off into the darkness. For John it was the most thrilling quest imaginable. He delighted in the silence, in the grueling daily hikes, in the tusks that bobbed with every breath. Sometimes he wouldn't need to actively carve, he would just hold his knife still and let the boar's breathing move the tusks up and down. Some nights a boar's wet breath would freeze on his sleeves. He had completed several full chess sets—the left tusks painted with black ink, the white tusks sparkling, finally freed from the years of rooting grime. It had taken him months to complete the pieces on the Butterfly Boar, and now his masterpiece was barreling across the countryside and towards Kraken HQ.

"Whales were magnificent. I miss their teeth."--John Carver

"I'm curious," said Daniel, turning towards Stalwart. "What kind of pieces did he carve on the Butterfly Boar?"

"Pawns," said Stalwart.

"Not queens? Not kings? Do they have the rounded heads?"

"Yes," said Stalwart. "The tops are so polished you can see the right one flash in the sun when he's out in the open."

"Do you think it's strange that John has blunted the tusks?" asked Daniel. "Do you think that it's ironic he's assigned the least consequential pieces to this most monstrous boar?"


"I'm just glad it's not a bishop," said Mitsubishi, running his fingers across a jagged white scar on his arm. "Bishops are pointy." The Bishop Boar had topped out at five-hundred pounds, and its slaughter had been instrumental in Mitsubishi's recent promotion to second in command.

"And the chrysalis the boar drags behind him?" asked Daniel, pushing aside the dossier that Merlot Bot had prepared for him. "What kind of insect lies inside of it?" Many of the

facts in the dossier corresponded to what the hunters were telling him, but Daniel Kraken simply adored multiple sources.

“A monarch butterfly,” said Stalwart.

“Not a good sign,” said Merlot Bot, laying a menu in front of Daniel. Merlot Bot loved cooking, and because every hunt that Daniel mounted invariably ended in success, it didn’t hurt to be prepared:



1st Annual Butterfly Boar Luncheon

Apéritif
Snifter of Kraken Especiallement.

Entrée
Sweetmeats stewed in a Dandelion Paste.

Main Course
Peppered Boar Steak topped with a Risotto of Scooped Pupae. Heaps of Mashed, Buttered Turnips and Taro covered with a Skein of Boiled Boar Hoof Glue.

Dessert
Blackberry Sorbet.

Digestif
Tumbler of Spiced Confidante.

“Excellent choice, MB,” said Daniel, lifting the menu to his nose to sniff it. Merlot Bot shared Daniel Kraken’s fetish for scented stationary, and had flicked a few drops of mint

oil onto the thick linen. “Substitute curried eel in lieu of mashed taro,” said Daniel, who always requested something disgusting from the sea to be added to an otherwise perfectly appropriate list of side dishes. Daniel passed the menu across the table to Stalwart. “I’d like you two to attend. Merlot Bot has a gift for roasting the mythical.”

Merlot Bot, his LEDs blushing bright red, bowed to the hunters, flattered.

“Will dandelions even be in season when we bring...this...boar...down?” asked Daniel, pulling up on his waistcoat chain, spindly hand over spindly hand, as if raising an anchor. He flipped open his enormous gold pocketwatch to see what month it was.

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<https://www.meetup.com/Bucks-County-Writers-Meetup/>

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<https://www.railstutorial.org/book/beginning>

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Some code was ripped outright from the following Codepens:

<https://codepen.io/gabssnake/pen/mgeLA>

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