

Novel
Writing
Samples

Josh Knatt

Prologue

Our world is forever changed. The land bleeds, the mountains weep, the rivers writhe in agony. Never has such devastation been wrought upon us and left so little in its wake. Never has death seemed so welcome a friend.

The oracle gazed over the desolate wastelands of her home with a sense of woeful agony, in all her visions of the end times had she scarce seen such destruction. What was once the proud and bountiful empire of Esharra was now a wasteland of scorched earth, barren of all life. The only thing that remained was the tower of Dalkhu, a colossal monument of twisted dark steel engraved with the stretched and agonised forms of the titans sealed within it. The oracle often stared across the remnants of her world filled with sorrow and regret. "If only I had done more" she often thought to herself, "if only I had been of more help to them, maybe we could have prevented this outcome." A wind blew ash up the base of the tower, creating large plumes of dark particulate, the oracle stood for a moment, a single tear trickled down her cheek as the plume dispersed in the atmosphere. "What have I done?" she collapsed on the black marble floor sobbing into her hands.

"My lady, you are summoned" an assertive voice stated from behind a large dark steel door. *Esh*, the oracle thought to herself, *why must it always be him?* "My lady, you are required immediately. I will not ask politely again" the voice of *Esh* commanded through the door. *Esh*, the self-proclaimed left-hand of their 'great' and dominant ruler *Xino*, was of the *Ef'len* race; tall, slender with narrow pointed ears, high pronounced cheek bones, piercing blue narrow eyes and a mane of pitch-black hair, however unlike many of his kin, *Esh* was broader in the shoulders and had the tracking marks beneath his skin that were associated with the [word from notes]. The Oracle picked herself up and, wiping the tear residue from her face, opened the large door to face the tall, tan skinned *Ef'len* "They're supreme eminence of Esharra wishes to speak with you my Lady, it is a matter of great importance and you will come with me immediately" *Esh's* tone was respectful on the surface, yet the Oracle could sense his despise of her in his eyes. After all, the Oracle who had actively opposed and worked to prevent *Xino's* planetary conquest would of course be a traitor in the eyes of the sycophantic followers of that deranged psycho, the Oracle thought to herself as she left her room and entered the dark, poorly lit corridor of the tower.

Esh led the Oracle up a large and winding staircase towards the throne room. The staircase, like much of the tower, was dark with only a handful of electroluminescent orbs on the walls to provide minimal lighting. The walls were clad in granite and dark steel pulling any extra lighting out of the area and there were very few windows that allowed natural light in "what little natural light was left" the Oracle thought as she ascended the winding staircase behind her apparent guard. After some time, the staircase began to open into a large hallway lined with granite pillars, large tinted, bay windows at the end of which stood a large dark steel metal door. Unlike the door to the Oracle's room, this door was more ostentatious, embellished with 9 different symbols, 6 for the earthly elements of fire, ice, wind, earth, thunder, and water, 2 representing the celestial elements of the astral and umbral and the 9th symbol representing *Aion*, or time. The Oracle approached the ostentatious monstrosity of a door with a growing sense of foreboding, the *Ef'len* however was beginning to pick up the pace, be it from excitement or anxiety the Oracle did not know.

Esh arrived in front of the grand door to the throne room a good 10 paces before the Oracle and stood to the side waiting for his companion to arrive. When she did, he placed his hand on the astral aspected side of the door and ushered the Oracle to place her palm on the side with the crescent

moon above the symbols of the umbral aspected elements of Ice, Lightning and Water. The symbols on both sides of the door began to illuminate with distinct colours, starting with the crescent moon and solar sphere moving down the columns until 8 of the 9 symbols were glowing vibrantly. The sound of gears turning and locks clicking open flooded the large hallway, echoing off the pillars of granite, with a heavy clunk the hourglass symbol of Aion rotated 90 degrees as the doors slowly lurched away from the Ef'len man and human woman revealing the tower's throne room. "My liege, the Oracle as requested" Esh's voice boomed into the open throne room as the doors swung fully open, the Oracle hesitantly entered the large open room, her stomach cramping in knots from anxiety as she approached the raised podium, atop which sat a pitch black, gnarled metal throne with 6 pipes running through its structure, each one a different colour "the same colours as those of the sigils for the 6 earthly elements on the door" the Oracle noted "So it's true, they really did manage to succeed in total elemental subjugation of the titans". The throne began to rotate slowly around to face the now open door, revealing the pale face of Xino the Salmaq, or fallen ones. Xino's eye's fell on the Oracle, their deep purple colouring now resembling more of a black than a purple, and she felt as if they were staring through her flesh into her spirit "Thank Esh, you may go" Xino's voice carried a level of calm and control with it. The Ef'len bowed deeply before making his way back out through the door he had entered from. As he left the door slammed closed with a heavy thud that made the Oracle startle slightly.

"Tell me, have you been crying again?" Xino's voice seemed to almost echo across the length of the sparsely decorated throne room.

"Why do you care?" the Oracle replied, showing her indignation to the question.

Xino's sat up in their throne, "Because, despite how your actions had hindered my grand design I still care for you my dear Oracle" the calm in his voice never breaking.

"You care for nothing, that much is clear from how you have destroyed our world!" The Oracle exclaimed. "Just look around us Xino, you have disrupted to elemental balance of the planet and extinguished all forms of life. Nothing outside of this tower lives because of your twisted game. Nothing!" The Oracle stopped herself before her voice broke.

"I have achieved paradise dear girl. The titans were a threat to every aspect of existence, and I have sealed them away in this very tower. I have saved this world from a future of certain doom" Xino motioned to the sky above the throne room, a sky that was grey from the ash clouds that had built up in the atmosphere in the decade since the second cataclysm.

"For 10 years I have been locked in this tower. 10 years I have been forced to endure the world's slow decay. Nearly every facet of life has been extinguished. How is this saving our world?" The Oracle felt her stomach turn, the memories of the events of 10 years ago beginning to flood back into her mind, of all the people she had lost, a fire of rage began burning in her.

"I did not bring you here to scold me for my design, nor did I summon you to guilt me into regretting my actions. I summoned you because I have need of your gifts. Now if you would please calm yourself before I lose my composure" Xino smirked at The Oracle as they rose from their throne and slowly descended to podium steps towards the Oracle. The Oracle felt the fire in her weaken and she began to tremble at the knee. Until now, she had never understood the power Xino had obtained, but now she could feel it. The overwhelming pressure they were exerting from every fibre of their being. The Oracle tried to step back but the pressure kept her locked in place. *Not pressure, fear* The Oracle thought as Xino approached her *complete and all-consuming fear*. "Now" Xino started, "I

need you to focus, for I have sensed the return of something most unusual” Xino extended an arm with talon like nails around The Oracle’s throat “tell me, where they are”

Raea awoke suddenly, short of breath and clammy. “Another nightmare” she thought to herself, “but this one seemed so real. Almost too real” She sat up in her bed, grabbed her glass of water from the nightstand and took several large gulps. “That face, those eyes. They seemed almost familiar, but it can’t be. They died 8 years ago” Raea took one last sip of her water and settled back into bed, glancing at her clock, “4am? Really? Damn nightmares, I’ve got to be up in 2 hours” she mumbled to herself as she pulled the duvet back over her head.

Chapter 1

The sound of the alarm clock filled the room with a high-pitched beeping. *I hate mornings*, Silv waved his arm towards the clock from under his duvet, missing as the sound increased in amplitude. After another minute of senseless waving, he threw his duvet on the floor and switched off the alarm, noticing the time. "Oh crap, I've overslept again!" Silv began racing around his room grabbing his work clothes from the floor and chair of his 8ft apartment *Kairos is gonna kill me* he thought as he grabbed his security pass from his desk and rushed out of the door. Silv was a half human, half Vultus man in his late 20's. As a half Vultus, he had not inherited a tail from his father, however, was gifted with a set of small pointed vulpine-like ears that sat atop his head. In fact, from a gene's perspective Silv took more after his mother than his father, he had inherited her bright green eyes, mouse brown hair and pale complexion, the only way people would have believed that his father was indeed a Vultus was thanks to his ears. Thankfully, the megacity of Esharra was filled with people of many races and mixtures of races, after all the city was built to allow all races to coexist and live in harmony. Silv grinned to himself at the thought of that.

"Silv!" called a familiar voice as he ran down the stairs outside his apartment, "Silv wait up!"

"Sorry Tai can't chat. I'm late for work again!" Silv yelled up to his neighbour as he continued to rush down the 12 flights of stairs until he reached the ground floor of the building. He leapt through the double doors into the busy morning street, the smell of fresh air hit Silv hard and suddenly he began to regret the events of the night before, specifically the 3rd bottle of wine he had consumed before coming home. The mixture of fresh air and sunlight had Silv on the verge of passing out and throwing up *No, got to get to work* he yelled at himself as he pulled out his sunglasses and began down the street. Silv lived in a section of Esharra that had been newly renovated, state of the art motion and time-controlled streetlamps, holoboards on the sides of buildings showing the Esharran imperial news, and the new state of the art sky rail. Silv looked at the sky rail boarding zone, *maybe I'll just get a cab* he thought as he watched the groups of people being launched across the city through the complex network of platform filled tubes. Suddenly his crystal cell began vibrating, he took the device out of his pocket, the thin circular piece of glass displayed the name Dr A Kairos and Silv felt nauseated again "Dr K! You wouldn't believe how bad the traffic is this morning, I'm running a little..."

"Cut the bull Silv, you're late because all you do after work is head to the nearest bar and drown your inadequacies in booze, then sleep through your alarms." Kairos's voice seemed more drained than normal. The 70-year-old Dracin woman had spent most of her life working with the Esharran central control agency as one of its most accomplished and well-respected minds, she had also been Silv's mentor for the last 8 years when he had applied to become a senior manipulator. "You're in luck though Silv, you're not needed in the lab today. In fact, both you and I have been asked to aid the bureau of public defence with an alarming discovery in the eastern warehouse district" The district was only a ten-minute walk from Silv's apartment building so the Dr was not technically wrong, however Silv's present state made the idea of walking anywhere other than bed seem daunting.

"Oh, that's great. Thanks Dr K! I'll head down there now" Silv's attempt at positivity and enthusiasm sounded bad even by his own standards.

"Oh, and Silv, make sure you're prepared for this. The reports seemed rather grotesque" the crystal cell clicked off, leaving Silv staring at the round communication device confused.

After a moment, Silv took a deep breath and headed down the street towards the eastern warehouse district. Warehouse districts in Esharra were predominantly run entirely by a complex artificial intelligence and a handful of heavy automatons that were programmed to load and unload haulage to send across the city from various points. Each district had, at most, 5 non-automated engineers assigned to them to manage and maintain the machines in the event of a software malfunction or physical damage, Silv couldn't understand what could have happened to require the assistance of two high ranking scientists from the control agency. *Something about this doesn't add up* Silv thought as he approached the edge of the district. Sure enough something did not. When he arrived, Silv noted 7 light armoured personnel carriers that were used by the public defence bureau that had blocked off all entrance into the district. 6 of the bureau's public defence officers were standing guard ushering people away from the site and deflecting all questions that were being asked of them. Silv approached one of the officers, a tall Ef'len man with blonde hair and piercing blue eyes. "Silv Gravene, titan manipulator 2nd class" he stated as he showed the Ef'len man his ID badge. The Ef'len officer checked the badge using his crystal cell and radioed to, what Silv assumed, was his superior.

"Sir, please follow me" the officer said in a dry gravelly voice. Silv followed the tall man into the district, all the automatons had been put into hibernation and Silv noted none of the AI software was active.

"I don't suppose you know what this is all about, do you?" Silv asked.

The Ef'len ignored him and continued walking towards a large and seemingly derelict warehouse on the southern edge of the district. As the pair approached, Silv noticed a large group gathered outside the building including, what looked like, 3 special investigators. *This is serious if the big guns are here* Silv thought to himself as he approached the group. The sound of orders being yelled gradually increased in volume the closer Silv and his escort got to the group, yet Silv could not hear or see Dr Kairos. *Dammit, she better not be pulling a late on me.*

"Sir! Silv Gravene, Manipulator 2nd Class. As requested." The Ef'len escort called out to one of the special investigators. A short and portly human man turned around and approached the pair.

"Excellent! Thank you Sergeant" the portly man stated with a deep, yet tired voice as he saluted the sergeant. The Ef'len saluted back, spun on his heels and began retracing his path back to the edge of the warehouse district. "Mr Gravene, I apologise for calling you here on such short notice but we have urgent need of your skills and expertise. I'm special agent 1st class Ject Uros, and the poor bastard that's been lumbered with investigating this mess" The portly man seemed almost bereft with the situation, his thin grey moustache glistening in the spring morning sun, his eyes surrounded with dark circles from an apparent lack of sleep. "Dr Kairos should be arriving shortly, if you would please come with me" Uros motioned to a small white tent that had been put up along the outside of the derelict warehouse. Silv started towards it when a foul scent drifted past his nose. Silv fought back the urge to throw up, the hangover he was fighting was beginning to win and it was thanks to the smell that was lingering in the air, a smell that Silv recognised but couldn't quite place. The closer to the tent he got, the stronger the smell became. Silv stopped walking about 3 metres from the entrance to the tent, took a bottle of water out of his bag and gulped down 3 large mouthfuls, steadied himself and entered the tent.

The tent was not the scene of a crime, like Silv has expected, but was instead a mobile operation tent. 2 other lower-class special investigators were reviewing data on larger crystal cells and a forensic analyst was going over data using a crystal laptop. What struck Silv more than anything

though was the lack of the rancid stench from outside the tent, the mobile operations tent was devoid of any horrific smells at all. It had the unmistakable smell of disinfectant in the air. In that moment Silv couldn't decide what was worse, the rancid stench outside the tent of the overpowering scent of alcohol-based disinfectant within. The forensic analyst spun around on her chair to face Silv, a Salmaq woman around the same age as Silv, her lilac eyes set against her tan skin and raven hair deterred from the pair of small horns protruding from her forehead. She smiled at Silv, a wry smile of suggestion "How's your head?" she asked "You look like you're about to keel over" Her voice was mocking and familiar.

"I feel fine Cal. Fresh like a spring morning" Silv's overly enthusiastic response was only hindered by the fact that he had begun sweating and the dark circles around his eyes were more noticeable than normal.

Cal burst out laughing "If you didn't look so grim, I'd almost believe you!" Cal and Silv had grown up together and both entered the academy of elemental sciences together, both had worked under Dr Kairos for 2 years before Cal had been offered a position as a forensic analyst with the Bureau for Public Defence. "Any idea when Kairos is arriving? I assume the two of you came here separately"

"Yeah, she was heading from Central. I came straight from home. But no one's told me why two members from the CCA are needed in a matter of public defence." Silv's tone was more confused than obtuse, however one of the special investigators gave him a look of disdain, nonetheless.

"So, you haven't been briefed at..." Cal was interrupted suddenly.

"No, we have not, and I must also add that I am in the middle of some highly sensitive research" The assertive, and aggressive voice of Dr Kairos echoed from the door of the tent. "And frankly, I don't see why CCA scientists are needed for a matter of public defence. Doesn't the Bureau have enough vaguely intelligent people to make conclusions and determine causes of death?" Dr Asta Kairos was a medium height Dracin woman of approximately 70 years. Like many of the Dracin race, Dr Kairos had scaled-like texturing on her skin, a pointed tail and horns that grew out of the side of her face. Unlike most other Dracin however, Dr Kairos had a grey hue to her skin as opposed to the more common red or blue hues, and deep crimson eyes. Her skin had a range of track marks where her veins should have been that pulsed with a grey-like glow.

"Dr Kairos, nice to see you again" Cal stood up to greet the Dr, who was now less than 2 feet from the Salmaq woman.

"Why have Silv and I been pulled out here. I want the short and precise version, not your normal lengthy account Cal" Kairos's voice was domineering, but not cruel. She was however staring at Cal with an intensity that made her feel uncomfortable.

"Right" Cal's voice was shuddering slightly "We got an alert at five this morning about a bizarre spark of light arising from this part of the warehouse district. When a first responder team arrived, they were puzzled with what they saw so asked for forensics to come and take a look. The findings however were not anything we'd seen before, and the readings of residual elemental energy are far above any norms." Silv looked inquisitively at Cal, Kairos however was motionless, her eyes still staring at Cal intensely. "I think it would be better if I just showed the two of you what we're dealing with" Cal stepped back from Kairos and motioned to the exit of the tent behind her. Taking a deep breath she led the pair into the cordoned off warehouse.

Silv wretched slightly as he exited the tent into the empty concrete building. The rancid stench from outside the tent was back and stronger. "Burnt flesh at a guess" Kairos stated "and possibly rotting corpses too" The rancid odour filled the entirety of the open concrete room.

"Why flesh though. Isn't this district fully automated?" Silv asked, as he buried his face in his jacket sleeve.

"You mean abandoned" Kairos said. "This section of the eastern warehouse district has been out of use for about 3 years now after a chemical leak caused the robots to malfunction. Am I right?"

"Indeed" Cal answered as she led the pair towards the centre of the warehouse. "This is why we requested the two of you" She motioned to a large section of the floor that was scorched. *It's half melted away* Silv noted to himself as he approached Cal. "This spark of light that was reported to have originated from this warehouse, more specifically this spot. The flooring here is burned and deformed" *You can say that again* Silv thought as he looked at the section of floor. Where most of the warehouse had a flat concrete floor, this section had been deformed, a dip of about 1 foot sat in the centre of a large splintered scorch mark, cracks had formed in the surface and the base of the dip looked as if it had been filled with molten rock and metal, it almost glistened in the spring morning sun.

"Incredible. What could have caused this?" Silv knelt by the mouth of the crater, running his hand over the surface.

"Elemental manipulation would be my guess" Kairos stated "Cal, you said the residual elemental energy readings were abnormally high, do you have them to hand?"

"Sure" Cal handed the Doctor a crystal tablet displaying a set of brightly coloured bar charts "What strikes me as odd is that there are reading for all 6 earthly elements. Which is impossible, right?"

"Not entirely impossible no" Kairos took the tablet and studied the charts "Amazing, all the residual energies are at the same level. I haven't seen balance in the elements like this outside of a lab for over a decade" Kairos crouched beside Silv at the mouth of the crater "What are you sensing?"

"This was no accident, the elemental energies were forced into this state of equilibrium by force" Silv's right hand was hovering over the lip of the crater, his eyes closed and the veins in his hand were glowing with a dim purple and white hue. "My guess would be that whatever caused this did so deliberately, but couldn't control the energies of all 6 elements and destroyed themselves in the process" Silv's hand twitched "Wait, no. 2 people were here, both were trying to manipulate elemental energies. One aggressively and one passively. The passive manipulator was the one that was destroyed, the aggressive one got away. They were testing something, but I'm not sure what" Silv slumped back onto the floor.

"I told you not to overexert yourself Silv. Your ability to manipulate Ice and Lightning elemental energies is incredible but the toll it takes it too much if you don't hold back" Kairos's tone had changed to that of a concerned parent "Besides, your far too important to end up in a charge tank because you've over done it again" Kairos stood and faced Cal "I'll need several samples from this crater Cal. Have some of your men bring them over later today"

"Um ok..." Cal's voice sounded both hesitant and curious. "Any particular reason?"

"This section of concrete has been the site of a convergence of all 6 elements. This doesn't just happen Cal. There hasn't been a convergence of elemental energies in over fifteen hundred years.

No matter how small I need to study the make-up of the stone now. I also need to test a theory linked to *them*” Kairos’s stressing of *them* sent a shiver down both Cal and Silv’s spines.

“Gotcha! I’ll get a team to extract and get this to you at the CCA by the end of the day” Cal spun on her heels and rapidly headed back across the empty warehouse towards the tent.

Silv centred himself and stood up slowly “Doc, elemental convergences don’t happen unless something is wrong. Should we head to separate containment facilities?”

“No Silv, we’re heading back to the lab. I need to talk to all 6 facilities at once, but before that I need to meet with the council.”

Cinematic Sample

Character Brief

Agent Phillips: A brash, older female field agent with an aggressive attitude. Phillips is approximately 37, has been hunting Vapour for 15 years and their capture is seen as Phillips' crowning achievement in her career. Leans towards the cliché "Bad Cop" in interrogation using her larger physique to intimidate prisoners. Is prone to more aggressive outbursts.

Agent Watson: An experienced and kindly older male field agent and Phillips' former mentor and partner. Watson is approximately 45, has always held up the ideals of personal freedoms and protecting these at all costs. Watson is a patient man who has worked with Phillips on hunting Vapour for the past 15 years, however, has never been surprised that they always got away.

Agent Lowe: A technology and data specialist. Despite being in their late-20's, Lowe is an exceptionally insightful agent and has worked with Watson and Phillips for the last 5 years on Vapour Case. Lowe is a quiet and unassuming agent with a strong moral compass and despises corruption present in international politics. Lowe uses their technical knowledge to support Watson and Phillips in the field and has made it their mission to bring Vapour to justice following a series of attacks on civilian populations.

Vapour: An enigmatic mastermind also seen as the worlds most dangerous terrorist. Vapour comes across as a calm and sinister femme fatale who always seem to be several steps ahead of the agencies that hunt her, however she has an aggressive side that comes out when her patience is pushed.

Dialogue delivery should be more naturalistic in nature, with Vapour using a melodramatic tone at times to extend on certain, more gloating, and villainous lines.

Interrogation Observation Room INT

A small, grey stoned room with a large one-way mirror on the north side overlooking the interrogation room. Agents Phillips, Watson, and Lowe are looking through the mirror at Vapour, who is sat facing towards the observation room at a steel table.

Extra Wide Shot: Camera pinned to back of observation room, Vapour is seen in the upper third of the shot with Phillips on the left, Watson in the centre and Lowe on the right. Camera is static throughout the exchange.

PHILLIPS

Fifteen years hunting her, and we finally got the fucker
Watson.

WATSON

Indeed. Although I do wonder why she gave up so easily. She
didn't even put up a fight.

LOWE

It's strange that she would just give up like that, and
weirder still she would hand you two a tablet with the
locations of her future targets.

PHILLIPS

I'm not one for staring a gift horse in the mouth, Lowe.
You're overing thinking it.

WATSON

Hmmm... I do wonder why she would just stand down. She's been
evading us for over a decade, so why now of all times would
she give up and just hand us the information we need?

PHILLIPS

Maybe she got tired of the chase. I sure as hell know I am.

LOWE

I doubt it's something as simple as that. There must be a
reason behind it. [PAUSE] But then again, I've done a full
scan on the tablet and it's clean. No malware or corrupted
data packets. It's just strange and too easy.

PHILLIPS

You're too on edge kid. Sometimes the bad guy has just had enough of the fight and wants to [Cut Off]

VAPOUR

[Over an intercom, distorted. Interrupting Phillips] Are you going to keep me waiting much longer? I'd have thought Phillips' would have barrelled in here calling me a bitch, among other obscenities by now.

WATSON

I do believe our "guest" is right. Lowe, do you have the data to hand?

LOWE

[Pulling out a tablet - camera zooms and focuses on this briefly] Yeah, it's all on here Sir.

PHILLIPS

Alright, let's get this over with.

The three agents move towards a door to the left of the mirror, Watson first, Lowe last. Camera tracks and follows behind Lowe, over the shoulder.

Interrogation Room Int

Lowe and Watson take seats opposite Vapour; Phillips remains standing in a corner to the left of the room near the mirror. Camera tracks to the window, High Angle shot with all characters visible. Vapour centre shot. Phillips lights a cigarette; Watson puts a mug on the table; Lowe places the tablet on the table.

VAPOUR

[To Phillips] Must you really do that in here? It'll kill you, y'know.

PHILLIPS

Fuck off.

WATSON

[Clears throat] Ahem, shall we? [PAUSE] Agent Lowe?

LOWE

Um... Right! [To Vapour] Five days ago three chemical weapon attacks were staged in Paris, Berlin, and Brussels. The

targets, two train stations and an airport, resulted in hundreds of civilian casualties by way of an odourless nerve toxin that has, at this moment, killed approximately fifteen hundred people. Following the incident, you delivered a message across social media and news networks claiming this was only the.. [Cut Off]

VAPOUR

[Interrupting] Is this how you're really going to start this? Regaling me with my own deeds? Come now Agent Lowe, surely you do not think I would forget my own plan? In short, yes that was just a test of this nerve toxin. Yes, there is an awful lot more. And yes, I do plan on carrying out a much more devastating attack.

PHILLIPS

[Moving to the table] Then where these other canisters and what are your target?

VAPOUR

Oh, I'm not going to tell you that easily, Agent Phillips. Where's the fun in that?

PHILLIPS

[Slamming hands on the table] Don't fuck with me Vapour! Tell us where they are!

WATSON

Phillips, cool it! [Phillips backs away from the table] Alright Vapour, what's the plan here? Let us take you in and then what? Goad Phillips into kicking the crap out of you?

VAPOUR

Come now Agent Watson, do you really think so little of me after all these years? I merely want to see how your little team does at getting information out of me. I mean, I would have thought that baby Agent Lowe would have been able to get all the information you needed off the tablet I so graciously handed you.

LOWE

The data on the tablet shows twelve government buildings across NATO member states along with the EU Parliament building in Brussels and the UN Building in New York. What we can't work out is which one of these targets is your next one. There's also plans of two different types of soviet era nuclear subs. What's the plan with those?

VAPOUR

You assume that the two plans are not linked. Or maybe neither plan is what I'm actually going ahead with. Tell me, Agents, do you have any idea what my end game is?

PHILLIPS

You don't have one. Your whole thing for the past 15 years is to cause chaos. Crashing the financial sector, nuking highly populated urban areas, attacking religious gatherings, and blaming local extremists. You're just sick in the head.

VAPOUR

Come now Phillips, you surely don't mean that. We've been playing this little game of cat and mouse for years. And I've always got a reason behind my ideas.

WATSON

We're moving away from the point at hand. Vapour, what's the plan here? You arm some old nukes and then threaten to launch them along with poisoning the worlds leaders if your demands aren't met? That seems a little basic, even by your standards.

VAPOUR

You assume that my plan involves any of the data you found on that tablet? That could just be a red herring to keep you busy.

PHILLIPS

Cut the crap Vapour. [Pulls out a handgun and leans over the table] What the hell are you planning? Legally I can't kill you, but there's nothing that says I can put a hole in your hand or leg!

VAPOUR

Then do it Agent Phillips. [Leans in towards Phillips] Shoot me and see if that gets you anywhere.

WATSON

Enough of this! Phillips, stand down! Vapour, you will tell us what the targets are and where the nerve toxin is.

VAPOUR

Oh, will I? And If I don't, you'll what? Let your attack dog maul me? I thought you were a man of principle Agent Watson. Surely allowing the injury of a prisoner in your care would

weigh too heavily on your conscience with that firm sense of justice you have.

LOWES

[Interjecting] Wait, there's a bunch of hidden data files on the tablet that I didn't see while I was breaking the encryption data.

PHILLIPS

[Turning to face Lowes] There's what?

WATSON

What sort of files, Lowes? Anything useful?

LOWES

I'm not sure. There's some data related to something called Operation Basilisk.

WATSON

[To Lowes] Basilisk? [To Vapour] What is Operation Basilisk?

VAPOUR

Oh that? Why don't you ask Agent Lowes to tell you. I'm sure there's enough information in the files.

PHILLIPS

Lowes, whats it say?

LOWES

It's plans to immobilize a range of international security agencies. There are names of agents from the CIA, FBI, Interpol, KGB, Hamas, Chinese PLA, Japanese DIH, MI5 and MI6, and plans to release a computer virus into each of their computer networks, while releasing the names of undercover operatives across social media and global news networks. There's also plans for a neurotoxin that's more aggressive than the ones used in Europe.

VAPOUR

[Leans back in their chair and smirks at the Agents] Oh you are a clever one, aren't you Agent Lowes. Well done for finding all that data. I suppose you can piece together my little plan now can't you, Agents.

WATSON

So, your aim is to release confidential data across the world, while crippling the ability of international security agencies so that you can deploy this nerve agent to cripple most of the world's governments.

PHILLIPS

You're a real piece of work, you know that. [PAUSE] So what now? There's no way you can achieve this goal with you locked up in here. No virus, no data transmission. We got you, you psycho.

VAPOUR

It would appear you have.

WATSON

There's one thing that still doesn't add up. Why would you come in quietly? Like you said, we've been playing this game for over a decade. So why now?

PHILLIPS

Who cares?! As long as she's in here there's no way she can do what she's planning. There's no access to external or internal networks, and while she's cuffed to that chair there's no way she can activate her virus or upload to any of the servers.

WATSON

Answer me Vapour, why'd you come in quietly?

VAPOUR

Why do you think?

PHILLIPS

You mean to say this was part of your plan? Fat chance. You're grand standing.

VAPOUR

Am I?

[Lowes begins looking through more files on the tablet]

WATSON

Tell me why you wanted to be here. Now. Today?

VAPOUR

To help you open your eyes, Agent Watson. To show you that your old school sense of justice doesn't exist in this world anymore. So I can look you in the eye and tell you and Agent Phillips that you will never win.

LOWES

[Still browsing the tablet, ignored by the others] Hmmm... There are some other files in here that might be worth looking at.

PHILLIPS

Look around Vapour. You lost. You're locked in a cell, 4 storeys below ground. No help, no back-up, no one is getting you out of here. You're finally finished.

VAPOUR

And your ability to underestimate my legions of dedicated followers is why you have lost Agents. You see [Look directly at Lowes]

WATSON

Lowes! What have you found?

LOWES

Exactly what I was looking for. It was hidden surprisingly well. I must admit, I would have thought it would have been easier to find. [To Vapour] You really need to get better at labelling your files. Seriously.

PHILLIPS

The fuck are you talking about Lowes?

LOWES

Oh, the virus Vapour had some techies develop that would cripple the data of security agencies. I found it. I must admit, the upload time on it sucks though. [To Vapour] You should really hire people that are better at packing things for upload. I've had to stall for longer than I thought.

WATSON

Lowes! What are you doing?

LOWES

[Ignoring Watson and Phillips] I really must admit, I would have thought you'd have asked me to develop this for you. I could have created the same thing in half the time with about a third of the data. [PAUSE] I assume you're ready now?

PHILLIPS

[Drawing her gun] The fuck are you talking about! [Aims towards Lowes] Answer me God damn it!

WATSON

[Tries to contact agents outside the room] We have an imminent breach! Repeat we have an imminent breach!

VAPOUR

[To Lowes] My, aren't you ever the humble one. And yes. I am ready. Agents, it's been a pleasure.

LOWES

Executing file.

Lowes taps a file on the tablet. All lights switch off. The unclicking of restraints is heard followed by several flashes of light as multiple gunshots fire. A door is heard opening during the gunfire.

PHILLIPS

What the fuck! The little shit was a double agent!

WATSON

[Contacting support] All agents, Vapour has escaped with Agent Low... Argh! [Pained scream]

PHILLIPS

Watson! [Through her comms unit] Urgent medical assistance in interrogation room 2 now!

As the lighting returns, Vapour and Agent Lowes are gone. Agent Watson is slumped over the table, bleeding from their left side. Agent Phillips is checking their pulse. An alert alarm sounds.

PHILLIPS

[Panicked] Watson! Hold on! Medical is on the way. [Through comms unit] Where the hell are those bastards? [PAUSE] What do you mean they're gone? Get me the director now!

FADE TO BLACK

Gameplay/Mission Sample

Isolated Cave, Congo Basin - INT

A dimly lit and expansive cave system deep. The upper area of the cave is a twisting tunnel system that descends into a large open chamber, with antechambers to the north, east and west. Four sandstone pillars extend from the base to the roof of the central chamber (approx 35 metres tall). The walls house several cartouches with Ancient Egyptian Hieroglyphs. Each of the heavy stone doors to the three antechambers have the Eye of Horus on them in the centre. The southern edge of the cavern, in front of the access ramp, has a shrine with four seven-foot sandstone statues depicting a different Egyptian god. All four have human bodies but different heads: one Falcon, one Baboon, one Human Female, one Jackal. Two foot in front of the statues is a small circular pool filled with water. [Players choose to play as either Luke or Kira]

LUKE

Wow... I never would have thought the Egyptians came this far west of the Nile.

KIRA

I know. This sort of find is a once in a lifetime opportunity. We should have a look around.

The pair split up and search the chamber, interacting with the many cartouches, hieroglyphs, and statues around the chamber. Interacting with the larger statues, the pair need to solve a puzzle. Dialogue plays during investigating the room. (Button Prompts)

KIRA

Wow, you need to see this, Luke!

LUKE

See what?

KIRA

This cartouche. It says holds the Eye of Anubis is here.

LUKE

Hold up, you mean to tell me it's actually real? You were actually right this time?

KIRA

Dude c'mon! I was wrong once.

LUKE

Yeah, and I almost lost a leg because of it!

KIRA

Almost being the important word. Besides, it's not my fault if you steam ahead and don't read ancient warnings.

LUKE

I believe you were the one reading. I was merely following your directions. [PAUSE] Anyway, what's it say about the eye?

KIRA

One second [PAUSE] "Those who seek the sight of Anubis must first show reverence to the gods" or something very close.

LUKE

[Sarcastically] Oh great! A Puzzle! I love puzzles! Think it has something to do with those doors?

KIRA

I think it has more to do with those statues.

LUKE

Right so what's the plan here? Pray to them?

KIRA

Maybe? Let's look around for some clues

The pair interact with each of the statues of the gods. A cartouche can be found on the floor in the middle of the room with the puzzle solution - interacting with them in a certain order: Falcon, Jackal, Baboon, Human. Once the puzzle is solved, the three doors open, and a platform raises from the pool. The platform has a gold and turquoise necklace sat on it with a golden Jackal pendant holding a large ruby in its teeth. [Camera pans to this]

KIRA

Holy hell, it's real! The Eye of Anubis!

Kira goes to grab the eye, Luke stops here.

LUKE

Wait! Booby traps! I'm not risking losing a limb again!

KIRA

Well, we did the ceremony so we should be fine!

LUKE

Alright, time to...

Luke reaches out to grab the necklace when ten armed individuals enter the chamber from above

REBEL LEADER

Not so fast, grave robbers! Mr Silverton has asked us to take this item back to him for his personal collection.

LUKE

This artefact belongs in a national museum!

KIRA

And how are we the graverobbers? You're here for the eye too! Dumbass.

REBEL LEADER

How dare you! Hand over the eye now, and we'll let you pass on to the next life swiftly!

KIRA

Shouldn't that be "or we'll let you pass on to the next life swiftly"? Seriously dude, is this your first negotiation?

Kira grabs the necklace and shoots towards the rebels, Luke pushes down a pressure plate that activates a dart trap on the wall halfway down the ramp. Kira and Luke run towards the northern end of the room towards one of the now open doors. [QTE/button prompt].

REBEL LEADER

Get them!

The group of rebels charge down the slope after Luke and Kira who have run through the northern most door. The sound of assault rifles is heard in the background as they continue running down the sandstone corridor. Kira and Luke encounter four rebels ahead and fight them from cover. The pair are given a choice of which way to go at a fork about 300 metres into the corridor. *(Players choose path - this sample focuses on the left path only; right path has greater emphasis on ancient traps, spike pits, puzzles, and traversal mechanics).*

LUKE

Left or right, K?

KIRA

Um... left, I think?

The sound of the rebels grows louder as they ponder their direction. (Any three barks from cluster one in bark table). The pair run down the left corridor and use a narrow ledge to ease across a chasm over a subterranean river. Kira pulls out a small revolver, Luke pulls out a hunting knife.

KIRA

Ideas?

LUKE

Shoot the ledge, then they won't be able to follow us! Kira shoots out large pieces of the ledge before following Luke further down the corridor.

REBEL LEADER

You lot! Over that chasm! Now!

Two or three barks from cluster two are heard followed by the sound of five distinct voices screaming before splashing sounds.

REBEL LEADER

Idiots! Find a way over this now!

After 200 metres of winding sandstone they find a section of collapsed pillar.

KIRA

Let's hide here and see if we can get the drop on them.

LUKE

Good shout.

The pair hide behind opposite ends of the pillar, Kira primed with her revolver, Luke with his hunting knife. The remaining rebels enter the room. Kira begins shooting at them from cover, while Luke sneaks around to engage the leader. (All cluster three barks will play during). Kira kills three Rebels while taking cover from gunfire. Luke successfully engages the Rebel Leader. Luke and the Rebel Leader struggle with Luke's hunting knife and his machete in a melee combat sequence. Kira rolls out from behind cover and shoots two more rebels that are distracted by the scene of Luke and the leader.

KIRA

Give me a shot!

LUKE

Nah, I got this!

Luke rolls past the leader's heavy overhand attack, slices his thigh and as the leader goes down in pain, Luke stabs the brute in the back of the head. (QTE).

LUKE

See, no problem. Now, let's get out of here

KIRA

There's an exit this way according to the cartouche.

The pair navigate through more corridors and end up back in the central chamber through the west door. There are more rebels here resulting in either a fire fight, or the pair can sneak past the rebels' using props in the area. They go through the east door, through a final corridor with a set of spike traps that can be used to kill another group of rebels. The pair must find some vines to swing over another chasm across the river as a final group of rebels pursues them from behind, shooting at them. Once over the chasm, the pair cut the vines and sprint to the exit, escaping.

END.

Bark Table for Rebels - see script for cues.

Bark Cluster 1 Bark Cluster 2

Bark Cluster 3

They went this way!	I'm not crossing that!	Throwing grenade!
After them!	I can't swim!	Quick! Shoot them!
Get the necklace!	There must be another way around!	Get down!
Kill them!	I hate getting wet!	Kill them for the eye!
Quickly men!	Don't make me cross that!	[Pained screams]
		I'm hit!

N.B. Barks can be in French, Sango or English as all are spoken in Cameroon and Central African countries.