

I witnessed the Great Game today, to be referred to as Aerune, and was given a grand privilege. The one who took my piece shortly after birth with a wise bet gave me the chance to decide a bet in Aerune. He said to me, in words decipherable by practice alone, to look upon the board. He told me to look upon the board, the Aere (pronounced as 'air'), and see one event. The event I looked upon belonged to that of two mothers whose fates were so opposed few would see their threads entangled.

He said to me, in his ever twisting form of word: "These events and fates take place at two different times and two different places, however the result of these events decide a major choice in two well woven souls." And it was so. The two mothers were preparing a meal for each of their families, those of names I now know to be reputable.

The first mother, one of wealth and fine education, prepared a meal so balanced and elegantly presented that it made my mouth water. I never knew an assortment of leaves, fish, rice, and sweet sauces could be prepared in such a way. She was precise and calculating as though a cook for those of royal pedigree. Never had I seen such skill in the kitchen for such a mundane task as supper.

The second was far worse off and, while intelligent, had a far inferior education. The meal she prepared was simple and was done with the grace of repetition, as though she had done this every day of her life and was bored of it. It was indeed a sad sight to watch her carelessly batter slices of chicken and simply drop them into a pot of boiling oils and salts. To accompany the meal she cooked corn, cream, and sugars together haphazardly.

Their positions were quite clear and had a good sense of how these women held themselves, however what my piece holder told me then puzzled me. "Look upon them, through the Aere." He said with the rare smirk on his face. "In this event, the wager is made on which of these two prepare the better meal. I wish for you to make the choice on this wager."

Of course I was frightened, I was to directly confront a true player of Aerune. Mahna, a 'soul' ranking player was to be my rival on this turn. I took the wager from my piece holder's hand, a minor pittance of studied knowledge from a piece under his control, and placed it in the Aere surrounding the event. Mahna matched me with an 'inspiration for victory' from a piece of his own. As my piece holder had the initiative in this section of the Aere I was able to speak first. "The woman of wealth." I stated, knowing that the wealthy are treated to the 'best' in life. I knew that a meal so expertly crafted was superior to that prepared so mundanely.

Mahna smiled. "The experienced and well lived." He stated pointing to the poor woman. From there the game was on, as we watched the events unfold. The meals were prepared and served, much to the delight of the respective families. To my own dismay, the meals concluded with results I had not expected. The only family who truly enjoyed their meal was that of the poor woman. I was perplexed, were the people in the wealthy woman's home not

appreciative? Had their taste buds fallen from their tongues? How could such a wonderful meal have fallen so short on their pallet?

With all these questions in my head, I barely noticed Mahna claiming the wager from the Aere. Once it was his, my questions were as well. I understood fully what had transpired. The poor woman's family was not just appreciative of every scrap of food they could muster, but ENJOYED it because they had so little. The family of privilege simply had 'yet another meal'. I suddenly felt sorry for anyone who had such an abundance and knew that the wealthy were always treated to delusion in their everyday life. They could never truly excel if left in their stagnant lifestyle.

Of all the things I could have done, I feared having lost. My piece holder was notorious among those who played Aerune as someone who couldn't lose. He was a mind who could not be cracked and I made him lose for the first time. To imagine my fear at the time was to understand the emotions of an immortal preparing it's own grave.

To my great surprise, I turned back to my piece holder and saw a smile drawn upon his face. "Oh don't worry my disciple." He said, comforting me in his own particular way. He produced a 'piece of fate' and showed it to me before continuing. "Your single loss produced three kinds of victories. I gained a piece of fate betting on your decision, you lost your false knowledge of the privileged wealthy and gained insight, and you have poisoned one of Mahna's pieces with your false knowledge."

The learned knowledge I had wagered was my own and thus causing my placement of the wager to be my very own turn during Aerune. I had been fooled into becoming a player in this strange game, if only for a single turn. My piece holder retained his status, never losing, and gifted me with a second chance to learn a fraction of the nature of the world. I admire him, he is the best player who ever existed.

~The 9th