

## BLOOD MAGIC:

Dichotomy

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"Any sufficiently advanced [or significantly different] technology is indistinguishable from magic."- Arthur C. Clark

**EXT. PLAINS OUTSIDE GOLDEN PASTURES - EVENING**

Fly in.

**NEWSPASITION (V.O.)**

It's a beautiful evening, The Matriarchy has ensured the temperature is perfect and the humidity is just right. Tonight we begin the third night of our three-week long Festival of Last Frost, welcoming the coming of spring. Like all our festival seasons, a party celebrated throughout the nation. We take this opportunity to thank the benevolent Matriarchy and their benevolent escilons that keep our little patch of utopia humming. Tonight, even Lady Evelyn Sinclair has deigned to grace us with her presence. If not for her grace we might actually have to work for a living, what a sad day that would be.

We approach the small town nestled in a gigantic fissure in a mountain situated in a brushy field, not desert but not prairie, there are occasional agri-drones that tend to various necessities. At the top of the mountain is a gigantic futuristic tower of ceramic and metal with a number of similar but squat buildings surrounding it. There is a multicolored, barely visible aura shimmering all around.

The town itself is clearly ancient, but advanced buildings of crystal, ceramic, metal and advanced composites with glowing lines of mostly aquamarine all around, surrounded by a hodgepodge of less advanced, clearly repurposed buildings of mostly wood and mud brick with power conduits connecting these patchworks to the older buildings. The aesthetic is crystal-eco. The buildings are all open air.

There are a few floating volumetric display (VMD or 'holograms') signs on the buildings themselves talking about restaurants and shops. Some even thanking and praising Lady Sinclair. and the rest of the Matriarchy.

The majority of residents are less than thirty, they all wear loose 'homespun' yet surprisingly futuristic clothing.

Those that are not considered locals are the service reps for the escilons, a military/security/maintenance service entrusted to keep the advanced tech working. The

clothes of this order are flowing gowns and coats of advanced synthetics that glow various colors, mostly aquamarine, yellow, and blue, but other colors are represented.

### **EXT. GOLDEN PASTURES CIVIC SQUARE - SAME TIME**

The square is like a park and campground with high tech looking picnic tables surrounded by bushes and flowers, and a few other tech constructs. It is a fair/carnival atmosphere.

There are people, women outnumbering men 3 to one, are lounging, some play games, some card, most via floating VMDs, some even watch others play these games, there is a barbeque and some sports being played.

We pass service reps working on signs, levitators, and other tech directly related to the ancient structures, scanning the emitters and making adjustments, one does something wrong and a puff of smoke erupts. Most ignore it.

The only other people 'working' are on the older end of the spectrum, but most of the work is done by the machines, the people just talk to customers and serve, in some cases robots take care of that too.

A taller than average lean and muscled man with old scars and a few fresh wounds wearing leather and fur armor, quite out of place in the village approaches one of the food counters near the edge of the village.

Most ignore this ADVENTURER, a few actively avoid him.

Without hassle he sits on one of the bar stools. As his bracelet nears the polished marble looking counter a light blue green glow manifests around him, starting to accelerate his healing.

The bartender, PAIGE (F) turns her head, double takes the smiles and approaches.

PAIGE

Ah, hello, adventurer, welcome to Golden pastures, are you here to enjoy the festival?

He smirks uneasily and after a look around begins

ADVENTURER

Well, uh, not specifically, just a little food and rest...

PAIGE

Adventurers like you are amazing, I could never do what you do...

ADVENTURER

(under breath) by design i'd wager. (aloud) Not something I would have picked if left to my own devices. (pause) Look, I'm a bit fatigued and just need some food. I could use a nice steak...

She grimaces, confused about the word steak.

PAIGE

Uh, not really much call for that, round here. We do have a nice red bean and rice pilaf...

He smiles politely and sighs

ADVENTURER

Sounds uh, nice, I guess. But I could really use something more, filling. (beat) Beef stew perhaps?

She smiles brightly

PAIGE

Critter makes an amazing miso soup!

A serving bot turns around and beeps enthusiastically.

ADVENTURER

Again, not... I need something to replenish PG...

PAIGE

Not much call for that around here. You can try the escilon commissary...

He holds up his bracelet and shakes it a bit.

ADVENTURER

Wouldn't want to trespass...

She is confused by the concept of trespassing.

He pulls out some gems and drops them on the counter, she curiously examines them

ADVENTURER (CONT'D)

Please, I can pay...

Finished with the gems, she thinks for a moment and shrugs.

PAIGE

I can have Critter get some...

The machine called Critter obediently approaches, selects some gems and trundles off.

PAIGE (CONT'D)

But tell me, what can we do until he gets back?

We turn away from this interaction and move in on a trio of teens as they enter and walk amongst the masses: GALEN STRADIC (M) tall average teen with sandy blond hair, his friend STONE BAKER (M) teen on the leaner side but lacking muscle, and TRAVIS HASKUL (M) average teen

STONE

...Bread and circuses man, they are just trying to distract us.

GALEN

Distract us from what?

STONE

Exactly, how many festivals do we need? certainly not back to back all year 'round.

GALEN

Stone, I really don't have the time to listen to your conspiracies. The selection is tomorrow. I need to make sure the machine is working properly.

STONE

You know they've already made their choice,  
enjoy yourself for once in your life.

TRAVIS

You know he is getting out of here, whether its  
elevation or as an adventurer.

STONE

Why would anyone do that? I mean, none of  
our schooling taught us how to survive, it's all  
indoctrination, not education, pump us full of  
patriotism, get us smart enough that we keep  
things running, not smart enough to question,  
or survive without them.

TRAVIS

That's what the escilon is for, to keep us safe,  
so we can...

GALEN

What, wait and rot? This place is so boring,  
there is more...

TRAVIS (CONT'D)

...maintain population, they say we produce an  
energy field that the Matriarchs can use like  
gas...

GALEN

So, like cattle?

STONE

Wrong gas genius. (beat) But yeah, its our  
energies, or aura that keeps the tech  
humming...

GALEN

So long as it's maintained, but it takes escilon to do that. But they can't have too many that can harness it...

TRAVIS

But they need a certain amount...

STONE

That's why they got to keep us dumb happy and producing the energy that we can't use, except for the amount that is siphoned off for the tech that keeps us dumb happy and producing. A vicious cycle man.

GALEN

And anyone that breaks the mold is either elevated or convinced to become an adventurer...

TRAVIS

That we're not prepared for...

STONE

By design, man. Why do think they offer no guarantees for those they 'let become' adventurers...

They approach a bench, sit down and place some computer pads down to charge and check on statuses.

TRAVIS

They rescue people, sometimes...

STONE

Yeah, when they're bored or want practice. They don't care about the plebus as individuals, only the group as a whole. As long as we meet their population quota, they let us be.

TRAVIS

And that's a problem? I like when they leave us alone. There is something odd about the escilons, their service 'reps'. Always looking to get ahead...

GALEN

Ahead of what? Its called ambition, they have purpose that we lack, that's why they tend to live much longer than us. Crap...

TRAVIS

What?

GALEN

AEtherium futures are down.

STONE

You're invested?

GALEN

No, but the market is a good predictor of how many are elevated, knowing how to plan takes knowing all numbers, and these numbers are not good. I have to take care of something, see you guys at school tomorrow.

Galen gets up and walks off.

STONE

Why do we even go, it's not like they take attendance, or even care if we pass...

TRAVIS

Something to do, what are you going to do when its over?

Stone shrugs and thinks for a moment before shrugging again.



STONE

open a shop or something, something that doesn't demand too much attention, like school...

**EXT. ELYSION SHORES - SAME TIME**

BLAIRE HOLIDAY (F) teen strawberry blond, and her friends: NATASHA KERES (F) teen raven hair, AKEIDA YESFIR (F) teen brunette, ZORAIDA LAINE (F) teen platinum blond, and BRAD SHERMAN (M) brown hair, martial art jock type, gather in an open restaurant high on a cliff face facing an endless green blue ocean, the town participating in their own 'carnival' party, though similar things are going on, just more ocean themed.

ElySION Shores is a small crystal-eco Marraco/Venice overlooking the ocean with tree sized mushrooms and ferns. As in golden pastures, women vastly outnumber the men.

BRAD

I'd think with selection tomorrow, you'll would be polishing your projects.

BLAIRE

Yeah, and why aren't you?

BRAD

Yeah, as if, why would I leave, I have all I need, great company...(they all roll their eyes) I'm not a smartie like you, I'd never get selected...

ZORAIDA

A cutie like you could be selected for diversity.

AKEIDA

Your the only one that thinks of him highly at all. Oh crap, what's escilon doing here?

BLAIRE

Pretending to be useful, I'd imagine. You know unless they work they can't get their fix.

A group of 7 escilon techs, MERIDETH, CHEL, O'HERA, ELSA, MAGGY, YESMITH and JONES, all female 30's, in their out of place powered armor looking uniforms, with glowing edges of purplish red, the body silvery, coppery and golden, there are also several settings of gemstones, enter the area checking readings on data pads.

MERIDETH

Uhg, why do we always get these bug hunts?

MAGGY

At least we don't have to run security at the elevation faire. I have always preferred tech to teens.

Chel is a mute, she taps on Maggy's shoulder to get her attention

CHEL

[We could be part of Lady Azaizal's private security...]

MAGGY

Yeah, you're right, at least we don't have to play dog and pony...

CHEL

[but we really should...]

MERIDETH

She is right, but the closer to the source the faster you get burned...

O'HERA

Yeah, if we never work with the Matriarchy or the people, we will never advance...

MERIDETH

And that's a bad thing? You know the matriarchs are Bitch eat bitch. If you have a shred of decency, you will never get far up that tree.

Elsa, the only one actively looking at her readings interrupts

ELSA

These readings are sporadic at best, but they are a match for the incident last week. Ugh, lost it again! Get your pads out, let's find this gremlin and join...

O'HERA

You really enjoy this dog and pony nonsense? You know the Matriarchs only put this play on to keep the locals in line...

YESMITH

That doesn't mean we can't enjoy it...

We return to Blaire and her friends.

ZORAIDA

...I don't really think you can call proper nutrition a fix. You know they need special nutrition not found in other food so their nodules develop and function...

AKEIDA

Or so we're told, Just ignore them, they'll go away.

ZORAIDA

Lies, drugs, or whatever, I'd kill for that kind of power, influence...

BLAIRE

Wouldn't say that too loud, Zora, its a dog eat dog world in the enclaves, and unless you're cold, calculated, and vicious, you can't survive...

ZORAIDA

You think I'm not? Crap, why are the lights flickering?

A robot server trundles up, but when it gets close to the group it glitches out. It smashes Jones over the head, Blaire catches it's hand, it shivers and beeps. Part of the aquamarine inlays explode. Occasionally sparks even fly from Blaire's hands

The escilon draw weapons, the crowd clears out. Some of the escilon shoot at the robot and others stop Blaire's group from leaving.

As Blaire's emotions flare, lights flicker more and more inlays glitch/short out and explode, people's data pads fail. After they take out the server, the escilon body slams Blaire and forcibly places a shackle covered in glowing alchemical symbols on her right wrist.

They snap the device closed, punch in a code of alchemical symbols, the device lights up, red cracks appear but are soon green-shifted to aquamarine then fade entirely. Slowly all the chaos stops.

MERIDETH

What that hell was that?

Being a mute, Chel taps Merideth on the shoulder to get her attention and signs:

CHEL

[Our equipment is shorted out, I'll need to get a hardline to...]

MERIDETH

Do it, (to Blaire) explain yourself!

BLAIRE

I get attacked by a robot and you cuff me? You tell me what's going on!

O'Hera looks over the shackle and looks at her commander.

O'HERA

Ma'am, the shackle is suppressing it, that can only mean one thing...

BLAIRE

...What would that be?...

O'HERA

...Proto Othala Thurisaz, pretty high count too...

MERIDETH

She has a talismen, check it.

MAGGY

Why would she have a talismen at her age, here, outside the enclaves?

ELSA

I think we can guess.

O'HERA

Shorted, another sure sign...

MERIDETH

So, are you legacy or spon-genis? Rebel sleeper lying in wait...

The question shocks Blaire she replies nervously.

BLAIRE

I think I have a line that stopped a few generations ago...

MERIDETH

Legacy, then. Well, for everyone's safety, you're coming with us, we'll get the full story at the station.

### **INT. HIGH SCHOOL CAFETERIA - MORNING**

The cafeteria is of a decent size for a middling institution. There are long tables and round ones, many of the chairs are empty, the ones that are occupied are used by pre-teens boys, there are no doors in the building, just archways.

This is the annual 'elevation evaluation' season, something similar to a science fair. The boys are getting antsy, they want the elevation just as much as the girls.

The school administrator, an older female, average, long sandy blond hair, long flowing robes with illumination on the edges with a similar look to the armor of the escilons, enters and is immediately bombarded by questions about why they are here.

ADMIN

I know you are excited, and like the girls, have been looking forward to the evaluations, but unfortunately you will not be participating.

The boys are not happy.

ADMIN (CONT'D)

The council has decreed that this cycle only the top girls will be eligible for elevation.

BOY 1

But if we don't get selected now, we will never have a chance, I don't have what it takes to be an adventurer...

BOY 2

Yeah, I know, right? Why is it, that when there is a restriction, it's us that get passed over.

BOY 1

And why is there a restriction anyway?

ADMIN

There are resource concerns, the elevated require certain nutrients and such to live, our tech requires certain scarce raw materials, the elevation process is cost intensive, and girls are considered more heavily, because they have a higher success rates and eventual PG counts. It's a simple playing of the numbers. If the harvests and other resource collections are

successful, I am assured you will be up for consideration next cycle...

BOY 1

Oh yeah, cause they never did this to us in the past...

ADMIN

Well, if your that disgruntled, this just means the adventurer permits will be easier to come by...

There is sudden silence. The two boys that had been at the head of the protest ease back and sit well away from the Admin.

BOY 1

Oh, uh, no, not disgruntled, more uhm...

ADMIN

Please, I know your frustrated and I would be too, you just have to have faith in the system. (beat) In the meantime, please enjoy the pizza party, just for you, the girls don't get any of it.

The administrator leaves as pizzas are brought out, telling the escilon guards, 4 women in powered armor, to keep the boys from leaving.

The boys rush the servers and nearly clean off the trays and boxes in the first go, but more are brought out.

After getting a few slices, Galen finds a spot to sit alone. He is soon approached by Travis.

TRAVIS

Hunh, she talks of resource concerns, but then bribes us to stay with all the pizza we want.

GALEN

Not just pizza, there are cookies and cake, and salads and hamburgers...

TRAVIS

My point, Len, all of us in the community have all we want, there is no resource problem. (beat) Which kinda proves my point that only fools leave the communities.

GALEN

Post scarcity only exists for us at the bottom, only basics are ever free from scarcity, oddly enough. The materials they need to produce the tech and keep the Matriarchy in power is scarce, they keep us fat and happy, they don't get deposed and cause a cataclysm that eliminates our post scarcity economy. Enjoy not having to be ambitious and work for anything, ever...

TRAVIS

Yeah, children forever. (beat) You are the most ambitious person I know. I know you can't be happy here, even though I absolutely will be.

GALEN

You know those without competition and ambition live ridiculously short lives, especially compared to the Matriarchs.

TRAVIS

Oh yeah, cause they don't have magic oh wait...

GALEN

(sigh) That is a factor, yes, but, can't wake the herd.

TRAVIS

May be better to be asleep. I don't know, living forever may not be all it's cracked up to be.



GALEN

I know, but even though I want it, I don't have the leverage to get what I want out of this, I need to find another way.

TRAVIS

Hah, elevation is the only way out, you know that. Even if you did become an adventurer, the odds of survival are not good, that's their population control.

GALEN

True, if we were meant to live outside the system, they wouldn't take such pains to keep us in the dark, not teaching us the Alchemia, or how to really fix things, or survival out there. And when we get too close, 'gently persuade' men its the best option, and secret the girls away.

TRAVIS

That book is going to get you in trouble. And they do let girls go adventuring too...

Another friend of Galen's pokes her head out of the kitchen. This is MARY KLINE (F) thicc teen, black hair.

MARY

Len, I have a problem.

GALEN

Yeah, the competition starts in like five minutes, if you're not at the booth when the judge walks by, you lose your chance, pizza?

MARY

It's not working, the arm only stutters up and down, that's even more embarrassing than not being at the booth.

With a sigh, Galen gets up and hands his pizza to Travis and looks around before strolling into the kitchens.

GALEN

(to himself) May the odds be forever in our favor...

### **INT. SCHOOL'S GYMNASIUM - LATER**

The gym is full of girls with their 'elevation' projects. Many are organizing their booths and going over their projects, they are all super nervous.

The booths all have VMDs over them, indicating the owner of the project, and other details. The floor is polished tiles with the glowing lines of the aquamarine lines ubiquitous of the tech.

Among all this hustle and bustle is a rather androgynous lone male student, JERRY SCOTT. Unlike everyone else he is wearing a suit. He preens in front of a mirror as the head judge, CLARISSA STEVENS (F) 60s white hair glowy metallic fiber robes, walks up and glares for a moment.

CLARISSA

This section was registered to Jerry Scott.

JERRY

You're looking at him.

CLARISSA

Ha, not even trying to hide...

JERRY

And why would I?

He hands her a plastic page with glowing letters just above the surface.

JERRY (CONT'D)

You'll see I am the top of my class...

She doesn't even look at the page before ripping it up.

CLARISSA

Males weren't to be considered.

JERRY

And that is your mistake, shutting the door on someone so talented...

CLARISSA

Hunh, doors. Look...

JERRY

I know we can work something...

He is approached by two of Clarissa's 'aspects', robotic constructs made to resemble the user controlled directly by the user's brain. Jerry's arms are grabbed, he is lifted up and carted away. As he is carted off, the school's administrator walks up.

CLARISSA

(offhandedly to Jerry as he is dragged off) You may have been correct that nothing is set in stone, but you really need to learn the right way. (to administrator) Looks like we have our first adventurer volunteer.

JERRY

**NOOO!!!**

Mary and Galen sneak to the back where her project, a pick and place robot sits spasming.

GALEN

Yeah, I'd say you have a problem.

MARY

It's not responding to any commands, I've tried turning it off and back on, and it just goes back to...(beat) Well, this.

GALEN

Really, just a power reset, that was all?

He starts opening the programs and diagnosing.

MARY

I did all the soldering, much of the fabrication,  
you were the programmer, You know I can't  
read alchemia.

GALEN

I'm the one that came up with this and  
repurposed all the old age semiconductors.  
Hunh, a runtime error, give me a sec, I have to  
redo some of the subroutines.

MARY

Hurry, it's started. Why does it look like you  
know exactly which was changed?

GALEN

You're not a judge...

The judges, women, mostly 30's, white hair walk around the fair talking with the  
presenters and making notes. Galen works trying to stay hidden.

As he works, a judge, AGNESS ROSE, F 30's long white hair, and two of her 'aspects',  
approaches and watches in silence.

GALEN

If we can get this old age tech working we  
could reduce our dependency on magecraft  
and...

AGNESS

You think we haven't tried that? It's been 3  
hundred years since this age started, the Event  
caused a lot of damage. (beat) Males were not  
to be considered this year.

GALEN

Uh, so I hear...

MARY

We did this project together, before we knew.  
There was a problem with the program...

Her 2 aspects grab Galen's arms and start dragging him away.

Agness makes a note on a data pad, the language displayed is based on the old character set of alchemists.

GALEN

Really, just fail her, you're not even going to look at it, just because I was here? At least give *her* a chance!

The aspects stop, she turns to look at him with a raised eyebrow.

AGNESS

Interesting that you can read my notes. Are they violating the trust and teaching Alchemia now? To boys especially?

GALEN

Uh, uhm, no, I can't read, reading is for losers.  
I just...

After some thought, Agness turns to the robot and activates it.

The machine starts up, small items shake and levitate to form a grid. The robot arm moves up, down, left, and right finding the limits and determining where the arm is and tries to pick one of the displays but crushes it.

MARY

Shit.

Agness turns off the machine before it could crush more, and gives it a once over, noting some bad cold shunt soldering connecting the claw's pressure plate and cpu.

AGNESS

Hunh, poor soldier job. (beat) Hydraulic driven?

MARY

I soldered that...

GALEN

Pneumatics, and the position sensor set is magnetic, the piezo...

AGNESS

No AEtheria?

MARY

Just repurposed silicon semiconductors from the old age.

AGNESS

Where is your eval?

Mary picks up a plastic looking paper with a DNA report, as well as grades and physical stats, strength, speed, ect, from a nearby podium and hands it to her with shaking hands.

Agness looks it over and puts it in a manila folder.

AGNESS

Congratulations, you have been selected. Pack this up and have a chat with your transition counselor. (beat) As for you...

GALEN

Males were not to be considered, I don't...

AGNESS

Interrupting your superiors is not a good idea, especially for one in your precarious position.

One of the aspects lets go of Galen and starts off to find the Administrator, the other starts dragging Galen away again.

AGNESS

You are to wait in the administrator's office while we figure this out. Try not to mess anything else up.

### **INT. ADMINISTRATOR'S OFFICE - LATER**

Galen sits in a plastic chair in front of the administrator's desk, the Aspect 'at ease' eyes watching him.

After a moment Agness and the administrator enter.

AGNESS

This is all his things?

ADMIN

In this facility, assuming he hasn't hidden anything.

AGNESS

We're going to need to borrow your office for a moment. (beat) When my supervisor arrives, please have her come in.

The admin grimaces.

ADMIN

(under her breath) As if I could stop *her*.

The Administrator bows respectfully and backs out of the office.

Agness sits on the desk curiously watching Galen. After a moment she tosses his notebook at him.

AGNESS

This is not for the masses, easier to keep the peace when certain knowledge is out of reach. (beat) Of the masses.

GALEN

I'm sure the elites don't do their own maintenance. It falls to people like me, us.

(beat) Those that don't have, abilities. (shrug)  
Can't fix things if I can't read the instructions.

AGNESS

You'd be surprised what is expected of many.  
But yes, working the AEtheric refining and  
other crafting equipment is not directly  
controlled by the Matriarchy. There are casts  
between it and (beat) the plebus.

GALEN

You mean me?

AGNESS

Perhaps not for much longer.

The judge's supervisor, Clarissa storms in. She completely ignores Galen.

CLARISSA

Males were not to be considered.

AGNESS

He is learning Alchema, autodidact. He also  
contributed greatly to a non-AEtheric legacy  
device.

Galen looks at the aspect.

GALEN

Do you ever get used to being ignored?

ASPECT

This body is controlled by me, Agness, through  
my will, it is just like any other limb.

GALEN

So, (beat) you're like a vestigial foot?

ASPECT



It takes great concentration to communicate through an aspect, especially when I am involved in another conversation, please shut it. You'll learn soon enough.

Clarissa looks at Agness with a raised eyebrow.

CLARISSA

Really? Where is his eval?

AGNESS

Males were not to be considered. My third is retrieving the report from the archives, this would be so much easier if they had their talismens. I should have it... Ah.

The last aspect turns into the archway and hands Clarissa the eval.

GALEN

Do you have any aspects, where are they, how do I get one...

CLARISSA

I almost want you to be accepted, you need to learn respect, and I am sorely tempted to teach you. All escilons have aspects, based on one's ability to control them determines the amount and capabilities.

ASPECT

She has five, and they are...

Clarissa speaks directly to Agness, who 'playfully' chooses to stick to using her aspect.

CLARISSA

It is rude to speak through aspects when one is physically present, I may have to teach you manors too.

ASPECT

We have all night, no need to report...

CLARISSA

Not now, and never in front of children. (to Galen) Your overalls are quite good, no known lineage, probability of success... (beat) 95 percent. (to Agness) Talk to transition, I'll smooth it over with the Matriarchy.

### **INT. UNIVERSITY LECTURE HALL - DAY**

Teens, all female except Galen, sit in the raised desks looking over the lectern. They are all chatting, excited about the 'elevation'. It is notable that they all have bracelets of composites with glowing lines and letters. These 'talismens' will have vital stats including health and safety info, and allow connection to the network, and passage between areas, with approval. Basically IDs/security badges

The room has simple industrial carpet, shiny ceramic walls with lines of aquamarine in 'circuit board' patterns.

The lecture area has a large desk that is a computer that can be controlled with touch on the whole thing, the 'display and control' area is the top.

Above and behind the desk is a VMD, also mostly aquamarine.

MARY

Can you believe we both made it?

GALEN

That's the way it is when teams have successful projects, especially when one of the team is a dude. Why don't they trust us to work alone?

MARY

Oh you know it's not about trust but that even 'success' for males seldom proves to hold power. Most are the crafters and escilons...

GALEN

You mean cannon fodder. Ugh, this talisman is so uncomfortable.

MARY

Its just new, you'll get use to it and it will be like it's not even there. And no, men aren't cannon fodder, that is what aspects are for, And of course we need men...

GALEN

I always wanted this, but now that it's actually happening...

MARY

Shh, it's starting.

An older woman, DOCTOR OLGA ASHEN, enters the lecture area and looks over the room. As she speaks, visuals of what she is explaining show up on the VMD.

OLGA

Welcome, Ladies (beat) boy. You have been selected, via intellectual pursuits, physical attributes, or in some cases, simple genetic diversity, for 'elevation' unto greatness. There is much that is unknown to you, as we have sheltered you and the others you know, from harsh truths that you will now be required to learn and accept, once you start this jeu d'intrigue, the pursuit-penumbra de supremacy, forever will it dominate your destiny. Not all will survive the ascension, and those that do, we will welcome as our new sisters, (beat) and boy, sorry, brother.

She looks over the gathers to gauge reactions.

OLGA (CONT'D)

Ascension begins here, the region's premier medical establishment. You will be given an injection of the CRISPER magi code, which will

alter your genetic sequence in situ. (beat) Yes, you have a question?

MARY

That sounds a bit dangerous.

OLGA

Not much of a question, but yes, some, more than we like, will as I mentioned, not survive. It takes a certain level of determination, and some existing sequencing inside your cells already. That is why you have the genetic evaluations, and all of your profiles indicate positive results.

GIRL 1

Is that why we sometimes don't hear from old friends?

OLGA

That, and sometimes, much later, they get overwhelmed, decide they don't want to associate with the plebus anymore, or die another way. As I said there are uncomfortable truths you have been shielded from, that will shape your destiny from now on.

GIRL 2

So, why are there not more boys?

OLGA

The process is more dangerous for them, they rarely get that powerful, even in a success, and to be honest, it's just a headache you don't need. The secret is, only a few are needed for continuity purposes. (beat) And I'll give you an uncomfortable truth now, even if there was time for relationships now, or after you graduate, men don't have much more than one real

purpose, the rest of the time they are tolerated, if you decide you want that, and you are approved, you will be able to rent one from various stud facilities. That is probably the last one most of you will see in the wild, unless you don't make the grade and end up in the escilons, and none of us want that for you.

GALEN

So, after we get these shots?

OLGA

The new genome must be incorporated, as it does do, your bodily systems will alter, for those that will have less power, a few headaches or heart palpitations while the new genome takes over, the more potent the change, the harder it is, from mild to severe and crippling flu, and yes, in 'rare' cases death. You're a boy, chances are, you wont feel a thing, and only barely be able to interact with the ki-aura.

### **INT. RECOVERY WARD REC ROOM - WEEKS LATER**

The room is full of teens in hospital gowns in various stages of recovery. Some are too vexed to move, others are faring much better, playing card or board games with others.

The eggshell walls with silver and gold lines, have VMD pictures, moving and still, some watch as if a TV program.

Galen, who is wrapped in a blanket weakly sitting in an armchair trying not to faint, or puke again, stares at a VMD 'Risk tactics' type board game.

We see a time lapse of a game starting with 6 players, at first he is losing, then it looks like he will win when he knocks out #6, EDNA, (F) black bob cut short hair, knocks out another, then blitzkriegs through #4.

Now, Edna has conquered half the map, while he and the third, TRISH, (F) multi colored pixie cut, in a wheelchair, are fighting over a small island continent, it's his move against the third player, who only has two territories left.

GALEN

West Arlight plains to Kasteil wastes.

From a 'hand' displayed to her, a card is placed on the map.

TRISH

Emergency scramble, Regent fortress  
reinforces...

A card from Galen's 'hand' falls to the board.

GALEN

And now I get to use my commander card,  
supply line ambush, your troops are  
surrounded, all my attack rolls are double.

Three red D10 and 2 black are rolled in the VMD and Trish loses. Trish's troops are obliterated and Galen's takes over both territories.

TRISH

I don't know how, but you're cheating.

She wheels away in her wheelchair in a huff.

EDNA

You haven't won against me in three weeks...

GALEN

You're not dying...

EDNA

You can try, but we both know...

GALEN

Well, one must choose their battles, and, this  
one is over.

EDNA

Believe it or not, you are a challenge, order of  
enemies is the answer for you. But, being epic,  
I make it look easy. Keep in touch, Greenie.

As Edna walks away another, BLAIRE, who is in street clothes approaches.

BLAIRE

So, you're the only male that made it this year,  
(beat) Uhg, you look like you might not have  
made it.

GALEN

I feel like I'm dead, so it's a set. too bad I can't  
trade it in for more troops. I'll beat her yet.  
(beat) Why isn't death following you, how are  
you already well enough to be in real clothes?

BLAIRE

I actually didn't get the ascension inoculation,  
I'm what you call, a legacy. My lineage stopped  
producing PG, and moved out of the enclave,  
and my body started producing it.

GALEN

So, you came to rub your nose in your good  
luck?

BLAIRE

No, due to a unique situation, I had to be  
adopted by relatives still in the Enclave,  
something about control issues. And here is  
really the only transition point in the region. Not  
really set up for Legacies, doesn't happen often  
enough, I guess.

GALEN

So, you in recovery to mock us?

BLAIRE

Mock **you**, mostly. Nah, I just wanted to meet  
the only boy that made it.

GALEN

Playing some numbers, setting up 5d wizard's chess...

BLAIRE

This is a game I didn't want to play, and I'm just looking to get out alive...

A NURSE, (M) 20s approaches with a data pad.

NURSE

I see you are finally responsive, Mr. Stradic. How are you feeling?

GALEN

Like Death is late. How is it, some are bouncing with life, and others are almost dead...

BLAIRE

Or completely dead.

NURSE

Well, that depends on the probable PG count, the higher count you will have, once all this recovery nonsense is done, the more you will feel like death. Did Dr. Olga not cover this? Anyway, yours...

He starts manipulating his data pad.

A regal woman, KAIDA MORWEN, 50's white hair in a bun, her talismen is more decorative than the standard business looking ones of everyone else, and her entourage, all women in their 30's, enter, she looks around and zeroes in on Blaire.

KAIDA

Is that my new daughter? It's sad that she is so plain... (beat) and surrounded by such foul creatures.

GALEN



What creatures?

NURSE

(whisper) She means us, men, many of the  
Matriarchy are a bit sexist.

KAIDA

And not without good reason, there is precious  
little you're kind is good for.

NURSE

Many like some of the services we provide.

She sneers at him and embraces Blaire.

KAIDA

Come, we have much to do to get you ready  
for school, you mustn't give your new family a  
black eye.

BLAIRE

Definitely not my intent, but what of him?

KAIDA

What of him? (beat) Probably go through the  
trials like all the ugh others.

BLAIRE

One man this year, probably worth a little...

KAIDA

You, Nurse, What is his count?

NURSE

Still undergoing morphis, but projections are  
upward of three hundred Uraz.

KAIDA

Three hundred and Uraz, that is something special. I don't have a studding license, but it shouldn't be too difficult. Come, boy. No need for you to compete, I shall be sponsoring you.

He starts struggling to follow, Blaire pushes him back into his wheelchair and pushes him after Kaida

GALEN

Three hundred Uraz?

BLAIRE

PG count, parts per billion, 450 theoretical max, over three fifty health issues start showing up, but still powerful, and worth studding. The futhark qualifier describes the type of magecraft your will be suited for. I'm Othala Thurisaz, tech and lightning. Uraz is rare and means you could potentially do it all, but having so many globulnodgels means even with a high count it will still be an uphill battle, to do much more than simple tricks, but still valuable.

GALEN

Why the sudden interest in me?

BLAIRE

It may not be my game, but if I am to play, I will stack the hell out of my deck, and its not sudden. Come'on, I don't think that woman waits for anything.

### **INT. MORWEN MANSION, FOYER - EARLY AFTERNOON**

Blaire and Galen Follow their new guardian, weirdly insisting they call her 'Mother' into the entrance of the mansion. Galen is sipping a glowing electric blue colored liquid from a stoppered jug, it is helping him feel a little better.

Much of the staff is waiting at the far side of the room, a quartet waits near the entrance waiting to assist the mistress of the house and greet the new arrivals. They are dressed

in flowy glowing Sari type robes that flow like silk, much of the male staff has more revealing garments than the women.

The ceramic like walls have decidedly less circuit like lines than most others, they also appear to be more decorative than the outside and more public places.

The six sided room has a table in the middle on a mosaic that is 'displayed' on the floor, and two grand staircases going up the sides.

#### KAIDA

Welcome to your new home, Blaire, dear, you shall have full reign as any heir apparent would, Boy, keep to the main areas and your room for now, I shall have to ponder what your usefulness entails. (beat) This is Ananastasia, my head of staff, she will see to your questions, and ensure your things get to your rooms promptly.

Ananastasia is a tall red head of about 30, graceful and deceptively powerful.

Kaida exits as Ananastasia approaches with some members of the staff, including only one male, DUKE, 20s light brown hair lightly muscled; he is the head of the escilon maintenance crew.

#### GALEN

Wow, a head of staff, your new mother must be pretty high up the echelons...

#### BLAIRE

**Our** new mother, 'Brother'. She is one of the 8 ancient houses, last of her line, apparently...

#### ANANASTASIA

Which is why she jumped at your adoption, you were going to get taken in by her cousin, Contessa Valiant, and not as an adoptee. But end of lines have a bit more leverage. (beat) As for you, she actually talked to you, interesting.

GALEN

And why would such a, (beat) powerful woman be last of her line?

ANANASTASIA

You're in Valdisia now, learning your place should be at the top of your to-do list, but, that segues neatly into the answer both of you need. The one place she believes men to have a place, she chooses not to take part of.

BLAIRE

I thought male numbers in Valdisia were lower because of lack of survival odds and power...

ANANASTASIA

That is part of it, but, men do tend to bully their way into leadership of whatever group they are a part of, even in some cases that which should only be feminine, that is something the original matriarchs planed against, and so, male populations of the upper Echelons are kept to bare minimum, keeping the price of, certain services high, and those that can provide them a certain power. (beat) The women running the show, that is, not the men themselves. (beat) But for now, Duke will take you to your rooms in the old Dungeons, and milady, I will take you to your rooms in the tower.

Anastasia leads Blaire to the grand staircase as the staff disperses and Duke approaches Galen.

GALEN

This might have been a mistake.

DUKE

You have no idea.

**INT. MORWEN MANSION, TOWER HALLWAYS - LATER**

Ananastasia leads Blaire down a long brightly lit hall, the ever present light lines along the ceiling and pumping a lot of light into the air, as they approach, the light gets brighter, as they leave, the light dims.

There are many small tables covered with knick-knacks and a few chairs and chaise lounges.

ANANASTASIA

...You are the second in line of one of the oldest houses in the world. Your word carries weight.

BLAIRE

What if I choose not to...

ANANASTASIA

You would be chewed up and spit out, your lack of impetus starting the downfall of half the court as they start to rebuild.

BLAIRE

Really, half?

ANANASTASIA

The strings of power may have multiple filaments, but they touch so many things that one weak link is enough to take down dynasties, some links are more important and unbalanced than others. Only those in the fringes can choose to stay out of the game and not destroy the world with their lack of ambition.

BLAIRE

That's, not what I wanted to hear.

ANANASTASIA

The clash of crowns is not about desire, but survival of not you, but our way of life. Once the series of systems are in place, a minor disruption can unsettle it all and kill millions. I'll thrive regardless; (darkly) don't make me have to turn you into a puppet, I simply don't have the time. (beat, then more cheerily) Though this wing has not been used since Miss Morwen was young, it has been cleaned and maintained, let us know if anything does not meet standards. (beat) Let me know if you get any back talk from the staff. Ah, here we are.

They stop in front of a set of gilded double doors. As Anastasia indicates, the doors open.

#### **INT. MORWEN MANSION, BLAIRE'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS**

The pair enters, as they do, the lights brighten and the shades open.

The room is shiny ceramic, mostly forest green as opposed to the off white of the rest of the mansion, the only soft surfaces are the bed and a few chairs. There is a desk in front of a window.

There is a large area in the middle of the room with the aquamarine inlay in a hexagon with a few hand weapons in holders around it.

BLAIRE

Wow, it's so, (beat) sterile.

ANANASTASIA

Yes, a proper room for a proper young matriarch. (beat) You, disapprove?

BLAIRE

Its, more that, well, I am used to sharing first off, it's the way in the communities, and (beat) carpets and wood, Its just so, (beat) alien.

ANANASTASIA

You are no longer a plebus, you are a matriarch. Sharing rooms is simply not done. And as far as the décor, I suggest you get used to it. The soft touch is no longer yours.

With that chilling statement, Ananastasia takes her leave.

Blaire wanders to the weapons area, picks up a sword and gives it a few swings.

BLAIRE

I'm not cut out for this.

**INT. MORWEN MANSION, DUNGEON HALLWAY - SAME TIME**

The passageways of the dungeon were obsidian black with the wall circuits redshifted from aquamarine. Each footstep echoing.

DUKE

It still may be called a dungeon, but it's really more of a basement, I doubt it's ever been used as such. This is where most of the equipment for the building maintenance is, as one would expect. All of the male staff, the five of us, and now you, live down here.

He stops in front of a simple door pulls out a key, unlocks it, and pushes it open, as it swings open he hands Galen the key.

GALEN

Wow, mechanical lock, don't think I have ever seen one of those.

DUKE

Well, because most are unfamiliar with them, they are the most secure locks in the world. (beat) This is the Guard Master's room, the best sleeping chamber down here, been a while since it's been used.

**INT. MORWEN MANSION, GALEN'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS**

The large room has institutional carpeting and a rug at the foot of a twin sized bed. There is a half wall of light brown wood paneling, the rest of the wall is the familiar shiny ceramic but it is a milky color with that same aquamarine inlay. There is a large wooden desk and a set of dumbbells and a bench.

GALEN

Cozy.

DUKE

We take what we can get. I only have a bed, my office has the desk and I have to share the communal weight room.

GALEN

It sounds like you have a problem with that, though I don't know why, communities share everything...

DUKE

We are males serving in a female world, it doesn't matter how smart or skilled you are, you're not going to get anywhere unless you look good.

GALEN

That's a weird thing to say. (beat) I was selected because I made a device...

DUKE

Just because that is why you were selected, like I said, it doesn't matter how smart you are, or skilled, you have to look good to get in the door. (beat) If I were you, I'd work on my abs and biceps. The staff is at your disposal for tips and stuff, but you are not escilon you are diocese, they are all going to resent you, be careful...

GALEN



Do you resent me?

Duke, who had been about to exit, pauses for a moment before turning back.

DUKE

You are in that weird state, despite a position of relative authority, you have no real power, but are expected to be in charge, your 'lessers' will expect the world from you, your 'peers' will laugh at you, and your superiors will ignore if you are lucky. You will be responsible for people that will hate you, and wont be able to do anything about it, or for them. Good luck, your going to need it, few men survive their first years of ascension, those that do quickly learn their place and never move on, that is the way it is, and the sooner you realize it, the better for you, and everyone.

With that, he leaves, pulling the door shut behind him.

Galen shuffles around and makes his way to the weights. He experimentally tests a few and sighs.

GALEN

Judged for my body when all I know how to do is deep work? I am so screwed.

### **INT. MEDICAL CENTER RECOVERY ROOM - MORNING**

The blue white ceramic walls are just shy of being called shiny. There is no door, but a small archway with curtains. There are 6 beds, 3 along each wall, and there are tracks for curtain walls between the beds that all look like Star Trek style original series bio beds. VMDs above the heads show vital stats.

Mary is in the middle bed on one side, and there are two others on the other wall at the ends. Mary is ashen and pallid, her blanket is tucked all the way up.

Galen enters and smiles when he sees Mary, he walks over and hands her a get well present. Galen is dressed in grayish glowing Sari type robes lit at the edges with a soft dancing rainbow.

MARY

Look who finally decided to visit.

GALEN

Things have gotten strange, Mary.

MARY

No kidding, they dressed you up as an off duty  
escilon...

GALEN

Actually, I got made into a dioces.

MARY

Well, now they see what we all saw.

GALEN

Yeah, well, its actually more complicated than  
that. How are you?

MARY

Oh, great, look at me, I was going to run a  
marathon, care to join?

He smiles and hands her a vile of glowing blue liquid.

GALEN

It tastes like absolute ass, but trust me, it  
helps.

She accepts it, and after an attentive sniff, she drinks it all in one gulp. Her skin almost  
immediately looks better.

MARY

Uhg, you weren't kidding! Now I'm glad I wasn't  
given any...

GALEN

Really?

MARY

I've seen some others take a dose...

GALEN

You haven't gotten any yet?

MARY

Something about it not being covered under my HMO, whatever that is. Like they want to keep me sick....

GALEN

All the better to control us...

MARY

Now you sound like Stone.

GALEN

I'm thinking he may not be too far off the target.

He looks at the health readouts and hold out his hand.

MARY

What are you doing?

GALEN

We're supposed to interact with the tech without concentrating, but...

The display glitches then shows 325 ?? (Ehwas Lagus, can't find futhark)

GALEN

Dark magic and water, but those numbers, no wonder you're not doing so hot. (beat) don't worry, I'll make sure you get more manajuce.

**INT. TRIALS ARENA - DAY**

montage start:

This is a succession of scenes to show A- what the trials are like, and B-the difference between being 'adopted' and/or growing up in the system, and having to fight for it, part of the dichotomy of the title.

We first see a succession of teen girls close up facing the camera with clenched fists, some have embers, some sparks, some lightning, some flames, some frost effects or a combo. These abilities are not that strong.

#### **INT. MORWEN MANSION, GALEN'S ROOM - DAY**

Galen is reading at his desk, Duke enters approaches watches for a moment before spinning Galen around in the chair, grabs the book and hands him a dumbbell.

#### **INT. MEDICAL CENTER RECOVERY ROOM - DAY**

Mary, still looking like death warmed over, watches on of her roommates leave, then slip a drink from a vial of the glowing blue liquid.

#### **INT. MORWEN MANSION, BLAIRE'S ROOM - DAY**

Anastasia and Blaire are having an intense sparing session with blades, Blaire is clearly outmatched and Anastasia is enjoying toying with her.

#### **INT. TRIALS ARENA - DAY**

We watch a cadre of teens going through training kata, the forms are not impressive, there is some phasing, like white belts first learning

#### **INT. MORWEN MANSION, GALEN'S ROOM - DAY**

Galen is working on a large robotic device, Duke walks up behind, taps him on the shoulder. When Galen turns around Duke holds out a jump rope, Galen looks at it, glares at Duke and grabs the rope.

#### **INT. TRIALS ARENA - DAY**

The arena is set up like a competition kitchen with teens behind tables with cooking implements and baskets.

The scene goes black as the words 'Ala cuisine!' appear.

#### **INT. MORWEN MANSION, BLAIRE'S ROOM - DAY**

Blaire is seated at a desk, Anastasia is in front of her and a map of the region, 'Juliana Augustinium'. Anastasia is lecturing and Blaire is furiously writing notes.

#### **INT. TRIALS ARENA - DAY**

We watch an 'MMA' style fight for a moment. This is merely part of the trials, only the activity is important, not the victor, it is encouraged for the participants to really let loose and have fun.

#### **INT. MEDICAL CENTER RECOVERY ROOM - DAY**

A doctor gives Mary, looking better, an exam, she finds an empty vial, sighs, shakes her head and continues the exam.

#### **INT. MORWEN MANSION, KITCHEN - DAY**

Duke is working a blender and after a moment turns it off, pours the pinkish brown glowing liquid into a cup and puts it in front of a sweating and clearly exhausted Galen. He grimaces at the shake.

#### **INT. TRIALS ARENA - DAY**

We watch another round of Kata, but the forms are closer to mastery.

#### **INT. TRIALS ARENA - DAY**

There are 4 large tables with teens behind them. the tables are loaded with the bits and pieces of a complex device. A countdown appears on the screen, at zero the girls furiously grab pages of schematics and start trying to assemble the devices.

#### **INT. MORWEN MANSION, BLAIRE'S ROOM - DAY**

Blaire is seated at her desk with a test and books in front of her and Anastasia staring intently at her.

#### **INT. TRIALS ARENA - DAY**

Time lapse of Edna in the middle of 4 VMD projectors dominating 4 simultaneous risk games each with different opponents.

#### **INT. MORWEN MANSION, GALEN'S ROOM - DAY**

Duke is spotting a struggling Galen as he bench presses.

#### **INT. TRIALS ARENA - DAY**

We see a similar succession of contestants clinching their fists to the camera as the first scene of the montage, but the abilities are much stronger.

#### **INT. MEDICAL CENTER RECOVERY ROOM - DAY**

Mary is not looking too good again, the health monitor shows minimal activity, doctors look on with concern.

#### **INT. MORWEN MANSION, BLAIRE'S ROOM - DAY**

Ananastasia and Blaire are sparing again, Blaire is holding her own until a slip up. Ananastasia is standing over her with her sword to Blaire's throat, a disappointed look on her face.

#### **INT. TRIALS ARENA - DAY**

Trish is in her wheelchair, members of escilon are putting a headset on her.

With the head set in place, we zoom out to see a generic uncanny valley, mannequin looking aspect being controlled poorly by her.

#### **INT. MORWEN MANSION, BLAIRE'S ROOM - DAY**

Blaire and Galen are in the middle of the room holding their hands up, sparks are sputtering from Blaire's hands, occasionally a arc jumps between them.

Galen's hands shift between frost, sparks, and embers.

Ananastasia and Duke are watching intently, ready to berate either for failing to manifest their powers.

#### **INT. TRIALS ARENA - DAY**

The teens are in rows and columns, like a military graduation, as a little confetti flies and the closing ceremony of the trials winds down.

End montage.

#### **INT. MORWEN MANSION, TOWER HALLWAYS - DAY**

The halls are mostly empty, a quiet before a storm.

Without warning Galen rushes out, looks around frantically then steps up to the wall.

He places a hand on it and a 'menu' hovers over the smooth surface. using mostly his mind he searches through menus and selects icons.

A noise down the hall catches his attention, he returns his attention to the command prompt and selects enter.

The menu disappears, he rounds a corner and a VMD of him appears looking as if he is about to attack.

Blairee rushes in, is about to attack the VMD, grimaces, and makes a motion. The VMD fades away and a ghostly image of Galen's last move appears before her.

She carefully approaches the corner, with a start Galen combat rolls into the open, throws a fireball and darts off.

Blairee uses lightning to deflect the fire and follows quickly.

### **INT. MORWEN MANSION, FOYER - CONTINUOUS**

A skeleton crew of the staff await the arrival of Kaida.

Kaida, Ananastasia, MALEFICENT SFORZA (F) 40s, KATARINA SFORZA (F) teen, and their aids casually enter as Kaida welcomes them to her home.

KAIDA

...And welcome to our lovely Manor. I shall have a word with...

Blairee and Galen burst out of an upstairs hallway, casting fire and sparks at each other.

Galen Vaults over the railing, combat lands and rolls right in front of Katarina who casually lifts an eyebrow as he rises uneasily in front of her.

Blairee stops just short of jumping, eyes wide with shock and fear.

Kaida is not mad, just disappointed.

KAIDA (CONT'D)

...Now I know why you didn't confirm the appointment. (to Blairee without looking at her) Please make your way down in a dignified manner.

MALEFICENT

This is why adoption is so troublesome, darling, I did warn you against it. No control in the formative years. I assume you are the boy?

GALEN

Uh, yes, hello...

KAIDA

Only when spoken to please. Yes, and as a boy, obviously a more troublesome case. Please give your betters space.

Mechanically Galen steps back and offers a slight nervous bow. Blaire comes to an uneasy stop next to him.

KAIDA

If you two are finished shaming the family, perhaps you can take time out of your busy schedule to entertain your guest. In a dignified manor. The adults have things to discuss.

With that Kaida, Maleficent, and their staffs stroll off into the Manor continuing a conversation started earlier.

With the adults gone, Katarina speaks up.

KATARINA

No need to practice for fool errant, the competition isn't that fierce.

GALEN

As the current title holder, I'm sure you will prove...

KATARINA

Do you know who I am?

GALEN

Haven't had the pleasure...

BLAIRE

She has the Sforza crest...

KATARINA

Katarina. Sad to see the Morwens are now only half a generation from extinction. (beat) I was so hoping for a challenge.



Galen and Blaire are silent for a moment, Blaire in simple shock, Galen trying hard not to be antagonistic.

GALEN

I could use some pie. You want some pie?

**INT. MORWEN MANSION, KITCHEN - LATER**

Galen, Blaire, and Katarina are seated at a table, steaming beef pot pie ready to be devoured in front of them.

GALEN

...The secret is a proper marinade before you bake...

KATARINA

At least one of you isn't a complete disappointment. (to Blaire) Have you considered where you're pledging?

BLAIRE

I suppose it depends on how easy it is to avoid bitch tarts...

KATARINA

(scoff) Uhg, you're worse than Valencourt. You have no clue what the battle or the stakes are and still insist on being insufferable. (beat) Now I am not so sure how best to use you.

Blaire is quiet for a moment.

BLAIRE

Look, I just want to keep my head down...

KATARINA

You're a Merwen, avoidance is simply not an option for you. (beat) Your best bet is to pony up to a powerful patron, and let her act

vicariously through you. After all, if you don't have the stomach...

GALEN

Is that an offer?

KATARINA

You are too smart for your own good. (beat)  
Ironically you need to learn your place.

GALEN

I actually hear that alot..

**INT. MORWEN MANSION, GALEN'S ROOM - MORNING**

Galen sits at the desk reading. A knock sounds at the door, he quickly hides his book, then remembers Duke never knocked, and puts the book back on the desk.

GALEN

It's open!

BLAIRE (V.O.)

Looks closed to me!

Galen gets up to open the door.

GALEN

It's actually manual, you have to open it yourself.

BLAIRE

We grow up with no doors, all the doors upstairs are automatic, then there's the dungeon. (beat) Man I hate this place.

GALEN

It'll definitely take some getting used to. (beat)  
What do you need?

BLAIRE

Apparently, there is stuff we need for school, and I would like to go into the city to get it, rather than just order it. I just got to get out of here, its so, ich...

GALEN

Yeah, this place is not the most fun. Never thought I'd miss the festivals. I need to get away from Duke and his obsessive workouts.

### **EXT. VALDISIA APPROACH - MORNING**

We are following a flying vehicle into a mountain of glass, structural ceramic, composites, and steel on top of an inaccessible mountain.

Multicolored lights flash amongst buildings. This is a Tokyo/Dubai/Times Square hybrid of the future. Along the ground are a few structures, but mostly plains forests; fern, deciduous, and mushroom, and little sign of a path through it.

NEWSPASITION (V.O.)

The Commemoration of Unity is in full swing. This solemn occasion is our annual reminder that only united can the Matriarchy stand. Back biting and infighting are not to be tolerated, we are the greatest, most civilized the world has ever seen.

GALEN (V.O.)

Wow, they sure do celebrate differently in the big city. Where is the carnival atmosphere, the gaudy décor?

BLAIRE (V.O.)

The matriarchy never sleeps. They have to keep to business or the whole system collapses. At least they have a light show.

### **EXT. VALDISIA SHOPPING DISTRICT - DAY**

The city is full of large towers all constructed of advanced composites and ceramic. The aquamarine lines visibly pulsate as they transport power and information on a scale neither Blaire nor Galen had ever seen.

There are a few plants in tall planters and many dancing fountains, it is completely alien to the teens.

There are a few vehicles on the ground but most are in the sky taking off and landing from high balconies.

There are a few escilons working on some of the tech, but they are far and away more professional than the ones in the community, more meticulous measurements, exclusion zones and no visible mistakes.

The gilded limo style vehicle with the coat of arms of the Morwens, a unicorn slaying a dragon, lands near one of the larger fountains.

The door opens and Blaire steps out followed closely by Galen.

BLAIRE

Wow!

GALEN

Definitely not in the communities anymore,  
Damn, I hope Mary is alright, she wasn't too  
good when we left the hospital.

Blaire checks her talismen, VMD floats above her wrist with a to do list.

BLAIRE

I'm sure she's fine. (beat) Well, we need to stop  
by the uniform shop...

GALEN

Wait, uniforms, back home we just wore  
whatever?

BLAIRE

Yeah, us too, but, apparently being matriarchy,  
and dioces, means we never get to dress like  
we want ever again. (beat) We also need a few

aetherion fragments, some memory crystals, and escilon tool sets. (beat) Yeah, even though we are nobility, we will have to take things apart in classes, even if just to see how it works and fix in emergencies.

GALEN

I actually prefer to work with my hands and build things. (beat) Well, the aetherion shop is over there, let's stop there first.

They start off towards the store. At her approach the doors open and she passes the threshold with ease.

Galen, however, gets repelled by the force field. He keeps trying, people start to notice and security, much like the aspects he has seen before start approaching.

Eventually an energy field surrounds him and forces him to his knees. Blaire steps up to try to help but is stopped by the leader of the security group, a tall female.

SECURITY SGT

Don't worry, ma'am we'll take care of this.

BLAIRE

Take care of what?

SECURITY SGT

This, (beat) boy, was stalking you...

GALEN

I wasn't stalking her...

He gets knocked in the back of the head

SECURITY SGT

Speak when spoken to, boy.

They start to cart Galen off.

BLAIRE

What, what are you doing?

SECURITY SGT

Taking him into custody, stalking with intent to trespass is a crime in Valdisia...

BLAIRE

First off, that is a stupid rule, secondly, that's not how it is in the communities, there is no concept of trespassing or theft...

SECURITY SGT

Ignorance of the law is no excuse, this boy was trying to go somewhere he is not allowed, he must be punished, or he will never learn.

GALEN

We just ascended, we're supposed to get school supplies.

SECURITY SGT

A likely story. There were no new males elevated this year, if there was the trials would have been much more...

BLAIRE

He's telling the truth, aren't you even going to check his talismen?

SECURITY GUARD

He probably stole it.

GALEN

From who? Why would I steal something from someone who has no access?

SECURITY GUARD

Shut it dumb ass.

Blaire moved to activate Galen's talismen; she is prevented from doing so.

The Sergeant moves to check Blaire's talismen

SECURITY SGT

Look, miss... (beat) Oh, shit.

The others release Galen and the gathered crowd takes a knee

SECURITY SGT (CONT'D)

I'm sorry miss Morwen, I had no idea, please...

GALEN

Her name is Hol...

BLAIRE

Shut it, Galen. (beat) It's fine, Sergeant. I won't report you as long as you tell me how to get my brother into the shop.

SECURITY SGT

His accesses would have to be updated on his talismen...

SECURITY GUARD

You might be able to talk to the shop stewards of any store you wish to enter for a temporary access...

BLAIRE

Thank you, you may leave. (beat) I said go.

The guards hurry off as Blaire moves in to help him up.

GALEN

What have we gotten ourselves into?

CUT TO BLACK.