

This journal is an experiment to see if the communication curse put on me spreads to writing. Here will be a record of my memories since I woke up here in the Maw.

I was informed by one of the Mawsworn that mortals like to put dates before their journal entries. However, time isn't a construct of death, so I'll just number them, and give each a title.

Entry 1: Awakening

I remember horrible pain in my neck and right side of my face. They were two different types of pain, though. My face burned, while my neck felt like it was carved into. This is the last memory I have prior to waking up here.

I woke up, and found myself in chains, with no memory of my identity. I looked around, noticing that I could only see out of my left eye. Still, I turned my head as far as I could and as far as the bindings would allow, and took in as much of my surroundings as I could. Around me was a bleak and desolate place, covered in jagged rock formations. I seemed to be high up, as I could see quite far. I looked down and saw that I was on a platform. Spiral stairs led away from it, and then descended out of view.

I struggled against my chains for a while, futile as it was. My knees ached horribly, and my arms were sore from being stuck in the same position. Trying to distract myself from my discomfort, I turned my thoughts inward, trying to remember anything at all. All I remembered was the cutting pain in my neck. It didn't hurt anymore, so I put it out of my mind and focused on the present moment. I tugged on one of the chains binding my arms as hard as I could to see how much strength there was in this body. The chain went taut, but didn't give. Evidently, my physical strength was not enough to tear it.

I then turned inward once again, but this time I willed something, anything, to happen. I twisted my arm, and gripped one of the chains in my hand, and focused my will on that spot. I turned my good eye to look, and saw that my talons were glowing a dark blue, and frost began eating at the chain. I willed it to go as cold as it could, to eat through the metal, and after a while, a section of chain was frozen solid. I tugged with all my strength again, and this time, the frozen links shattered, freeing my arm, and causing me to fall over and skid along the floor.

I laughed, a ghastly, distorted sound that echoed around the empty landscape. I cut it out shortly, afraid someone would come and undo my progress. No one seemed to take notice, though. Was there anyone else at all?

I dealt with the other chains the same way I dealt with the first. I could move again! Standing up took effort. It seemed like my limbs had forgotten how to move. I stretched, and made a few stilted steps along the platform. I was free, or at least, free to explore this place.

I don't know how long I spent wandering, as there was no way to mark the passage of time. All this time I was alone, save for a few tormented shadows that either stared into space or tried to attack me, and small horned creatures scurrying about. From the shades, I learned the name of this place: the Maw. The name fit, I thought. The jagged rock formations could pass for teeth.

My solitude ended when I found another chained prisoner.

It was a man, held on a platform similar to mine, but reinforced by glowing runes that hummed with power. Similar runes were carved violently into his skin all over his arms, back, and chest. Whoever put him here put far more effort into restraining him than they did with me: metal shackles were wrapped around his limbs, belt, and neck, seared right onto the skin. A multitude of chains extended from them, keeping him on his knees.

He snarled at me when I approached, and I saw more runes etched into his face. He seemed vaguely familiar, even though I have no memory of him.

I tried to chew through his chains like I did with mine, but the power coursing through them threw me back. Not knowing what else to do, I sat with him instead. He glared and bared his sharp teeth at me at first, and I hissed at him once. He seemed impressed with my lack of fear, and ceased hostile displays. Eventually, he seemed to warm up to my presence. I told him of what I learned, and he listened. Somehow, he understood the distorted noises that fell out of my mouth.

After another while, he started speaking to me in return. His name was Zovaal. He told me of the Maw, of its purpose as a prison for the supposedly unredeemable souls. He told me his story too, of how he was the one to question, to oppose the very idea of the Maw, only to be thrown in there himself, and given a new title: the Jailer. We agreed that the title was a mockery as he was more of a prisoner. Zovaal asked for my name, but I couldn't give him one.

It became a routine. I would wander the Maw, and then return to Zovaal and tell him what I found, which usually wasn't much. More tormented shades and scurrying beasts. I fought a larger beast once, and won.

The routine lasted until we both sensed the flow of power through Zovaal's prison weakening gradually.

Zovaal urged me to try freezing the chains again, and so I did. Our senses were right, whatever was holding him, weakened enough for me to gnaw through his bindings like I did with mine. Zovaal growled and thrashed in his chains until they snapped, and he was free. Or, well, as free as any of us could be here in the Maw.

He drew to his full height, slightly taller than me. He regarded me for a while, then said I was familiar somehow, but he couldn't remember. I told him that I had the same nagging feeling.

Like we were supposed to know each other, but didn't. Like something was missing. He thanked me, then beckoned me to follow. And so I did. I have been following him since.

Entry 2: the Mortal and the system

My curse doesn't affect writing! I have given the journal to one of the Mawsworn, Sharael, to see if she could read it, and she could! She even complimented my writing. For a Mawsworn, she is quite kind and approachable. The others are mostly grumpy and incorporeal.

In any case, this means I can communicate with others now!

Zovaal has made a new friend too. Her name is Sylvanas, and she is a living mortal. She's tiny compared to Zovaal and me, with big pointed ears and long eyebrows and red eyes. She holds a grudge against the very system of death and is willing to assist Zovaal in dismantling it. She could as well be the key to breaking us all out.

We are still stuck inside the system. At least, that's what Zovaal says. He explained to me how the Shadowlands worked, how the souls are sorted into one of the infinite afterlives, or get thrown into the Maw, to be tormented and broken. Like we were. I don't feel particularly tormented though. Maybe I am vile enough to be put in here. But... I don't know what I did. I don't remember. I feel like I should remember. I should have had a life before I woke up here.

Zovaal wants to break everything down and rebuild it, but I think he's as stuck within the system as everyone on this side of the veil is. His mortal friend, however, isn't. She's not dead. Her soul hasn't passed on to the Shadowlands the way they normally do. She's here with her soul still in her mortal body and she's angry because her soul was destined for the Maw.

Come to think of it, she is right. This system is not fair, and while there are countless afterlives, the souls seem to have no say as to where they go. Was it always like that?

Zovaal said that before he was banished here he would always argue with the others of his kind about the Maw. This place shouldn't exist as there really are no inherently evil souls. That gives me some hope. I have no memory of the time before I woke up in the Maw, but whatever I did, maybe I deserve a chance to fix it. Maybe we all do.

Nothing belongs in the Maw.

Entry 3: Guests of the Maw

We have some more unwilling mortal guests in the Maw now, courtesy of Zovaal's new friend. She tore open the sky, and the winged Mawsworn brought in a bunch of living mortals. They're

all from her world, and all were important somehow. Zovaal is overseeing their treatment personally. I don't know what he does with them, or what he's looking for. One of them has ice magic, like I do!

Sharael said she was from the same world as them, although none of them seem to be the same shape as her. There's a big green one with big teeth, two pale ones with light hair who look a bit like Sylvanas but don't have her pointed ears or eyebrows, and a beastly looking one with horns and brown fur, and one with dark grey skin who also had horns.

I wonder if I can jump through the veil if I climb on top of Torglast. I want to see the living world. I've explored everything in The Maw, and I'm bored out of my mind. How come I never tried climbing the tower?

One of the mortals, the dark grey one, turned into a pointy serpent thing with seven eyes and big arms and many insect legs, and broke out of her cage. Is that a normal thing mortals of that world do? Is that allowed?

At least it's amusing to watch her scurry around the Maw and the Mawsworn's futile attempts at containment. She's bent on causing trouble.

Serpent thing off the chain. What crimes will she commit?

I tried to climb the tower earlier. I actually made it to the top but it still is too far from the veil. What a disappointment. At least the view is good. You can see all of the Maw from up here, and the top of some sort of pointy tower on the other side of the veil. It looks similar to Torglast, but like it was built by someone trying to copy it but not seeing the whole thing. A twisted reflection.

I was on the top of the tower when something changed. White flames started pouring from the rift above. I came down from the tower to investigate, and recognized them as mortals like the ones Zovaal had taken. I think they want their friends back. One even threatened me with their weapon, but I retreated before they could do anything. How are they not squish after falling from such a height?

There are three of note: a tall woman with green hair and huge ears and white clothes, she was the first to arrive, and disappeared shortly. Then there was an orange beast person, similar to Sharael, and another one with big ears and eyebrows, but that one had pink hair and horns. They managed to free some of the others that the Mawsworn brought in earlier. Zovaal recaptured them, but the beast lady and the pink hair fled through the old waystone. Is this also a thing mortals do? That would make sense since living mortals are not even supposed to be here.

How come me and Zovaal haven't tried to use that waystone?

Zovaal had the mortals, including the serpent thing, taken into Torghast, and each was given their own torment, although the serpent one broke out once again. I think she fed on the anguish surrounding her and grew stronger from it. Fascinating.

Now I get to watch her scuttle around Torghast. Fun times.

Zovaal isn't as amused by her constant escape attempts, but he doesn't care what happens to her, as she wasn't the one he was looking for. Zovaal had separated one of the mortals. I haven't gotten his name so for now I'll just call him the golden one because of his hair. Zovaal tasked Sylvanas with convincing him to join us.

I asked him about it. He said the mortal's soul is noble enough to grant him entry to Bastion. There is a key there, one of five that Zovaal needs. To start on his revenge, and on freeing us from the Maw.

Entry 4: reflections

I have asked Zovaal about the waystone. He looked almost sad at the question, like he was remembering something. He said it doesn't respond to him, at least not anymore. It once connected the Maw to the floating city at the center of the Shadowlands. The Maw wasn't always like this, and was a realm like any other. Back then he would use the waystone to go to and from the realm as he pleased. His tone was somber as he said those things. Almost mournful.

Come to think of it, I think I have come across this stone before, or maybe another like it, and poked at it with no result. I guess escaping the Maw wouldn't be so easy after all. I wonder if we could capture one of the mortals and convince them to keep the way open for us. By "convince" I mean threaten them with torment.

Serpent-thing isn't as entertaining anymore. We ran into her in one of Torghast's corridors and she attacked us. She tried to claw at Zovaal's face. She tried to hurt him.

She tried to hurt my Zovaal.

I've never felt anger like this before. I haven't really had any strong emotions since I woke up. I remember feeling confused, and bored, and lonely, and mildly disappointed, but not rage like this. Why do I feel possessive over him like that?

And then a curious thing happened: I unleashed icy chains upon her. I didn't have such an ability before. Chains are Zovaal's thing, not mine.

Maybe his power is rubbing off onto me. I have spent a lot of time with him, and it feels like we understand each other, and have a bond of some kind. I wonder if it goes the other way round.

Or maybe it's just the Maw, twisting me like it did him. This chain magic pervades the whole place, weighing me down. It's kind of oppressive. Me learning to harness that power could be a way I adapted to it. Like Zovaal did. Am I turning into a counterpart for the Jailer?

Serpent was put in a cage once again, but I suspect she won't stay locked for long. We will deal with that when the need arises.

I am very fond of Zovaal, and I want him to succeed in getting us out of here. His presence and voice are comforting. He seems to enjoy my company as well, as much as I can gather. He is not the most expressive person ever, but from the distinct lack of rage and disdain directed my way, I can gather that my company is not entirely undesired.

I'm not sure what this feeling is, but the fact that the serpent thing hurt him made me furious. I don't feel that way about the others, although I don't have much to compare to. The one other person I communicate with a lot is Sharael. I think I would be angry if something hurt her too. Maybe I should ask her about my feelings towards him. She was a mortal once, so maybe she has an answer.

Entry 5: experiments, hunting, mawrats, and love

My whole being hurts. I tried to execute the plan I outlined in the previous entry. It went well until the very end. I captured a mortal and dragged them to the stone, and it responded to them. We both were pulled up, but then I felt like the very fabric of existence rejected me. I fell, and blacked out. I woke up inside Torghast with Zovaal sitting next to me. He looked almost worried when I stirred. I feel a strange giddiness thinking about it now. To know that he was worried enough about me to actually watch over me while I was unconscious.

It took a bit to recover, and I don't seem to have lasting damage from the ordeal, but I know to not attempt that again. It seems that there's a barrier of some kind preventing us from leaving the Maw. Very disappointing indeed.

I tried to hunt a mortal again, just for fun, the orange wolf woman, but she escaped. She can run really fast on all fours even with this bulky armor on. Impressive. I will try again later. She seemed to think I wanted to eat her, but it is not the case. Mortals are fun to chase around. Way more fun than the souls trapped in the Maw. Way more, dare I say, lively?

I think I am developing a bond with the small scurrying critters I see all around the Maw and Torghast. They are cute, in a way, but also make for a nice snack. Is it weird to find a creature cute but also edible? I offered one to Zovaal. He seemed to appreciate the gesture but declined to eat the creature.

I showed Sharael the previous entry and asked her about the feelings. She thought about it for a long while, and then said it could be love. She said it's a powerful thing, a type of attachment

mortals often experience in their lives. It is a very revered thing among the mortals, at least ones from her world. There are many kinds of love too: the love one has for their friends, the love a parent has for their child.

"What are parents?" I wrote on a blank page.

Sharael got stuck here. Asked me where I came from.

"I don't remember." I replied.

I pointed at the words above and shook my head at her. She sighed, and tried her best at explaining where mortals come from.

She went on to connect it to the kind of love that is most exalted among the mortals, sometimes without reason: the romantic kind. She said that it might be the kind of attachment I have towards Zovaal.

This has given me a lot of food for thought.

I don't really remember what happiness is, but I want that for him. For both of us. I have other desires too. I'm not sure how to word those though. A vague longing for closeness and warmth. Something very physical. I want... him? All of him?

~~I want to see him writhe in chains under my touch. I want to claim him.~~

Entry 6: art and attraction

Maybe I should have put more effort into scribbling the part about chains out in the last entry, before giving it to my friend. Still, Sharael's face was a sight. Her eyebrows have risen so high up they may have escaped the Maw for that one moment.

"Sooo you want to jump boss' bones," she said.

I was very confused by the question, and didn't even need to write it down for her. I guess my befuddled expression and head tilt were enough as Sharael covered her face with a palm and said:

"Do I really have to explain what sexual attraction is to a god?"

I kept staring at her, and so she did.

It was probably very odd and awkward to her, but enlightening to me. I guess it could be seen as another component to love, which we had discussed before. According to Sharael, the two

concepts can exist apart from one another, as well as work together. In mortals that sometimes leads to new mortals being born. I'm not sure how it would work for two creatures of the Shadowlands. I don't think there should be a capability in us to create a new life? Unlife? New souls? But then again, new souls have to come from somewhere unless there are more rebirth realms like Ardenweald, or an entity out there creating new souls. Or maybe a soul just pops into existence when a new mortal is made.

I don't think Sharael is judging me for my attraction to Zovaal, which fills me with a bit of relief. I don't think she gets it, but she's not denouncing me for it either. I think for her watching me stumble through this all is a source of amusement, which I can't blame her for.

The Maw has grown boring to me. I have explored every nook and cranny of the few floating islands that compose it, and even the shifting structure of Torglast doesn't offer much of a reprieve. Zovaal said there will soon be more land added to the Maw, but I'm not sure what he meant by that.

So, in the meantime, I decided to try learning to draw. It was, once again, a suggestion from Sharael. She said mortals often use the same tools they use for writing to capture the likeness of things around them, be it the landscape or living things or other people. So drawing would be a logical extension of me already scribbling down symbols in my book. Sharael gave me another empty book to use. She's far too kind to have ended up as a Mawsworn. I wonder what led her here. I should ask next time we meet.

I think I'm a quick learner. I draw things around me: towers, rocks, mawrats, other creatures, mawsworn, and I think they turn out nice. Mawrats are fun to draw, but also a challenge because they never stay still, always running around. Mawsworn can be generally asked to stay still if they're not busy.

Sharael has a sort of a rivalry with the orange wolf woman I've already mentioned before. They are of the same world and type, both being wolf creatures. They share a love of large weapons, and Sharael seems to usually be on the lookout for the orange one, to have yet another duel. And yet, it seems to always end in a draw. I don't think Sharael actually wants to harm the orange worgen. Maybe she just seeks her company, kind of like I seek Zovaal's?

My attempts at drawing things around me eventually ended in many drawings of Zovaal. It was inevitable, really. I think he is beautiful, and so I draw him.

Entry 7: a small disaster.

Oh no.

I have misplaced my sketchbook. I wouldn't be worried about it much, however, since I started drawing, I might have drawn a few... pieces of Zovaal that might have explored my attraction to

him, and some of the thoughts I had about him recently. I'd rather those stayed for my own viewing only as they are very personal. I should have put a lock and chain on it.

I hope no one finds it before I do, as it would be awkward. And if Zovaal found it, I don't know how he'd react. His opinion matters to me, and to receive judgment from him would be devastating. He might see those as an invasion of some kind, and end up hating me for it. It would ruin the relationship we have already built. And I don't want to lose him.

I sought out Sharael, and communicated my predicament to her. She said she will be on the lookout for it and asked me where I remember seeing it last. I wrote that it was in an area of the Maw teeming with twisted spires of ice, near the soul river. I went there to draw the icy spires, as their structure fascinated me.

I also asked her why she joined the Mawsworn, to distract myself from worrying about my sketchbook.

I sat down on the floor, and Sharael perched on some crates. She explained how Bastion, the realm she was sent to, worked. I was aware of Bastion from Zovaal's lesson from before, but not of the inner workings of that realm.

Sharael told me that souls that came to Bastion would undergo a first cleansing, and become aspirants. Some would get new forms, while some would retain traits of their mortal forms, like she did. All aspirants worked tirelessly to ascend and receive wings. There were several types of Ascended that Kyrian could become. The two roles that held the most responsibility were the Bearers, who carried the souls across the veil, and the Watchers, who judged if it was a soul's time to pass. Those two roles required the Kyrian to let go of their mortal memories, including the good ones. However, not everyone wanted to be a Bearer or a Watcher, and some argued that for those who chose to serve Bastion otherwise, it wasn't necessary to lose all the memories of their mortal lives. Sharael was among those people.

I wondered if the Kyrian had something to do with my own memory loss. They seemed to have ways to remove memories. Right?

I asked Sharael about it and she scratched at her shadowy mane, deep in thought.

"All the memories that were stripped from us are stored in a facility in Bastion. But you need all kinds of authorization to view them. It could be that your amnesia is a result of Kyrian intervention, and your memories could be stored in the locus. If we ever get to Bastion, we can go look, but it would be difficult since we don't even have a clue about what we should look for..."

She looked apologetic as she trailed off and returned to her story. Eventually, Sharael said, the dissent grew and the doubtful ones split off from the Kyrian into a group called the Forsworn. Furthermore, Forsworn leaders doubted the Jailer's fate, and sought him out. Some of the Forsworn were sent into the Maw, and made into Mawsworn.

"Lady Helya just had us sit in the soul river until we further changed into what we are now. It was really unpleasant, but so were all the cleansings we had to endure back in Bastion. At least I *chose* to come down here."

She must have been referring to another one of Zovaal's allies. I haven't really interacted with Helya so far, but she seems like she'd been scorned by fate like all of us here.

Entry 8: a confession

Oh no. My worst fears have come true: Zovaal has my sketchbook.

Apparently some mortal found the journal, looked through it, and let out the most unholy screech of anguish the Maw has ever heard. I guess my attraction to Zovaal is too incomprehensible for frail mortal minds. Still, the sound drew Mawsworn attention. By the time the Mawsworn got there the mortal was long gone, but they dropped my journal, and it was brought to Zovaal. The Mawsworn must have thought it to be some horrible and powerful artifact to have caused this much pain and dread to the mortal. If only.

I am currently hiding because I don't know how Zovaal will react. I don't think he'll want to hurt me, but I'm afraid it would destroy the companionship we have. I know he will find me eventually and I'll have to face an extremely odd and awkward conversation.

I was going to bring up my feelings at some point, but not like this.

What have I done?

By some cruel twist of Torghast's anomalous structure, or because Zovaal wanted the tower to bring me to him, I ended up walking in on Zovaal looking through the journal. His expression was unreadable as usual, although his eyebrow ridges seemed to be raised in surprise as he thumbed through the pages. I tried to hide, but he saw me, so I had to come out from behind a pillar, and face it.

I ended up telling him everything. There was no point in lying or hiding things anymore, and I hoped that a truthful answer would at least reduce whatever consequences that were to come. I told him that I liked and wanted him, and apologized if my depictions of him offended him. It probably came out completely garbled even by my curse's standards, but he listened. He didn't seem angry or disgusted. Just surprised.

He said he was surprised someone found him that desirable, and that he's not angry with me. In fact he was flattered by the art I created. Flattered and surprised that someone wanted a twisted broken thing like him.

Words can't describe the relief I felt, mixed with pain at his negative view of himself. We are both twisted and broken. It didn't matter. I like and want him.

Zovaal gave my journal back to me. I took it and risked hugging him. He didn't push me away, and did his best to return the embrace, hesitant and clumsy and too aware of the spiked shackles that would poke me if either of us made a wrong move. Despite that, his arms felt safe. Familiar. I wish I could stay like that.

He leaned in and said quietly that he wouldn't mind recreating some of the drawings with me. I laughed at that, and he joined me. I don't think I've heard him laugh before, aside from him mocking someone. I don't think either of us had many reasons to laugh. I don't have the gift of future vision but I can foresee many fun misuses of chain magic in our collective future.

He said I'm the best thing that happened to him in the Maw.

Entry 9: the prisoner in the tower

This was an earlier event, from shortly after I freed Zovaal from his chains, but I feel like it is relevant now.

Soon after Zovaal was freed, there was a guest in the Maw. A tall skeletal figure clad in dark blue and gold robes, with huge horns and a long white beard. He was moving towards the tower with clear hostile intent. He stopped when he saw Zovaal standing on one of the lower platforms.

I offered my assistance, but Zovaal said it was a personal matter. So I retreated to Torgast and watched from one of its battlements. The stranger used the same chain magic as Zovaal did, but tinged with teal. He clearly intended to put Zovaal back inside the circle of binding. The skeletal stranger seemed more like a Jailer to me than Zovaal did, but I suppose for the poor souls here Zovaal is a more immediate threat. However, the stranger didn't expect the magic to be turned against him. Zovaal overpowered him, and I swear I could sense malicious glee coming off of him in waves as he chained the stranger and dragged him into the tower.

I haven't seen the stranger since, and eventually I forgot all about him. I've noticed that there was more activity in the forges recently, and more and more shades donned spiked armor and had better weapons. Zovaal was preparing for something.

It would be a while before I found the stranger again, chained behind an inconspicuous door in Torgast. He looked completely broken, slumped in chains not unlike the ones both me and Zovaal started in. His robes were in pitiful tatters, and the impressive horns and beard were completely gone, a huge metal skull mask concealing his face.

There was pure fear in his eyes when he looked at me.

"One of his. You are one of his. Have you come to torment me, twisted Fae?"

I paused. Fae? Did he know something about me that I didn't? I didn't know what I was. I've never seen creatures like me among the few members of the covenants that joined Zovaal's cause. Now more than anything I regretted being unable to speak normally. I shook my head at him. Then pointed at the runes etched into my throat. I think he got the message, and I swear there was a tiny glint of recognition in his stare when he looked at the runes.

He asked me if Zovaal took my memories too. I was puzzled at that, and shook my head again, and shrugged, trying to communicate that I didn't know. I don't think my memory loss is Zovaal's doing. I woke up with an empty slate for a mind, and I found Zovaal much later. Unless he could erase my memories while in chains, I don't think it was him.

I later asked Zovaal about the prisoner.

"That broken thing? He has no use for me any longer." was the answer. Voice full of disdain, as if being reminded of the prisoner brought Zovaal a great deal of disgust.

There's history between them beyond that one fight I observed. That, I'm certain of. But it seems Zovaal is unwilling to talk about it right now, so I don't press him.

"Did you take my memories?" I asked. I know that if he did, he probably wouldn't confess, but it was worth asking. Zovaal shook his head slowly at me, his expression changing back to his usual frown.

"I cannot take what isn't there, and not while bound. Before you found me I had no awareness of you. More importantly, why would I?"

I shrugged.

"I don't know. Why did you take his memories?"

"He had the knowledge I required."

"I see. That's the source behind all the fancy armor and weapons the Mawsworn now have?"

Zovaal nodded. I scratched at the mangled branch stumps on the burned side of my face.

"He called me a Fae. Am I a Fae?"

Zovaal gave me a long look, tilting his head slightly this way and that. He then let out a deep hum, and shrugged slightly.

"You do seem to resemble a denizen of Ardenweald. I have never seen a tall Fae like you though. Most of the Night Fae are small."

He paused, and frowned as if something was bothering him. He was right about the Fae, though. Most of the ones I've seen were tiny compared to me.

Next time I visited the prisoner, one of his chains was severed, melted through, allowing him to half lay on the floor. It seems like the mortals found him, and meddled, as mortals do. He didn't speak to me, just glared.

I would visit him once in a while, and I noticed that the Runecarver seemed to be more lucid with every visit. Things were coming back to him. Or were being brought back to him. His glare had more and more anger in it with every visit, but he also seemed to warm up to my presence, much like Zovaal had when I found him.

I should probably tell Zovaal about the severed chain. The Runecarver has a great deal of animosity towards him, and a great deal of power. So him being freed would be bad for Zovaal, and possibly for me.

Zovaal seemed to not regard this as a priority, too busy forging his golden mortal into a weapon. When I sought him out to tell him, I found him in the soulforge, overseeing an armored shade hammering a sword into a more... Maw appropriate shape. There were Domination runes etched into it already, glowing an icy blue. A mourneblade, he called it, for the golden mortal.

"The mortals are restoring memories to the one in the lower levels," I stated.

Zovaal acknowledged it with a nod, and not much more. I approached him and gently put a hand on his scarred shoulder.

"I think we should lock him back up. We won't have a good time if he gets out."

He nodded, again.

"He has played his part. As has Denathrius. As will others."

"He seems to hate you."

"They all do. And if it is not hate it is fear. You, however, seem to be an exception to both."

It was true, I did not fear nor hate him. My love and loyalty were freely given. There was a measured amount of fondness in that last sentence, reserved just for me. He wasn't one to express it openly when others were around, even the Mawsworn who were broken into being completely loyal. I think otherwise he would have embraced me, or touched my face. He liked doing that. Maybe the bark growing on it amused him.

Despite Zovaal seemingly having an attachment to me, I wondered if at one point I will outlive my purpose. Would Zovaal discard me like he did with the Runecarver, or ignore pleas for help like he is doing with Denathrius? Would he chain me up on some forgotten level of Torghast and throw away the key? What was my purpose in his plan anyway?

I sighed, and shoved the thoughts out of the way for now. For now, Zovaal cared for me, and he had never shown any intent to hurt me. If the worst comes to pass, I think I'll be fine. Heartbroken, but fine. I am of the Maw, and I will survive. I got out of one set of chains, I'll get out of more, if need be.

"I don't want him to hurt you," I said quietly.

"I can defend myself. I have defeated him before. And if he is freed, he will fail. Again."

"I know. I still think it's a potential threat that shouldn't be left unchecked."

And unchecked it went. I love Zovaal but sometimes he's just far too single minded for his own good.

Zovaal would later reveal more of his history with the Runecarver. He took me to the place I found him in. The platform with several circles of binding runes that still had an oppressive aura to them.

Apparently the Runecarver, under a different title, was responsible for much of Zovaal's torment here. He designed the rune prison, and together with Zovaal's other former siblings, carved the runes into his skin. The hatred made sense now. My scars were limited to a hole in my chest and a few runes around my throat. I think if I'd have gone through what Zovaal did, I'd hate the one responsible too. Despite my suspicion that the Runecarver had also inflicted the communication curse on me, I can't really hate him, except on Zovaal's behalf.

Entry 10: Restored

I remember things now. Not all of it, but what I have is enough to fill me with rage and mourning.

It started with an unexpected kindness: the orange wolf woman that I chased around earlier, approached me and returned my lost memories. There were five of them. Five little tokens holding memories of key points in my existence. I suspect she and her elf companion have returned similar tokens to the Runecarver. It would explain his increasing lucidity.

I will relay them and my conclusions based on them here.

I was a Night Fae, created by the queen herself to cull dying groves and herds that have grown too big, to free space for new things to grow, to help keep the balance. But I culled too much, or too little. My ideas to improve things always backfired. My blight and frost magic didn't exactly fit

in in Ardenweald. I was a disappointment to the queen, and she looked down upon me. I think she regretted creating me. I felt lonely and rejected.

I was lonely, and at one point, I heard mortals calling out into the realms beyond. I reached out in turn, and started teaching them my icy blight magic, and teaching them about the importance of death and balance it brings. They listened, and learned. It felt so good to be needed and heard. I had people who seemed to revere me as their deity.

Oh how naive I was.

The mortals, called Drust, would return, led by their king. They wanted Ardenweald for their own. They used my own magic, and wore masks in reverence of me. The queen banished them. And then she would banish me.

Most importantly, I remember Zovaal. I knew him before we both were condemned to the Maw. He was kind, and offered company and friendship to me when no one else did. I remember being in love with him, and it felt exactly like it feels now. I think he loved me back. I don't know if he still does, but he seems to care as much as he can. The only good restored memory I have is the memory of our soulbinding ritual. Us being soulbinds explains so much: why he seemed so familiar, why he understands my mangled speech, the fact that we can use each other's magic. The fact that I fell in love with him all over again.

I remember being tried with Zovaal, both of us with bleeding holes in our chests. It hurt so much. He was pleading for mercy but was granted none.

I remember falling and burning.

It took me a while to process my memories before I could relay their contents to him. I think he sensed my distress too, so he didn't press. I told him everything when I was ready, and he listened. I think it is causing him to remember things about me too. Things that were erased from his mind as well as mine. Gaps in our collective memory filled through our soul bond.

He told me I had wings once. He said they were mismatched, both butterfly wings, but one was that of a male butterfly, and the other was that of a female. He thought they were beautiful. I don't remember having wings. I don't remember what happened to them. Probably gone the way my eye went. I turned around and asked him if there was anything left of the wings on my back. He said there were long scars running along my spine, but no trace of wings. I suspect the scars are a result of the wings being torn or cut out.

I told him what I remembered of him in turn. I told him he was kind and gentle to me. He nodded as he listened, and sighed heavily. I think he still mourns the person he once was. Zovaal, the kind and compassionate being who just wanted a chance at redemption for everyone. There's no place for someone like that in the Maw. So he became twisted into the Jailer. The Jailer is cruel and filled with rage, although he had never turned on me. His rage is for the rest of the

other Eternal Ones, not for me. He puts great effort into not turning that anger towards me, and I appreciate that. Zovaal treats me with as much love and kindness as someone as mangled as him can muster.

I wonder if the Maw had twisted me as well. Maybe we're just twisted in ways that match, broken reflections of our past selves. Zovaal and the Fae. The Jailer, the Banished One, and me, one bereft of name, the forgotten.

I wonder if I should reach out to the Drust again. Zovaal already has a plan to acquire the Bastion key, it somehow involves the human mortal he had so much interest in. Maybe by reaching out to my former pupils, I could assist in retrieving the key held in my former realm. And possibly I could get some revenge for being discarded the way I was.

The Eternal Ones betrayed us both.

Entry 11: a curious trade

A most peculiar thing has happened recently!

I was wandering the Maw as I often do when an odd small being approached me. They were the same size as the mortals. However, their body was made of energy, and they were wearing an elaborate artificial suit to interact with the environment. They had no head, only a blue flame behind a flat mask. I later learned that this type of being was called a Broker, a type of beings traveling different realms and trading artifacts and information.

They were interested in information about the Maw and the Jailer. It took a bit to establish communication, but the same approach as the one me and Sharael developed worked here. The stranger spoke, and I wrote my replies.

I was careful in my answers, taking time to weigh whether or not a particular bit of information could hurt my and Zovaal's plans. Most of the questions seemed fairly benign though. They were about the Maw's geography. I told him what Zovaal had told me: the Maw was once a realm like any other, before a calamity passed through it. I omitted the fact that Zovaal was once the ruler of that realm. If they want that information they'll have to dig elsewhere.

They asked me to describe Zovaal, and I did. Apparently, the Jailer is a bit of a mythical being to most denizens of the Shadowlands and beyond. No one knows what he looks like and if he even exists. Those who end up in the Maw rarely escape. If they ever see Zovaal chances are they meet a quick end. So Zovaal's appearance was a point of interest for this Broker.

And then I had the idea to trade one of my drawings in exchange for a favour. I didn't have anything in mind at the moment, but it could come in handy later on. I toyed with the idea of

asking them how they planned to get out of the Maw, but decided against it. Whatever means of escape they had likely wouldn't work for me anyway.

I also wanted to see their reaction to the more racy depictions of the Jailer I had in my sketchbook. Pity that the Broker didn't have a proper face. I would have given a lot to see what kind of expression they had. Their flame shot up a few times while they looked through my sketchbook. I'm not sure what it meant.

The Broker eventually picked one of the tame art pieces, carefully removing the page from the sketchbook and handing it back to me. By that time I had an idea of what favor I wanted in return. I wrote a message on one of the spare pages, twisted it into a scroll, and conjured an icy sigil to hold it closed. The message was meant to go to Thros, my old haunt.

I had old allies to contact.

Entry 12: reunion

My memories were enough to lay my own plans to help Zovaal. I reached out to the Drust with the help of a Broker I met recently. An exchange of favours. A bargain worthy of a Fae. A proof of the Jailer's existence and an image of his likeness in exchange for a message to a realm outside the Maw. My message contained a request for an audience with their king. I hoped I'd recover more of my memories then.

While I waited, I combed the memories that I had for anything about the Drust. One of the memories I have shows a gnarled forest. Once a remote grove, turned blighted by my attempts to refine my abilities. I taught the Drust there. I gave them knowledge of my magic and understanding of death.

I didn't have to wait long. The reply came, and it was urgent. Gorak Tul, my half-remembered ally, granted me an audience. The message contained a spell I could use to reach Thros.

When I stepped through the portal, I found Gorak Tul dying. I recognized him, barely. The mask he started wearing back when he was my student became part of his head, and one of his arms was covered in bark and twisted branches. He sat propped against a rock, covered in wounds. Some of the branches growing out of his head were broken, and he was clutching his side, where dark blood seeped from under his hand. His body was starting to fade at the limbs, becoming translucent.

I knelt by him. Not thinking, I channeled anima into him, and watched the biggest of his wounds close. His form became opaque again. Many smaller wounds still covered his body, and he was weak, but he was stable. My anima pool has limits, and recovery is slow in the Maw. We'd have to find more anima to heal the rest of Gorak Tul's wounds.

"We match now." He reached up and touched the blind side of my face. He was referring to the broken branches on his head and a deep gash that ran across two of the additional eyes on his forehead. "How long has it been?.."

I held his hand, almost instinctively. The touch felt familiar. Just then, I remembered my speech curse, and realized I'd have to find a way to communicate with the Drust. I shrugged, and pointed to my neck.

"Runes...They took your voice?" Tul asked.

I nodded. Well, that was easy. I'd just have to write out what I wanted to say like I do with Sharael.

As he recovered, Gorak Tul told me what happened, filling the gaps in my memories. The Drust had lost their fight, even with the magic I taught them, and the human invaders wiped them out. He told me that in an attempt to save them, we gathered all the Drust souls in my realm. The Drust gave their new home a name: Thros, the Blighted Lands. I became akin to a lesser Eternal One, with a small realm and a semblance of a covenant.

Back then Thros was located right by Ardenweald. However, Gorak Tul and I led our people into Ardenweald, begging for access to the Grove of Awakening so the Drust could return to their world and avenge themselves. It was a peaceful procession, but it didn't end in peace. The Queen refused us. Enraged, the Drust and I tried to take the Grove by force. We were desperate for vengeance. The Drust deserved justice.

Gorak Tul said I fought the Queen herself, and lost. After that I was taken away and the Drust were herded together and banished to Thros. The realm itself was pushed closer to the Maw, becoming a prison for the Drust. I could reach Thros from the Maw, but I doubted I could reach Shadowlands proper from Thros. However, I was surprised to learn that the Drust had a way into Ardenweald. The recent drought has weakened its defences, making it possible for portals to be opened.

As for Gorak Tul's wounds, those were a result of a fight between him and the heir of the kingdom the human invaders established after they'd wiped the Drust out. Gorak Tul tried to return to life, manipulating one of the noble families of the kingdom into building wicker bodies for Drust souls to possess. A twisted attempt at rebirth. Gorak Tul was stopped and defeated. He then tried to pull the heir's soul to Thros, but that was thwarted as well, nearly costing him his very existence, and ending his attempts to resurrect his people. And by a twist of fate, that very same heir was the frost magic wielder imprisoned in Torghast until recently!

So this is the full story. I didn't have a full memory of this, and reconstructed it differently as a result. Turns out I was more complicit in the invasion, and attacked the Queen to protect the Drust whom I viewed as my charges. After thinking about it for a while, I have no regrets. I did

what I thought was right. Those people reached out to me, and I tried my best to protect them. I failed twice, but Gorak Tul and his Drust don't hold it against me. I hope I won't let them down a third time.

The Drust rally behind me. They still revere me as a deity, although after my banishment, my depictions seem to be spliced with those of Zovaal, forming a sort of a two faced god. I should show one of those images to Zovaal to see how he reacts. I quite enjoy the attention Tul lavishes upon me. He seems to have the same sort of feelings for me as I do for Zovaal. I only have a faint memory of Tul, but he is understanding. Wherever this relationship may go this time, it promises to be a good one.

I had to explain my memory loss to Gorak Tul as well. He understands that too, and our rage is shared. Thros would make a perfect staging point for our vengeance. I would get the sigil for Zovaal, and anima to heal Gorak Tul. And if I see that mortal who wounded him, maybe I'll get her head.

Entry 13: vengeance

As a symbol of my return, and of my rekindled alliance with the Drust, Gorak Tul presented me with a scythe, as tall as me and decorated with skulls, bones, and feathers. I had an idea then. What if I turned it into a mourneblade? It would be a symbol of the alliance between Thros and the Maw. After all, I will need a mourneblade to retrieve the sigil from the Heart of the Forest. I know that we have Anduin, the little golden mortal who has such a blade, but I want to be the one who cuts the sigil out of the Heart. Not him.

Zovaal threw a few odd glares at Gorak Tul as I brought the Drust King with me, but agreed to my proposition. He kept side eyeing Tul while we all were overseeing the blade being altered. I think he's... jealous? Well, if he is he will have to learn to exist with it. I'm not property to be owned after all, even by a god of death. And he has more significant things to worry about than who I give my attention to.

With my new Mourneblade scythe and the Drust by my side, I joined Sylvanas and the Mawsworn in the assault on Ardenweald. To them it would appear as if the Drust simply saw an opportunity and took it, as they've done before. And it is an opportunity, one that the Drust didn't have since their last failed attempt! Maybe we'll even get access to the Grove of Awakening again, and they'll be able to return home.

It was...odd to step foot into my former home. I have forgotten, not without the Queen's help, how beautiful it was. The tall trees with stars glittering among their foliage, and the sky covered in whimsical constellations far above. This beauty was not for me. Not anymore. I have become a creature of the Maw, and I bring with me ruin and domination.

Sylvanas attacked the main covenant forces with her Mawsworn, while I and the Drust waited. I slowly made my way towards the Heart of the Forest. The rest of the Drust split off towards the Grove of Awakening. It would be foolish to attack the Heart right away. Too many people were defending it, including the Queen herself. Sylvanas seems to have a plan to lure her away, though. For now, I climbed a tall tree and observed the battle from afar.

The mortals fought tooth and nail to repel the Mawsworn forces, but Sylvanas slashed and shot through them, her own strength augmented by Zovaal's power. She could summon chains like he does. Hers are much weaker, but they were enough to hinder the average Shadowlands denizens and the mortal helpers. Her arrows and daggers pulsed with dark power too, inevitably finding their mark.

I wonder what the relationship is between Zovaal and Sylvanas. I never really thought to ask, and Zovaal didn't talk. So far my understanding has been that both are scorned by the concept of fate but there's likely more going on under the surface. She doesn't seem very happy to work with him lately, though. I will keep an eye out for her.

Despite all the efforts of the mortals, Sylvanas was able to open a gateway to the Maw and draw out a charred behemoth, one of the huge horned beasts that inhabit the Maw. But before it could do anything, it collapsed, a crescent glaive stuck in its neck. It appears Sylvanas met her match in the vengeful black-eyed woman. The fight between them was so swift I could barely keep track of the two. They darted across the forest in a clash of weapons and energy. At one point, Sylvanas took to the sky, but the moon warrior caught up with her in a flash of silver, both of them falling from view.

There was a commotion below, and I saw a large group of Mawsworn swarm one of the gardens located at the foot of the huge Heart tree. They started draining the anima from the wildseeds there. I watched intently, waiting. So this was Sylvanas's plan: take the wildseeds hostage to lure out the Queen.

I suddenly remember how the Queen drained me of anima after I had accidentally blighted one of the wildseeds. I lost the ability to summon my wings back then, at least for a while. I remember being so terrified she'd kill me. But also that was when I met Zovaal. I literally ran into him while fleeing.

The Queen appeared in the garden, blasting the Mawsworn with bolts of starry blue energy. The Mawsworn were no match for the Queen, but they didn't need to be. All they needed to be was a distraction, and they did their job: the Queen's back was turned to the Heart of the Forest. This was my cue to strike.

I jumped down from the branch I perched on, down to another tree, and then landed by the roots of the heart tree. I ran to one of several entrances to the Heart. A few unlucky guards met a quick end from my claws and scythe. And here it was: the Heart of the Forest. It was smaller

than I remembered it, withered by the drought. Zovaal had explained that it was responsible for keeping the Maw inescapable, and for keeping him chained.

The runes on the blade glowed, sensing the sigil's presence. I walked up to the heart and raised the scythe to it, draining what anima I could. Then I pulled the blade back and the sigil came floating after it. I held out a hand, and the round symbol floated there. I got what I came for, and a nice bonus in the form of the anima stored in the Heart.

Suddenly, someone shouted, and I saw two mortals appear at one of the entrances. One I recognized as one of Zovaal's former prisoners, the ice mage named Jaina. She was also the one responsible for Gorak Tul's wounds, but that was a grudge I would have to settle later. The other mortal was odd. His skin looked like the cooling lava around the volcanoes in the Maw: coal black with glowing orange cracks. It was the only remarkable thing about him. Otherwise he looked like a poor imitation of my Zovaal.

The weird fire man shouted again, and Jaina readied an ice spell, and I ran then, as fast as I could from the chamber. Their short mortal legs were no match for mine. I climbed up a tree. From there, I jumped to a ledge and ran back to one of the dead groves. A rift was hidden there, and I jumped into it. It led back to Thros. From there, it's a short journey to Torghast. The anima I took from the Heart was enough to heal the rest of Tul's wounds, and to open a stable gateway between Thros and the Maw.

Zovaal was happy to receive the sigil. It was enough to extinguish the odd jealousy he seemed to harbor for Gorak Tul. Either way, I got to spend some time with Zovaal. That was enough of a reward for me, for now. I was promised more once we are freed.

I later learned that an entire group of Drust was able to escape Shadowlands through the Grove of Awakening. I don't quite understand its workings, but they were now on their way to rebirth. I wondered if that meant they'd have to start over as children or have the same forms they had in Thros. I will find out eventually.

Only two keys remained: the elusive sigil of Maldraxxus, and the final key held by the Arbiter.

Entry 14: The Giants

This entry concerns past events. This happened shortly after I freed Zovaal, but before he imprisoned the Runecarver.

A group of four giant beings arrived in the Maw. They towered even over me and Zovaal. Zovaal forged an alliance with them. The giants became his head tormentors, and were granted enchanted armor.

I would later meet the archivist. A sad, humbled soul that wrote down the story of the four damned tyrants on Zovaal's order. From him, I learned their names and stories. They were rulers of a distant world, cruel and warlike. They trusted no one except each other. Their doom came when an outside force came to burn their world, and their armies were too weakened by infighting to resist.

The head of the four, and the oldest, was named Bahmethra. A cruel queen who took to the Maw as well as I did. She became Zovaal's head tormentor, working tirelessly within Torghast to twist and break souls until they become shadows who serve the Jailer willingly. She was granted silver armor decorated with skulls, like everything in the Maw is.

However, another was the main force behind the alliance. Hrestimorak, the older of the two brothers, was the one to do the talking. He poured words into Zovaal's ear, trying to talk his way out of the Maw, but Zovaal was wary of him, and for a good reason. I was wary too. He, along with his kin, became one of the first tormentors, clad in icy armor.

(Description of other 2 tormentors)

However, they started scheming behind our backs. They built armies of their own, and concocted plans to overthrow the Jailer. A foolish move, because Zovaal has this eye thing that he uses to see everything happening in the Maw. Including the giants' schemes. He pretended he didn't know, and planned his own attack.

Bahmethra led an army of treacherous Mawsworn to the foot of Torghast. Zovaal and I ventured forth from the tower, our own Mawsworn following us. But when we approached, Zovaal ordered them to stop, and I was the only one accompanying him to the final confrontation. The giant attacked us right away. She slammed one of her hands into the ground, sending out shockwaves. Zovaal jumped out of the way, and fired chains at the great being, launching himself onto the giant's back. I used my own magic to freeze her limbs. More chains wrapped around the former queen, wicked spiked ones that bled anima from her until she collapsed.

At the same time, the ground itself opened under the opposing army, swallowing many of the shades while others scrambled to escape. They failed, as chains shot out from the ground, trapping them. Zovaal glared at all of them from the top of their leader's body.

He then raised an arm, and dragged the traitors and Bahmethra into Torghast. A litany of roars, screams, and wails echoed in the halls for an eternity afterwards. Whatever Zovaal did, there was nothing left of the giant. You'd think it served as an example to the others, but no.

(Confrontation with the other 3 giants)

Entry 15: thoughts of true death

I found Zovaal on top of the tower earlier. He was standing far too close to the edge, and I ran to him. I felt worried, and I felt how hollow and numb he was. I wrapped my arms around him, hugging him from behind. At least if he wanted to hurt himself, he'd have to free himself from me first. I buried my face in his scarred back. We stood there in silence for a while, until he spoke.

"Sometimes I wonder what would happen if I jumped into the void beyond the Maw. Occasionally mortals choose to enter the Shadowlands that way. But I am a god of Death. Can I die? Would it stop the pain? Would I just wake up back here? Would I fall for the rest of eternity?"

I didn't reply. I didn't know what to say. A painful memory stirred in my mind. I remembered running through a blue forest, and a feeling of pure fear and despair. I remember wanting to jump off the edge of Ardenweald and be consumed by the in-between.

"I don't know. I know deep down that I can die, or at least cease to exist. I wanted to jump too, once. I saw no other way out. But then I ran into you."

More of the memory returned. I remembered Zovaal holding me. I felt safe for the first time in a long, long while, possibly my entire life. In the present moment, Zovaal stepped away from the edge, almost dragging me with him. I nuzzled into the dip between his back muscles. He no longer radiated kindness like he did when I first met him, the Maw stripped that from him, but he was still kind to me, and being with him still felt safe.

"I remember being so scared that true death seemed a good option. I don't think I feel that fear anymore."

Zovaal hummed in agreement. Maybe this was what the Maw took from me. The fear I had of my creator. Or maybe, it simply took away the ability to give a shit. To give one in general, and to give a shit about what she thinks. In that way, the Maw had done me a favour.

Zovaal carefully untangled himself from my arms, if only to turn around to face me. He pulled me close to his chest, or as close as his shackles allowed.

"Thank you." He muttered. "I needed this."

Entry 16: secrets

I am really bloody angry. Furious, even. Tul kept secrets from me, knowing full well I don't know the whole picture because of my memory loss.

I found him wounded and dying in Thros, and he told me that it was from a confrontation with mortals. Imagine my surprise when I received a message from a Drust who claims he was among those I taught long ago. The message was short, but it contained an account of Gorak Tul's cruelty as king, both before and after the Drust settled in Thros.

So, I confronted him, waving the message in his face and demanding an explanation. In my anger, I had forgotten about the speech curse and that to Tul, my speech must have been a terrifying cacophony of clashing sounds. Still, he seems to have caught the meaning.

He bowed his head, and confessed. What the letter said had been true. Tul was a ruthless king to the Drust.

"I saw no other way. Many were running off to mingle with these invaders, these humans. I suspect the one who wrote to you was one of them." Tul looked absolutely disgusted at that. "I thought that if I scare them enough, they wouldn't run off."

"That's kind of stupid. Things tend to run away when scared, or lash out, if they have nowhere to go." I wrote.

Tul considered my words, and nodded in agreement.

"I was drunk on power that I learned from you." He said. There was no accusation in his tone.

Somehow I doubted I taught him to use my magic for intimidation of his own people. I wasn't that kind of person back then, at least from the few memories I had of the time. But also maybe I should have emphasized it more. But back then I was just happy to feel needed and wanted.

"What about your wounds? Were you truly hurt by mortals?" I asked.

"That is... part of the truth. I reached out to mortals from Thros. A woman who wanted to save her ill husband. I promised her that they'd be together for eternity. And in a way, it was true. In exchange, they opened a way for me and my allies to come back to the world of living."

How ironic. He simply continued the cycle I started. Although, in my case, the Drust reached out first, and I simply answered their prayers. I also did not have an ulterior motive. Not back then. If I were as I am now, I would have absolutely asked for something in return. Also, something told me that the reward the woman and her husband got wasn't what it seemed. Such is the nature of asking for things from otherworldly entities.

"I was thwarted." Tul continued, sneering. "By the same mortals that now run amok in your master's domain."

"He is not my master, he is my soulbind and lover, but he is the master of this realm." I wrote, and stared down at him pointedly. He seemed jealous of Zovaal.

"Specifics." Tul grumbled dismissively. "Point is, I was thrown back into Thros. And then they came for me in a place where the border of Thros and mortal realm was thin. I was already wounded, and was left even more so. And that was the moment the Drust chose to rebel against me."

"So you're no longer the Drust King."

"Not for all of them. There are Drust who are loyal to me."

"They're no longer in the Shadowlands." I reminded him.

He sighed. I was right. Most of his allies escaped through the grove of rebirth during the recent attack on Ardenweald. Tul stayed behind for whatever reason.

"Why did you stay?"

Tul shrugged, and handed me the parchments back.

"I am weary and wounded. Maybe it is for the best if they go on ahead without me."

I paused, thinking about his reply. Something's bothered me, but I couldn't put a finger on it. If all his allies moved on, then how did he plan to follow? He couldn't go through Thros and to Ardenweald alone. If the state I found him in was any indication, the rebelling Drust would tear him apart. And I didn't want to fight the people I tried to help once.

"Tul. You can't go back. Both Thros and Ardenweald are closed to us. Even I wouldn't be able to go against both of those realms."

I handed the reply to him to read. He sighed heavily as he did.

"I know." He said. "And I won't ask you to. I am quite content staying here, by your side. The Drust are better off without me."

He grumbled something under his breath, still clearly angered by the betrayal. But, he seemed to have come to terms with it. I felt my own anger with him dissipate. He was just a mortal who was in over his head to begin with. On top of that, he got involved with me. A broken thing who didn't fit in in their realm, and just wanted to be needed and liked.

I was partly to blame for how Thros ended up. After I was banished, the island was pushed away from Ardenweald, and towards the Maw. The Maw's energies mixed with the blight I left on the island. The Drust were constantly at war with the energies seeking to twist them into unthinking shades and beastly monsters. Many fell, as I've seen during my brief visit there.

"It is partly my fault." I wrote. "We condemned the Drust to that fate."

I just wanted to help. I just wanted to make someone happy.

"I would like to contact the new Drust King. See if there is anything that can be done for them." I wrote.

I'd have to find another way. And even then, it's not like I could pull Thros away from the Maw. Maybe Zovaal's plan of remaking reality had space for the Drust. I'd have to hope it does, or ask him to make that space. The Drust deserved as much.

"I would still like to learn their side of the story as you have shown to not be the most reliable narrator."

Tul withered a little under my stare. I leaned in and kissed his forehead. There used to be an eye there, but now a deep scar ran through an empty void, down to the side.

"You're not as cross with me anymore it seems." He remarked.

I shook my head. Tul was kind of a bastard, but so was everyone in the Maw. I was no longer the gentle lonely soul I was before the Maw, and I was in no position to judge. He is a bastard but he is mine.

Entry 17: victory

I do not know the location in which I'm writing this. But, both me and Zovaal have successfully escaped the Maw. I believe we are in the realm of the First Ones. It's beautiful here, and I'm going to explore this place as much as I can and write about it in future entries.

The anima Zovaal had received from Sire Denathrius was more than enough for Zovaal's purposes. He forced the Maw to surge up. I could no longer see the breach to the mortal realm as the Maw's churning black clouds consumed it.

I could, however, see a floating structure up above. Zovaal's goal. Our goal. The resting place of the last sigil. His sigil.

Zovaal joined me on a platform high up along the tower. He raised his arms, power radiating from him in waves. I didn't stay with him for power, but I had to admit: it made him all the more beautiful to me. I watched as huge infinitely long chains formed out of thin air. They shot up towards the floating structure. Armies of flying Mawsworn surged upwards to follow.

At the same time, mortals have breached the lower levels of Torghast. Zovaal didn't seem to care. Just as a group of mortals came rushing on to the platform we were in, he opened a portal and walked in. I hesitated, looking over the group. I recognised some of them: the wolf woman and her very fuchsia demon friend. The fiery one Zovaal tried to subdue, and another woman with white hair with a gold streak in it.

What a coincidence. All three mortals who hurt my Tul, gathered together. And what an irony, as two of them were the ones who returned my memories to me. They clearly were regretting that choice. I sighed, and stepped into the portal. I would still have time to battle the white haired one. The other two? Have earned some degree of mercy.

Through a series of portals, Zovaal reached the top of Oribos and I joined him there. He pointed at the slumped figure floating opposite us. The new Arbiter. I suddenly remembered watching as one of the other Eternal Ones was placing an orb into the construct's chest. It still had fresh blood on it. I looked at Zovaal, and for a moment, an image of him with blood pouring out of the chest hole was superimposed over him. I understood. The Arbiter had his sigil. I threw a blight bolt at the construct. It bounced off an invisible shield. It wouldn't hold forever.

The mortals finally caught up with us, harried on every turn by Sylvanas. I joined her and the little formerly golden mortal in the fray, finally going against Jaina, the white haired frost mage who nearly killed Gorak Tul. The descendant of the invaders. I wish she could understand my taunts.

The mortals fought valiantly, but between me, Sylvanas, and Anduin, they were too slow to stop Zovaal. And even if they got through all three of us, what could they do against the Jailer and his domination magic? The fighting stopped as one last bolt of domination magic broke down the Arbiter's defenses. Everyone stared.

Zovaal reached out, and the dark orb floated from the Arbiter's chest. The construct dissipated into nothing when the orb left her. Zovaal opened his arms, and the sigil entered the empty void in his chest. There was a bright flash of light.

When it faded, an armored figure stood before me. Gone were the chains and shackles, replaced by a wicked set of plate armor. A full helmet with tall curving blade-like horns hid his features, a metal skull with big gnarled fangs taking their place. The chestpiece still had a hole in it though, filled with blue light. I don't remember Zovaal ever wearing this. But there are many things I still don't remember. Maybe some scars ran so deep that they reflected even on magic armor.

Despite the gravity of the moment, some part of me groaned at the prospect of having to remove all that plate if I wanted to... celebrate. I'll deal with that when and if it comes to that, I guess.

Zovaal clenched his fist, and a huge portal of shimmering golden shapes opened behind him. They were mesmerising to look at. He beckoned me to him, and I hopped onto the platform to stand by him. His voice had dropped even deeper than it already was. It sent a shiver down my entire body.

Zovaal chained the mortals up and gloated over them for a few moments. I chased away the thoughts of those same chains used in a very different context. Instead, I moved closer to him, wrapping my arm around his waist. He returned the gesture, pulling me close to his side. I swear I could feel his voice vibrate deep in his chest.

Sylvanas fired an arrow at him. A futile display of defiance. Zovaal wasn't even angry. I suppose he expected it, or maybe he no longer cared. He caught the arrow midair, and crushed it to nothing in his hand. Instead of destroying Sylvanas where she stood, he reached into a small portal, and pulled out a glowing shard. Same kind as the one in Anduin's mourneblade and my scythe. He crushed the shard, and something darted towards the elf and hit her.

He then turned to me.

"Join me." He said softly. "Be among the first to witness reality's end."

Fear shot through me. Reality's end? Would that mean I would be erased? Or the Drust? Would Zovaal go as far as leave me behind? Would the new reality have a place for me and the Drust? I'd have to find out. So I followed him. I followed him through the portal, much like I did after I freed him from his chains in the very beginning of this chain of events, pun somewhat intended. It would only be logical and reasonable to see it through to the very end, wherever it may lead.

Entry 18: Zereth Mortis

We stepped out of the portal, and I shielded my eyes against the bright light. I glanced at Zovaal. He didn't seem to react to the brightness, or didn't show it. I looked down, letting my eyes rest. We were standing on water, the surface miraculously holding our weight. Geometric patterns glimmered on its surface.

My reflection was a murky shadow. I stared at it, and for a moment I thought I saw it change. For a moment, my broken antlers were whole and my mane neat and braided. I blinked and took a step back, sending ripples across the surface. I shook my head and looked at my reflection again, but it was back to showing an indistinct view of my present self: a tall shape wrapped in a cloak of feathers with big hair and a single intact branch antler sticking out.

"Did you see that?" I asked Zovaal.

"Hm?"

"I thought I saw my reflection change."

Zovaal looked at the water below him for a few moments. After a while of regarding his armored self, he shrugged.

"I do not see anything."

My sight got used to the light soon, more or less, and I took in the environment. I'm not sure what I expected. It was very green and lush. Huge spheres made of metal floated in the air, some overgrown with vegetation. They were carved with wavy lines.

A huge sphere floated above a hexagonal pool of water in what seemed to be the center of the area. Similar to the smaller ones, it was carved. Several bands surrounded it. Light streamed from an opening on its side. Zovaal stepped forward, his gaze fixed on it.

His goal. Our goal. The fabled engine of the First Ones, supposedly able to rewrite reality itself. Or at least rewrite the Shadowlands. To be fair, I don't really get it. Trying to understand creation is a bit beyond me.

I moved to stand by Zovaal's side, and slipped an arm around his waist. He didn't pull away, but his attention was still focused on pondering the giant orb in the sky.

"So, since we're pretty far ahead, maybe we could take a break and celebrate?"

Zovaal didn't reply for a while.

"The sooner we get to the Sepulcher, the better. Then, we can celebrate."

I sighed.

"Let's go then. That armor better be removable."

Zovaal started walking forward. I weaved around him, exploring the surroundings as much as I could. It has been so long since I saw plants and animals, odd as the latter were in this realm. Behind us, Mawsworn started pouring out of portals and setting up camps. I hoped they wouldn't interfere with the environment too much. It would be horribly boring if this place turned into a copy of the Maw. I'd have to explore this land more.

The Mawsworn are a necessary evil, though. The mortals would probably try to follow us soon, I can feel it. The Mawsworn would see to it that Zovaal's plan isn't disrupted at the last minute. I wonder if Sharael is here. I wonder if Tul would come through one of the portals. I didn't really have time to talk to him before I left with Zovaal.

Speaking of Tul...

"Will your new reality have a place for the Drust?" I asked, climbing down from the top of a large metal orb that had water pouring out of it.

"They can have Ardenweald. Or we can build them a land of their own." Zovaal said. I caught a tiny hint of dismissiveness in his voice. Still the answer was enough, for now.

I wondered if the new reality would still have the Maw. The Maw was once Zovaal's realm, and its destruction was what started his downfall. He wanted to rebuild it, but was denied the ability to do so. I wonder if he still wants to restore his realm. Or if he now wants the Maw to consume everything so everyone could suffer like he did. I don't mind the Maw, but I'd rather existence had other places besides it.

It seems that the mechanical creatures of this realm understand my speech. I do not know why. Maybe I will find answers here. For now, I follow Zovaal as he prepares to open the way to the Sepulcher.

I've explored the land a bit. There's a large swath of desert to the north, and the rest is covered with soft, bright green grass. I saw a few islands off the coast of the main landmass but they seem rocky and empty.

The trees are odd. They loop in on themselves, and float in the air, unsupported. Some weave geometric patterns with their trunks. There are metallic orbs scattered all over the place, some small enough for me to hold in one hand, and some taller than me or Zovaal. However, even the smallest ones have proven immovable, despite some floating in the air untethered.

The animals do not mind my presence, and the caretakers are wary, but so far, peaceful. They call themselves Automa, and they seem to have not connected my presence to that of Zovaal. Otherwise their friendliness would have dropped long ago, I'm sure. There are several Broker settlements here, but these Brokers are far different from the ones I've seen before. Their bodies look worn and their clothes are tattered, and they shot golden energy at me when I approached.

Entry 19: prototypes

It turned out that the giant sphere was not, in fact, the Sepulcher. It was, however, the Forge of Afterlives. Or at least Zovaal said it was. I wonder if we can build a new afterlife for the Drust with it. Or rebuild Zovaal's home. I wonder what we're going to do after he rewrites reality. Can we just rest? Do I get to explore other lands? Do I get to be an Eternal One? I don't think I'm fit to rule, but I guess I could be the Eternal One for the Drust.

The Forge also serves as an access point to the Sepulcher. We just need to convince this one automa to open the way. The oracle, as she's called, reminds me of the Winter Queen a bit too much.

It seems that the mortals have figured out how to follow us, and made friends with the hostile brokers. Can't even explore a new environment in peace without some tiny nuisances lobbing spells at me. I hope they get erased in the new reality. Sadly, I am quite tall, and I don't know how to shapeshift my size like some can do, so I stick out. Still, they can't get me on top of the giant orb, so I have some peace. I can lie there and stare at the shapes in the sky.

Sharael is here too, but she's quite busy leading the Mawsworn. They're setting up in the desert area.

Zovaal called me. He had a task for me and the little mortal he insisted on bringing along. We were to subdue the oracle that guarded the entrance to the Sepulcher. When we approached, she immediately attacked me, and ignored the mortal. She summoned an energy spear, and I blocked her strikes with my scythe while Anduin slashed at her limbs. She threw me back with a blast of energy, and I lashed out with chains of ice and thorns that tripped her up and bound her. The chains ate at the metal and stone she was made of. Anduin walked up to her, and raised his mourneblade, channeling Domination magic into the construct until she first went limp, and then sprung back up. Dark metal adorned her now. A Domination rune was inscribed into her blank head.

I heard heavy footsteps behind me, and turned around. Zovaal was here, and so was a small group of mortals. They watched from a platform in the distance, powerless to do anything. Zovaal stepped up to the fallen construct, and commanded her to open the way. There was light, and a feeling of being pulled. I held onto Zovaal for dear existence.

And then, we stood inside the Sepulcher. I don't really know what I expected. It looked similar to the structures outside, the same blue stone and shiny metal.

Zovaal's shoulders relaxed a little, now that he was so close to the goal and so far ahead of the covenants and their forces. I didn't let go of him, and he held me close. I will keep what came next off of these pages, but suffice to say, the armor finally came off, and we celebrated. And possibly defiled this place of creation.

And then Zovaal went deeper into the Sepulcher, and I was left to explore. I followed him at first, and assisted in convincing the automa to step down, or simply dominating them.

There were many rooms in the facility. Of the most interest was a chamber with four large containers among the walls. They housed automa constructs of some kind, with a golden lattice slowly growing on them. I stepped closer to one, and flinched. The face of the Winter Queen stared at me, but it was blank and angular and made of stone. I checked the other containers,

and recognised the likenesses of the other three Eternal Ones. I wondered if there was a Zovaal prototype. I wondered if I could have two of him. That would be fun.

Suddenly, there was a noise behind me, a hurried clicking of metal steps. Those didn't belong to Zovaal, but rather to something that moved on pointed limbs. Probably one of the automa, and a large one judging by the sound. I looked around frantically, and saw a passage I didn't notice before. I ducked into it and into a dark room and watched. A large fancy looking automa ran into the room and started singing to a console. Emergency commands, activate the creation forges. I saw the four containers start to glow. I did not have the strength to go against the eternal ones, even if those were merely copies. Despite this, the thought of driving my scythe into the Winter Queen's gut was a tempting one. Still, I decided to lay low until either the automa and the copies left, Zovaal came to free me, or I found another way out.

Speaking of, I decided to look around the room. It was dimly lit and fairly large. I saw rows of inactive constructs sitting and standing by the walls, in all shapes and sizes. I walked by them to the other side of the room. There was another passage, and I snuck in. This new room looked abandoned, and the constructs here were piled by the walls haphazardly. Broken and damaged parts littered the floor. I picked up a discarded construct hand and was startled to see how similar it was in shape to mine. It even had a bit of a wooden texture carved into it. Curiosity eating at me, I stalked over to one of the constructs slumped by the wall and bent down to look at it. And then I promptly sat on my butt in surprise.

The construct had my body: same long thin legs that ended in the same paws, a tail, and taloned hands. All were carved out of blue stone and finished with a bark texture. Branching antlers grew out of the top of the head, and sprawled to the sides, undamaged and whole. The eyes were huge and empty. I reached up to touch my own face and antlers. Half of them were partly missing, as was my eye. The remaining half was identical to that of the construct, at least to the touch.

While the construct's face was whole, its body was another story. Cracks radiated from its shoulder where it leaned against the wall. I could imagine it being thrown against the wall in anger for whatever reason. A memory popped up: Winter Queen throwing me at a wall in anger. I wondered if this poor construct suffered the same fate.

I let the flashback pass over me, reminding myself that she wasn't here. She couldn't hurt me. And even if she tried, I wasn't the meek, scared Fae I once was. I would fight back. Probably.

More importantly: what did it all mean?!

I looked around, and my eyes were met with more constructs that looked like me, all in different states of unfinished or broken. Some had limbs broken off. Some had differently shaped antlers. One looked more like one of the Sylvar, with hooves and smaller tail. Another had graceful,

curling antlers and smaller eyes, an unsettling middle ground between myself and the Winter Queen. I saw other constructs too: a small shape with butterfly wings, another with the lower body with four hooves and an upper body with arms. And then shapes that probably belonged to other covenants.

Was I made here? I always thought that I was made in Ardenweald, along with Moonberry and Herne. And yet here were constructs made in their shapes, the prototypes of the main Ardenweald denizens. Their prototypes were undamaged, and were sat neatly along a wall. Mine were broken and strewn all over the room for some reason. I looked around again, and saw some more constructs in a corner. I walked over. These ones were in a similar state to mine. Different shapes, but all very tall. The designs went from a curvy shape to a very broad shouldered one that struck me as familiar. The construct was otherwise very bland, and had a sorrowful face. Was this the Zovaal prototype?

I sat down next to it and took one of its hands in mine. Its fingers were blunt, instead of the familiar sharp claws, but the hand was the same size as his. All of this was too much, and I curled up next to the construct and closed my eyes. I don't remember much else afterwards. I must have lost consciousness, or even fallen asleep like the mortals do. Can I even sleep? I never really tried.

When Zovaal found me, he didn't say anything. He picked me up and let me cling to him while he carried me to the central room. And so I did. I clung to the only stable and true thing in my existence: Zovaal. He is my everything.