

Idrelle Games Patreon by Thomas Bell

(27/January/2021 - 02/January/2023)

[Throwing Out Ideas & Seeing What Sticks](#)

[Jan 27, 2021](#)

Long-time followers of my development blog will probably remember that Wayfarer began as a Dragon Age fan game. In fall 2019 I began transitioning the story and world into an original setting. During that process, I was taking an online narrative design course at a university in my area.

The course was mediocre at best, but my assignments did help kickstart some early conceptualization. Our final assignment was to create a game bible that included a one-page pitch, an overview of the characters, notes for the design team and other aspects. (I actually almost failed this assignment because I went one page over the max limit by adding a table of contents, which I think is *hilarious*).

Things have changed radically since then, but here's a few things of note:

- The main city was called Stonehaven (which was also the name of the game)
- The plot is ridiculous
- I made my first world map. Pretty much the only thing that has stayed consistent is the main city occupying a peninsula, the shape of the Gairloch mountain range, Rona being in the outskirts and at the head of a swampy tributary, and a large lake
- Our favourite human mage, elven assassin and dwarven mercenary are here
- The role Zenaida fills used to be played by a character called Vulpa. They are not alike.
- There are a few face-claims/references that are intact (see Noval Markal's--that's pretty much how I still see her and her twin sister Malsara)
- The dialogue snippets are really old and probably won't transfer, but they're still fun banter

You can take a look at the game bible through the attachment below.

[stonehaven game bible.pdf](#)

[Wayfarer \(Alpha Build\) by Idrelle Games](#)
[A browser game made in HTML5](#)

<https://idrellegames.itch.io/wayfarer-alpha-build>

[Alpha Build v 1.0.2.](#)

[Jan 27, 2021](#)

Hello friends,

Above is the link to the Alpha Build. Currently, the public and alpha builds are the same (this is due to timing not working out quite as intended - I wanted to get a new update out publicly, but I also didn't want to delay launching the Patreon). However, when I have new content written and coded for the alpha build, you will be the first to see it. Fingers crossed for getting some content completed and updated by the end of February!

Please note that the link is password protected. The current password is **cneCG5CV75**.

Please do not share the link or password.

If you want to report any bugs or typos, [please use the form here](#).

[Progress Report 2021-02-01](#)

[Feb 1, 2021](#)

Hello friends and welcome to Wayfarer's first Weekly Update+!

Because this week has been so busy with the release of the new Chapter 1 content, there isn't much to report. But I did want to give Patrons a brief run-down of my goals for February and some of the content you can expect in the coming month.

Since I am discussing the game's development, there are SPOILERS for all released content and a discussion about future content.

Public Release on Itch & Other Platforms

The goal I've been working towards since releasing the original demo of the game last November has been to complete Chapter 1 in its entirety before taking it out of restricted access on itch.io.

Itch is a really good platform for indie developers and it emphasizes fairness across the board to all developers, regardless of status. When you make a game public for the first time, your game is listed on the front page for a week—and then it can never be on the front page again. You have one shot to make an impression.

Considering that, I didn't want to release Wayfarer publicly on Itch until the Prologue and Chapter 1 were complete in full, since I feel that content combined will make the biggest impact with the scope of the chapter and the amount of playable content. But at the same time, I did want people to play the game and experience the content since feedback about player experience is really valuable (and also it's lonely creating +200k words in total silence?). So that's why there's this kind of "public but not really public" thing going on with the current public build. To keep the game from displaying on the itch front page until it's ready, the public build is technically in restricted access and only available through the password-embedded link on my tumblr.

Once Chapter 1 is complete, I can take the public build out of restricted access and officially launch it on itch and announce it on other social platforms outside of tumblr.

The Alpha Build

Currently, the Public Build is up-to-date with the Alpha Build. There will be a few growing pains in this regard going forwards. My goal is to keep the Alpha Build one chapter ahead of the Public Build, but since we're at the beginning of the game and content is taking a while to create and code, things haven't quite lined up the way I'd like them to. I will be working on Chapter 1's Route B this month but I haven't quite decided yet when I'm going to start coding the content (with the Chapter 1 Route A, I waited until all of the story content was written before coding because it's far easier to edit a word document than it is to edit passages in Twine if I need to change something). Ideally, I will have an update to the Alpha Build by the end of the month.

Chapter 1 B Route

The B Route covers what happens if the MC doesn't go to the Docks and doesn't accept Zenaida's contract right away. There are four locations the MC can choose to investigate, depending on their available action points, and a final location that needs to be unlocked in order to discover the artefact. If you got injured by Kane or if you visited Zenaida, you'll have limited places to investigate and you'll need to think about what looks promising to you. Not every player will be able to successfully uncover the mystery and find the Count's missing artefact before you run out of time.

There is some cross-over with the A Route here, so I do have a head start on that content. The Cove and Edgewater will remain mostly the same, but I'll be editing the content to change some conversations/situations (for example, on the B Route, your apartment in Edgewater will not have been raided). The Cove will work differently depending on whether you have money or not—if you have 0 crowns because Luthais robbed you, you won't be able to buy anything, if you have 5 crowns you may be able to haggle a bit. If you accessed the B Route by failing to convince Aeran to take Zenaida's contract or declining the contract yourself, you will have the same options in the Cove as you do on the

A Route. The main difference is the interaction with Larks Drakehand in Runes & Relics as he may or may not be able to give you some of the clues you need to find the Count's artefact.

The visit to the Viridian Lady's villa is completely new content. You'll be able to approach it two ways—either through stealth (which requires good agility) or going in the front door and talking your way through the situation that arises (good persuasion). I'm excited to write this sequence because I enjoyed her introduction in the A Route and I'd like to spend more time with her character.

If you left the Kane fight by escaping over the rooftops, you'll have the option to report the magical fire to the local Guild chapter. You'll get docked a few approval points from Aeran (he doesn't like mages and he is going to be grumpy about it); you also have to pick a specific choice in order to unlock the area (selecting "You don't care, you need to move on with your mission" will lock you out of the Guild, "You don't care about Kane, but you are concerned for the townspeople nearby" will unlock the option). The Guild will give you an extra clue, so you may have an easier time passing the check to the final area.

I'm not entirely sure how I'm going to execute this yet, but I want the check to the final area to be determined by how well the player paid attention to the text and not just "you could only visit 2 areas so you get locked out automatically because you don't have all the clues". It's a bit of a mystery and you are going to have to put the clues together yourself. If you have more clues, the easier it will be, but you could still guess correctly with fewer clues.

Zenaida has three introduction points in the chapter. You can either meet her early (by going to the Docks), meet her at the mid-point (if you fought Kane, Malsara will approach you after you visit your first exploration location—you can either go with her or decline her; if you go with her, you'll have the same encounter with Zenaida as you do in the A Route and choosing to accept or decline her contract will determine whether you continue with the A Route or jump back to B), or meet her after the final Boss Fight. How early she is introduced will affect the approval of the Order of Lethalis. On the A Route, the approvals starts at 50 and there are opportunities to raise or lower it (it depends on how to behave when Zenaida confronts the Viridian Lady). The approval starts at 35 if you encounter her on the B Route and if you refused her offer and then encounter her at the very end, it will start at 20.

Ideally, there should be pros and cons to each action. One path through the chapter is not necessarily better than the other and each comes with its own rewards and drawbacks.

Obviously, there's a lot of content in the B Route and I doubt that I can finish the writing portion within a month. I suspect that working on the B Route will take all of February and March to complete.

Coding Upgrade

While I'm working on the story content for the B Route, I need to practice with Grunt. Grunt is a Javascript Task Runner (which I have never used, which I'm sure is the source of my anxiety about using it). Twine's creator made a Grunt plugin that allows you to combine Twine story files into one HTML5 document, alongside any extra CSS stylesheets and Javascript you may want to add. The Twine editor UI has a design flaw where the more passages there are, the laggier it gets. The lag in Wayfarer's story file right now is pretty bad (there's over 700 passages). If I'm editing a passage I either

have to be very patient and wait for the program to respond to what I want to do, or re-code a passage in Notepad++ and copy/paste the entire thing over. It's slow, and while it's workable, it's very annoying to work through.

Having separate story files for each chapter is going to be a huge help because that removes the threat of lag. I need to practice a bit and get used to the task runner. I've been through the walkthrough a few times, but whenever I see this:

```
grunt.initConfig().
```

```
grunt.initConfig({
  entwine: {
    options: {
      // Task-specific options go here.
    },
    your_target: {
      files: {
        // Files to assemble.
      },
      options: {
        // Target-specific options.
      }
    },
  },
});
```

The `files` property should look like this:

```
files: {
  'generated.html': [
    'path/to/a/Twine story.html',
    'path/to/a/Twee file.tw',
    'path/to/a/JavaScript file.js',
    'path/to/a/CSS file.css'
  ]
}
```

I go *ahhhhh it's unfamiliar help*. I just need to do it and it will be fine.

(I had exactly the same problem when uploading assets to itch for the first time, I thought I would never understand what it meant by making an index and using relative paths in the Twine story file for embedded images, but it's... very straightforward and I made a big deal out of nothing ahaha).

Bonus Content

I'm working on a few pieces of bonus content for this month. My goal is to share 2-3 pieces of bonus content and/or writing tutorials a month (I thought about doing it weekly but I need to figure out my workload first, so this will be an ongoing process of finding the right balance). If you're in the Follower or Recruit tiers, feel free to let me know what you'd like to see for bonus content/writing tutorials so I can figure out which piece should be accessible to all patrons.

For everyone else, there is a poll I posted in January you can answer to let me know what kind of content interests you the most!

Love you all,

Anna

[The Genesis of a World Map](#)

[Feb 4, 2021](#)

I LOVE MAPS.

I'm going to blame this one on *The Hobbit* and *Narnia* (my parents read me both when I was pretty little), but I have always loved maps. There's something really fascinating about maps. I like to know where things are and I also like to imagine what the surrounding environment looks like. It's all nice and good to know that Mirkwood is a giant forest that Bilbo and the dwarves must travel through, but did you realize how BIG that forest actually is? You need a map for that.

Maps aren't just for fun. Having an idea of the characters' environment and where one place is in relation to another is really important—this goes for many genres, but is especially true for fantasy. If you're creating a fantasy world, you need to know what that world looks like. The fantasy map is a trope, but I personally get a little peeved when I read a fantasy book that doesn't contain a map. This is a whole new world, I want to know where things are in relation to each other, I want to know what the geography looks like—a visual indicator can go so much farther in that regard than any descriptive passage.

Characters, like people, inhabit space and that space shapes them in a multitude of small ways. Local geography impacts everything from city layout to local cuisine to culture and that, in turn, is going to shape the people who live there. A character from a small desert village will likely have a radically different upbringing from a character who was raised in an urban port city.

If you're incorporating any kind of journey into your writing, a map can ground that sense of space and distance. This can backfire, of course, especially if the scale and breadth of the world is emphasized again and again and then that emphasis is suddenly taken away. One of the many complaints about Game of Thrones seasons 7 and 8 is that the sense of distance and the size of the world is lost—the characters seemingly teleport from destination to destination, going wherever the plot needs to them go, with no acknowledgement of mundane things such as travel time (thinking of the season 7 finale when an emergency message is sent to Daenerys and somehow, within the time it takes for the runner to run to the location where he can send the message, the raven to fly to deliver the message, and Daenerys to fly 4000 miles north on dragonback, the characters in the emergency situation are still fighting and somehow managed not to die).

Creating fantasy maps, like other aspects of fantasy worldbuilding, is difficult. Most writers probably aren't geographers and don't have the scientific background to draft a fully realistic world. But I also think that creating a realistic fantasy world that plays by Earth's rules is maybe defeating the purpose of having a fantasy world in the first place. Sure it might ruin a reader's suspension of disbelief to put a jungle directly next to a snowy tundra, but I also don't think you have to get into the nitty-gritty details of how different regions work. You're creating a *new world*. Let it play by its own rules.

(And maybe if there's a jungle next to a tundra, there's some strange magic at play, who knows?)

When I start building maps, I think first in shapes. Maps are visual and I think they should be pleasing to the eye. This is a personal pet peeve, but I am not a fan of the Map Blob: one coastline goes straight down or across the map, and then a blob for mountains, a blob for forests, a blob for deserts, etc.

I am not throwing shade, I'm just using these as examples:

The map in [Christopher Paolini's Inheritance Cycle](#) is like this, as well as the map in [Brandon Sanderson's Elantris](#) (though the geography in that book is tied to the magic system and there are important lore reasons for the world looking the way it does, so it's a justified map blob). I like the [Dragon Age](#) and [Middle-earth](#) maps because they're not reduced to a single coastline, there are clear regions and separate seas that flow out to the ocean.

On the opposite end of the spectrum is the Blob Collection, usually seen in world maps that have multiple continents: random blobs of land across the map, with no rhyme or reason as to how they fit together. The [world map of RWBY](#) is like this, but maybe I should give it a pass because Monty Oum made the map out of ketchup smears on an IHOP napkin, which, I mean... valid.

Back on topic. Map shapes.

When I'm starting out, I'll often look at maps of real-world places that have interesting geography for inspiration, especially for coastlines (I personally think the Norwegian coast is really neat). Once I have all my basic shapes drafted, I'll figure out mountains, usually by referencing real-world mountain ranges. I'll look at their proximity to coastlines, deserts, and plains, and then figure out a shape that I think is visually pleasing.

Since most rivers begin in the mountains and then roll down to the ocean, I do rivers next, and then forests. On smaller maps I try not to get too mountain or forest happy. I think it can be very tempting to fill in empty space on your map with mountains and forests, but the map does need room to breathe. I also usually assume that on large world maps, smaller woods and forests don't need to be placed. If you look at a map of Middle-earth, you assume there are forested areas between the Shire and Rivendell that aren't on the map, but Mirkwood and Fangorn Forest are marked very prominently as forests.

I'll often do lakes around the same time as forests. I like incorporating large lakes into my fantasy maps. I grew up in the Great Lakes region of Canada and Lake Huron had such a strong presence in my childhood. The Great Lakes are huge—large enough that you can surf on them on a windy day, large enough that there are hundreds of shipwrecks sitting the bottom because you do not mess with the lakes. Large lakes are really interesting geographical features and I think they're fun to incorporate.

Once I have all of that figured out, only then will I start thinking about city placement. Cities need access to fresh water, so I'll look at the rivers and lakes and use their placement to inform where I'm putting major settlements. Most of my capitals go somewhere that would be easily accessible for trade—usually on the coast or on a river that has other settlements on it.

All that being said, here's the drafting process of Wayfarer's world map:

The First Draft



I made this in Inkarnate. Already I had a few ideas that have remained the same across iterations:

- The main setting would be a metropolis on a very large peninsula near a mountain range
- Rona is across the sea at the head of a river delta (it wasn't a rainforest/wetland yet)
- Two island nations
- A collection of countries/city-states that used to be independent, but then joined the Empire

The Arathian Empire as name goes back to this draft. I was playing Fire Emblem: Three Houses at the time (when am I not playing FE3H, to be honest) and I think I had Adrestian Empire stuck in my head. I wanted something that had a similar sound. One of the countries in my favourite childhood game, Heroes of Might and Magic III, is called Erathia. I think I merged Adrestian and Erathia and got Arathian—and now the name is stuck and I'm not changing it.

Adrasus Citadel was also developed during this draft, as well as many of the city-state names. They were only ever intended to be placeholders (I was drawing from Byzantine city names, as well as ancient Greek, Roman and Macedonian place names—for example, Edessa is an ancient Greek name and was a city in the Seleucid Empire around 305 BC). I frequently use placeholders so I can move onto the next thing and don't get stuck for days trying to find the perfect name for something—but the trouble with placeholders is that if you use them enough, they eventually just become the name you use.

In this draft, the city-states were countries and I had to name both the country and the capital. Lake Parthia first appeared in this draft (though I would move and rename it later). The country Rona borders was called Melcina, though I hadn't figure out what kind of geography it has so it was just kind of... chilling there. And, finally, the main setting of the game was called Antheid. Antheid is a placeholder name I pulled from a fantasy novel I wrote in highschool (I never finished it); I knew that name wasn't going to stick and that I would change it and use it for something else.

The Second Draft



Still working in Inkarnate, except I had a better understanding of the tools so now there's colour to indicate environment!

I still have country/region names, but I dropped naming the individual capitals/major cities except for Stonehaven as the capital of Reynes and Erenvor as the capital of the Empire. I think Antheid (see how that name moved) became a special city where mages are trained (the concept of the Guild of Mages didn't exist yet). I also destroyed Melcina and put Rona in Imperial territory, rather than having it on the outskirts/on another continent. I also renamed Farandor as Faro? Why? I don't know.

The Gairloch Mountains were named in this draft. I don't remember how I got that name, I think I smushed voice and consonant combinations together until I got something I liked (it's "gare" (rhymes with stare) "lock" (with the emphasis on lock).

City name change! Antheid is now Stonehaven, which was the working name for when used Wayfarer's material for a video game writing class. I think this draft was very Dragon Age-inspired. The land shapes, the coastline were all inspired by the Waking Sea. The name Stonehaven was an attempt to find something that had a similar sound and feel to Kirkwall. I renamed Lake Parthia to Lake Ameiran (Ameiran being another name I plucked from my teenaged fantasy novel, though I think I swap back and forth between Ameiran and Ameidan).

The Third Draft



The free-version of Inkarnate, as a web browser-based tool, was getting frustrating to work in so I switched to Wonderdraft, which I still use (it's a good program!).

This was my first time using Wonderdraft, so I was still unfamiliar with most of its tools. I essentially tried to re-create my earlier Inkarnate drafts, mixing elements from each. You can see me playing around with names (the lake is called Lake Parthia again) and the emphasis on Adrasus Citadel. I also created Mathara in this draft, though it hadn't become an elven pirate capital yet.

I think this is when I decided Rona was in a wetland and that it was a remnant of Imperial colonialism. Rather than it being on the outskirts of the Empire, it's a piece that is gone and doing its own thing (like what happened to cities in Roman Britain after the Romans left).

The Fourth Draft



There are a lot of things going on here in this draft. I wanted to have a larger view of the world, to see the layout of some of the places named in the story. So, the continents got named, I started working with most of the placeholders that would become the names of the countries in the current version of Wayfarer. I remember I uploaded the Draft 1 map to Wonderdraft as an overlay and then traced over it to replicate the coastline, and then I edited it back. Wonderdraft has a delightful tool where you can adjust the “roughness” of your land tool—it’s how you can shave off or add onto a coastline and make it look jagged and ragged.

Rhesaina is now the name of the main continent, rather than a region in the Empire. Farandor is Farandor again. I was still sticking with Melcina (the Straits of Melcine is a derivative of that) for the country Rona borders.

The main city is now called Lothryn. I didn’t like Stonehaven, it was always intended to be a placeholder. I got attached to the name Lothryn from my partner, but it had one significant problem:

Lothryn is the name of his D&D bard. Lothryn Blushrose: poet, troubadour, actor, seducer of dragons, and also very likely to get stuck to the sails of a windmill and almost die on his very first session out.

While I did like this draft, I felt it was a little blobby. I liked some of the shapes, but in my attempt to do a full world map, I ended up with something a little “meh”. The central sea straddled between three continents is a little strange. I also had a distance problem: the main setting is supposed to be in the southern hemisphere, but Farandor is a cold country with lots of snow in the winter months. Even if I did put down an equator line, the distance between locations just didn’t make sense for the climate I imagined for each country.

The Fifth Draft

The distance problem and the hemisphere problem needed to be fixed. I essentially needed to flip the map so that the entire thing could be in the southern hemisphere, but I wanted to keep certain shapes intact (particularly Farandor, I like the shapes there). I ended up cutting and uploading different drafts as overlays and tracing coastlines over and over until I was able to find a layout that worked. During this process, I found some new shapes and I also started playing with the idea of the main city being located on a sea that flows into an ocean.





Eventually, I landed on what is the current world map:



Velantis is now Velantis (after a very brief period of being called "Velanis"). Lothryn remains as a reference via the Lotharic Sea. The names of countries/regions in previous maps are now city-states that are part of the Arathian Empire. I named more mountain ranges. I added more citadels to the map, as well as clear indications of Aeda and Melusine settlements. Melcina was dropped as a name as it was too close to Melusine and replaced with Calantha (which I had been using elsewhere). The continents aren't named on this map because it got too crowded.

Tol Navarre was renamed Tol Covere to avoid confusion with Felix Navorre's last name (I changed his last name from Navarre to Navorre as well). I dropped Kalranthar as a place and stole/moved Sathir (same thing with Osian—it's a desert now, instead of the name of a city). Rona's location got moved from the south-east corner of the map to the north-west corner, just as Farandor got moved from north-east to south-west; in many ways, a lot of the geography got reversed. I also added a few new features (namely fleshly out Artanis and the location of the Spire).

I also made a coloured version, but I don't like it as much (and didn't update this version when I last updated the main one, there's a small edit to the tree line in Calantha):



I would like to make a full global map at some point, but I find those are really hard to make. But I always want to know what's beyond the borders of a map, so who knows? I may take another stab at it.

[Feb 8, 2021](#)

Hi friends,

This past week has been both busy and not busy. I took a little bit of a break to unwind from releasing the Chapter 1 update but still got caught up with working on bits and pieces of things every day. While I did plan on starting the Route B content this past week, I ended up poking at coding stuff instead. I updated the game files with a small but major update—you can now name your saves.

I have also been working on a short story that will be released for all patrons later this month.

Story Content

I did some outlining work on Route B – I'm fairly certain I'm going to start with the MC and Aeran visiting the Viridian Lady's villa, which is a sequence I've been excited to write for a while. There are two ways the MC can gain entry to the villa:

- By Stealth (these will be primarily agility checks; if you have the grappling hook you can by-pass the agility checks, but you can only get the grappling hook if you go to the Docks, take Zenaida's money, don't return to the tavern and then go on a shopping spree in the Cove)
- By Persuasion (walking in the front door and convincing everyone you're supposed to be there)

This sequence is a little more complicated than the other places the MC can visit, so I need to work out how failure works in this scene and also clamp down on variations since I don't want to end up with too much content to create for this scene.

Command Line Adventures & Contingency Plans

As mentioned last week, I'm working on a solution to the Twine editor's UI lag. What I am looking for is a way to compile separate Twine story files and their associated CSS and Javascript so I can minimize lag by writing each Wayfarer chapter as a separate file.

After a lot of experimenting and testing my first solution has become a dead end. The entwine task for the Grunt plugin hasn't been updated in 5-6 years and all the repositories it references have been updated around 30 times since then. I don't have experience with command line interfaces, so I am very out of depth here and couldn't understand why what I was doing was resulting in an error. My partner took over for me and he was the one who eventually found the root of the problem: it's old and it doesn't work.

Since he has a computer science degree and experience with command line interfaces, I am leaving this part of the game's development to him. TweepGo is the command line compiler larger Twine games

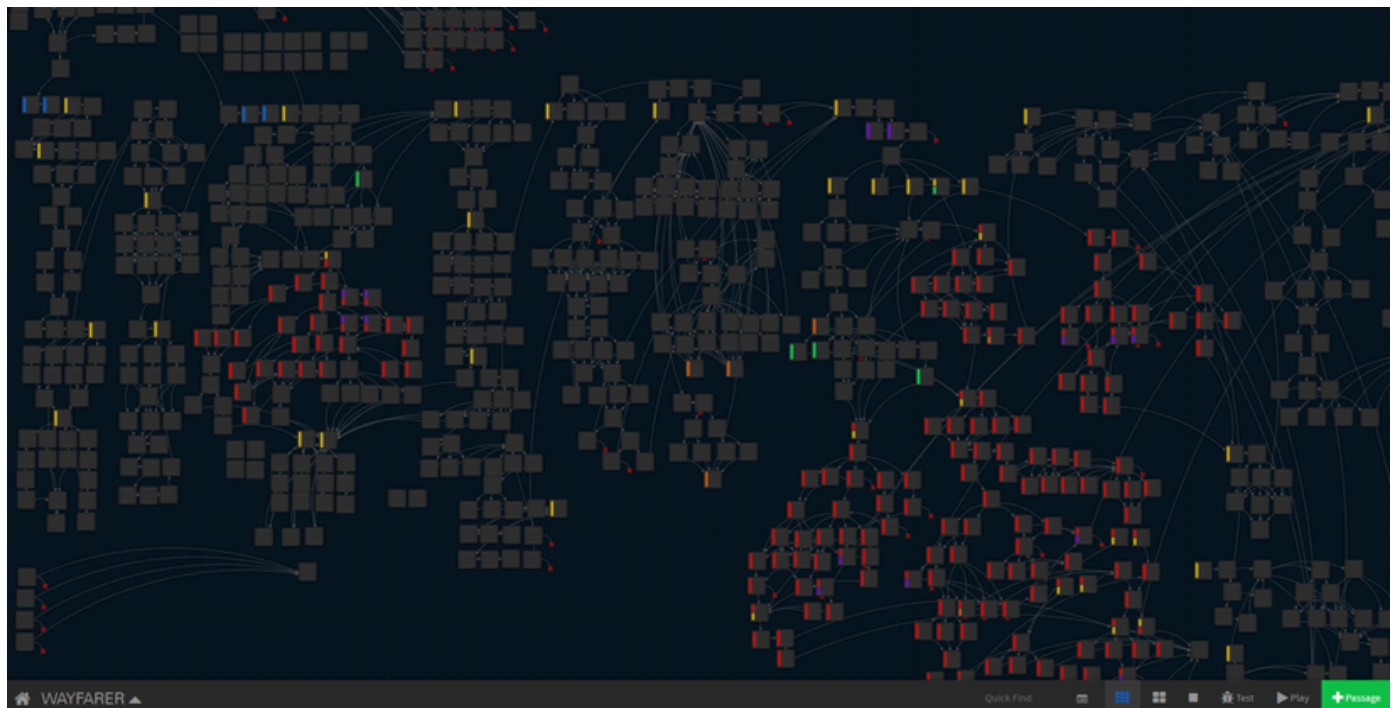
use—it's kept up-to-date and one of the major Twine/SugarCube contributors has written walkthroughs and guides for using it, so it's a good sign.

I was hesitant to research TweeGo because it's marketed as a tool to primarily write your Twine game in a plain text editor and I don't want to write my game in a plain text editor (that sounds like a nightmare; one of the reasons I like working in Twine is because of the visual map the editor generates so you can see a flowchart of all your passages). But my partner went through its documentation and it sounds like my assumption was wrong: while you can use it to avoid the Twine editor entirely and still make a Twine game, its main function is to compile project files into an .html file.

Sounds like it does exactly what I thought grunt-entwine would do.

I have a few contingency plans if we can't get TweeGo to work:

1) Keep coding in the Wayfarer master file and work through the lag. The lag comes from the editor generating the passage boxes and connection lines for the visual map:



I do wonder whether I have hit a limit on the lag, as long as I stay in the pulled back story structure view (like above – you can also view your story with passage titles and with a passage title/first line combo, but that REALLY slows it down). It's manageable for now; we'll see what happens when I start coding Chapter 1 Route B.

Twine 3 is going to be released sometime later this year. I may not upgrade right away (I have issues with Twine 2.3.11, which is the most recent version of Twine 2 – I love working in this program but newer releases and updates always feel buggy and Twine 2.2.1 feels so much more stable). The general advice for the Twine contributors is to make sure you have several backups of your files if you do switch – Twine 3 is likely going to be very buggy when it releases and it will take some time to sort out all the problems. I would like to see if they've addressed the lag issue with Twine 3.

2) If I'm working in a single file for the entire story, I will likely divide Wayfarer into three games, divided at the Act break. I would rather not do this because I really want to keep the player's stats intact and if I make three separate games I will have to deal with save imports and a system to account for new players who may have skipped Game 1... It's complicated. I'd rather keep Wayfarer as one standalone game (albeit one that will be very large) than break it up.

3) If the lag becomes so bad that breaking the game into three parts doesn't work, Twine integrates with Unity and Unreal Engine. I feel like that is a... big, *big* jump to working with actual video game engines. I would have to redo all the code for the visual design, but I would be able to keep the visuals intact. Not a huge fan of this option since I don't think I have the capabilities or background to learn Unity's code, but one of my partner's friends suggested it as an alternative, so on to the contingency plan list it goes.

4) Switch to a different IF platform. This would be either ChoiceScript or Inkle. This is the last resort option because I would sacrifice the visual design completely, as well as a bunch of functions (the inventory system, the interactive maps, the timed choices, etc). The positive side of this is that turning the game into a ChoiceScript game would make it more accessible to the COG community, with the potential of publishing to Hosted Games. But I would really like to maintain control over my game and I don't want to lose the integrity of the current design.

At the end of the day, the most important part of the game is the text itself and those files aren't going anywhere. There will be a game, but the *how* is a little more complicated than I initially anticipated.

(Thank you, editor lag, I'm not salty about this at all.)

Misc Updates

I recently updated my FAQ page on my development blog. If you missed it, [you can see the new one here](#). That prompted me to want to update other pages on the blog and one thing led to another and I spent 6 hours yesterday making character portraits in Artbreeder.

And I dislike every single one of them.



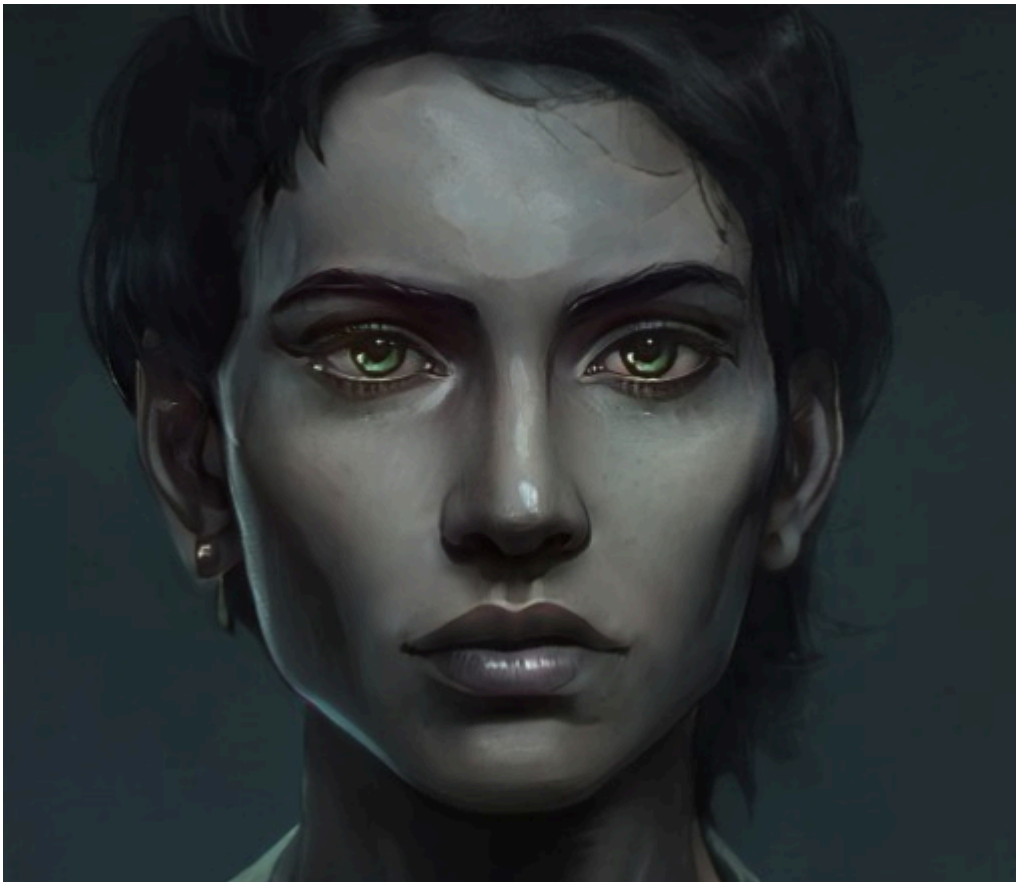
Brissa Varyn



Malsara Markal



Nova Markal



Rhodarth (uuuuuuuggghhhh couldn't get long hair or make him green uuuuuugggghhhh)

Look at how bad Malsara came out. I was trying to take Nova's portrait and just make her hair blonde but it didn't work very well and I am a little horrified. Look at Varyn's face. What did I do to her? She doesn't deserve this.

Anyway, I'm probably going to dismantle this and switch it out for something different (Unsplash photos? Aesthetic objects representative of the characters? Who knows) at a later date, but if you want to see some hilariously bad artbreeder portraits that don't really look like my characters at all, my WIP character page is here (desktop only): <https://idrellegames.tumblr.com/newcastpage>

[Balanced on the Edge \(Aeran x F!MC\)](#)

[Feb 11, 2021](#)

Happy Valentine's Day, friends!

(Yes, I know I'm early, but I finished this sooner than expected and I thought I might as well stick to my Thursday bonus content schedule).

This week's bonus content is a bit of an experiment. I wasn't intending on doing short stories for Patreon this early, but I had an idea and it wouldn't leave me alone, so here we are.

I'm still figuring out how I want to tackle bonus short story content. I dislike writing in second person outside the framework of interactive fiction and there are far too many variables involved with the MC for me to write a blank slate and not have the MC feel like a vague blob. I think for future short stories that involve the MC, I will use a different MC for each, with different profiles for gender, ancestry and origin.

This short story features a named female MC (elven ancestry, Child of the Streets origin). It is set after Chapter 1 Route A. It is considered non-canon, but it falls within the realm of possibility. I mean, they share a cabin on a ship for over a month. Anything can happen, right? ;)

This version is rated M (Mature) for sexual themes, but does not contain any explicit content and has a fade to black scene. A version of this story that contains the steamy scenes for those who want them is available for Patrons only.

Other content tags: romance, angst, mutual pining that gets out of control

Word count: 2,863

Once again, Raina wakes from the creaking of the ship.

Sleep, admittedly, has never been one of her strengths. After a childhood of cold nights where an inability to sleep with one eye open could leave you gutted and bleeding out in the streets by sunrise, sleep remains elusive. A few hours here, a few hours there, rarely more than a handful at a time. Though her nights on Nesactium's streets are little more than a distant memory, they have left their mark.

Her body aches. She presses a hand to her shoulder, fingers slipping below the loose neckline of her tunic to brush against rough skin. The wound has healed nicely, though it has left a gnarled scar. A not-so-gentle reminder that she is not an unstoppable force. Push too hard and she will break.

She's no stranger to injury—no Wayfarer is. Anyone without magic knows very well that scrapes and bruises are no small matter when you cannot visit a healer, pay for curative magic, and call the matter done. But a Wayfarer's work is dangerous and injury is a constant threat. It is the first lesson, drilled into the mind of every recruit and apprentice: you are not invincible. You will be hurt. You will be injured, sometimes grievously. And unlike the rest of the world, you will be slow to heal.

Raina sighs and lets her hand drop to her side. She rolls her shoulder, stretching the muscle.

One more for the collection...

"You awake?"

She turns, rolling to the side, pulling the quilt with her. The cabin is dark, the lamps extinguished several hours ago, but it is no hindrance to her elven eyes. She glances across the cabin.

Aeran lies in a hammock strung across the opposite wall, his lanky body too long for him to lie comfortably within it. One foot dangles off the edge, bouncing absentmindedly. Three weeks into their journey and still he refuses to take the bed—not that it's the better option. A cramped cot squeezed into a tiny alcove, one that barely fits even her small frame. Space is limited on a ship, even one as extravagant as Zenaida's flagship.

He stares at the low ceiling, arms stretched behind his head, fingers locked behind his neck. She watches him, listening to the familiarity of his quiet breath. There's something comforting about his proximity, a safe haven she can turn to without question.

The feelings aren't new. True, he's watched over her since her injury, refusing to leave her side throughout her recovery, but she's carried those feelings for far longer. Aeran has always been a presence in her life and, aside from Master Varyn, he is the last reminder of a much simpler time. A safer time. A time when the world wasn't actively trying to kill her.

"Raina?"

"Yeah," she replies quietly. She brushes a lock of curly brown hair out of her eyes and tucks it behind her ear. "I'm awake."

"I had a feeling."

A smile tugs at the corner of her lip. "Yeah?"

"Well—" His foot bounces. The hammock creaks. "—you weren't snoring for one—"

Raina reaches across the cabin and playfully jabs his arm with her fist. "I don't snore."

"How do you know what you do when you're asleep?"

"Easy," she replies, rolling back over. She stretches out her legs and her feet hit the wall. "I *don't* sleep. That's the problem."

He falls silent. Beyond their cabin window, the sea roars, thunderous waves rocking the ship to and fro. There's a vastness to being at sea Raina will never truly overcome. The sea makes her feel small. Fragile. Insignificant. There's a part of her that likes it, and a part of her that is terrified by it.

"I know," Aeran says after a moment.

"And you don't either," she adds.

She glances at him. He meets her eyes for a brief moment, then turns away. His foot stops bouncing. He groans, passing a hand over his eyes.

"It's not getting any better, is it?" she says.

He sighs. "Raina—"

"No." She pushes herself up, swinging her legs around the edge of the bed, dragging the quilt along with her. It bunches up around her, tangled around her legs. "We've been doing this for four years, Aeran, don't think I haven't noticed."

Aeran exhales sharply and sits up, planting both feet on the floor. He links his fingers across the back of his neck and looks away, avoiding her gaze. "Yeah," he murmurs after a moment, "well..." He swallows hard. "The more you want to forget, the more you're forced remember. Funny how that works, isn't it?"

She squeezes the quilt between her fingers, tugging at stray threads, chewing the inside of her cheek as she considers her next words. "Is it getting worse?"

"I..." He runs a hand through his hair. "Yeah. The closer we get to Velantis, to the heart of the Guild, the more I..." He shakes himself and rises to his feet. "Never mind." He stoops, picking up an unlit lantern, hooking it onto the wall and lighting it. A flickering glow spreads across the cabin.

The lantern isn't necessary—both can see well without it—but there is something comforting about the light and its warmth. Something to stave off the darkness.

Raina pauses, pulling the quilt tight across her lower body. "You can tell me, Aeran," she says quietly. "You know that, right?"

He leans back against the wall, folding his arms. "I know," he replies. "But Rai, there are some things... It's best not to know." He smiles faintly. "You've got enough to worry about, you don't need me fucking things up even more."

She sighs. It's difficult to keep the frustration out of her voice. For all his casual, playful moods, he has a stubborn streak that's impossible to avoid. "For once can you worry less about me and more about yourself?" she says tartly.

He ignores her. "How's the shoulder?"

She shoots him a dark look. "Aeran."

"I'm being serious."

"So I am."

She stands, slipping off the bed. She pads barefoot across the cabin (not that she has far to go in such a small space) and places a hand on his arm. He glances at her, blue eyes meeting hazel, and a strange look crosses his face. Suddenly, he wraps his arms around her, cradling her gently as he pulls her to him.

Raina's voice hitches in the back of her throat. She melts into his embrace, fingers clutching at his shirt as she presses her hands into his back with an unexpected fierceness. He pauses, hesitant, and murmurs something too soft for her to make out and holds her. As she rests her head against his chest, she feels the rapid beat of his heart.

She exhales a soft breath. The ship lurches, tossing to and fro on the dark, thunderous sea, but Aeran holds them steady. Waves splash against the cabin window, water misting across the glass.

She recalls the first time she stepped on a ship. It was the day after Cenric found her on the streets. He was taking her to the Spire. She was already overwhelmed by this unexpected shift in her life, from a street rat without a home to the newest recruit of an ancient order of terrifying warriors. Unable to process such a fundamental change, she latched onto the next thing in front of her: the sea.

She didn't know how to swim. The sea terrified her—all that endless water, a bottomless void that could swallow her whole, hiding mysterious, monstrous creatures in its depths. Scared though she was, the sea filled her with exhilaration. She couldn't look away. She spent the voyage on the deck, skirting the crew and watching the waves, balancing the fine line between fear and euphoria.

Aeran's hand rests on the back of her neck, his fingers curled in her hair. She freezes, her grip on his shirt tightening, pulled out of her reverie by that single touch. She's thrown back to that moment, that *stupid* moment several weeks ago when she finally woke from her injuries. When he... when they...

Oh, gods.

She closes her eyes. There was something left unfinished that day. Despite these weeks together at sea, they have been dancing around it, neither willing to broach the subject. This *thing* between them is complicated. It always has been. Given their line of work, relationships are difficult, let alone relationships between two Wayfarers.

She can't pinpoint when her feelings for him began. She's known him for the greater part of her life, he was the first true friend she ever had. Apprenticed to the same master, they were inseparable as youths. It became a joke among initiated Wayfarers that they were a pair that came together. You could not deal with Raina without also dealing with Aeran.

If she's honest with herself, maybe those feelings were always there. But she made the choice long ago to push them down and lock them away, telling herself that no matter how much she trusts him, no matter how much she wants him, there are some things better left unsaid.

"Raina..." Aeran murmurs.

She lifts her head. He gazes at her, his eyes searching hers, an unspoken question lingering between them. His palm brushes her cheek and she can barely stop herself from trembling. Her stomach is twisted into a knot, yet her heart is racing.

Fear and euphoria. She is walking that precarious line again, but this time it's impossible to keep her balance.

"Raina."

He says her name again. She breathes, unable to look away, but unable to say anything. It's not like her to be tongue-tied, but somehow her words are failing her.

"I..."

She swallows the lump in her throat. She wants more than his arm around her waist, his hand pressed to her cheek. It's not enough. No matter how close he holds her now, she wants him closer still. She wants to feel the warmth of his hands on her skin, his lips on hers, his body against hers...

"We can walk away from this," he says. "Leave it alone and don't look back. Nothing has to change—"

"I want it to."

Aeran freezes.

Raina reaches up, resting her hands on either side of his face. "*I want it to*," she says.

He stares at her, eyes wide, one arm still looped around her. His silence nearly stops her heart. Her mind reels, wondering whether she misinterpreted his meaning, whether she said the wrong thing, the

wrong words. She's put a wedge between them—

He kisses her. She gasps in surprise and he pushes her back with surprising intensity, pressing her against the opposite wall. His mouth is hot and fervent and hungry. One hand is tangled in her hair, the other sliding down her body, tugging at her tunic. She loops her arms around his body, hands splayed across his back, and pulls him to her. He grunts, breath caught in his throat, and he deepens the kiss.

When he draws away, he leaves them both flushed and breathless. Eyes closed, he rests his forehead against hers. One hand hovers at her waist. Despite the passion of the kiss, she can feel his hesitation.

She presses her lips to his cheek, slowly kissing up his jawline. He trembles at her touch, exhaling softly.

“Rai...”

His weight presses against her, pushing her against the wall. She can feel the wood panels through her tunic.

“Touch me,” she murmurs against his ear. “Please.”

Aeran draws back, eyes searching hers. He smiles and does not say a word.

He kisses her.

Raina melts into it, into him, her mind blank, her emotions a chaotic jumble, exhilaration taking hold. They move together, a tangle of arms and legs, desperately seeking something unspoken within each other's touch. There's something raw and urgent in their haste as clothes are discarded and they fall into bed.

She doesn't want gentle. She doesn't want slow. There's a part of her, buried deep, that is afraid that if they slow down, if they stop, this fleeting moment will be over and they will never find it again. So she kisses him and pulls him to her.

And she lets everything go.



Some time later, Aeran lies nestled beside her on the cot. His eyes are closed, breathless satisfaction on his face. She holds him, his head resting on her chest, and strokes his hair. She watches him, a small smile on her face.

Outside, the sea roars.

Aeran chuckles.

“Something funny?” Raina asks.

He raises his head and kisses her. “Not at all,” he says. He brushes a loose curl from her forehead. “I’m just thinking about you. Really enjoyed the look on your face. It’s a good look.”

She blushes deeply and raises an eyebrow. “Oh?”

“A very—” He kisses her forehead. “—good—” He kisses the tip of her nose. “—look.” He kisses her mouth.

She leans into the kiss, savouring it. “If it’s something you’re so enthusiastic about,” she says, “I’m sure there’s a way we can make it happen again.”

He smiles. “I’d like that.”

“Me, too.”

His eyes sweep over her, lingering on her shoulder scar. He gently brushes it with his fingertips. “This didn’t... hurt you, did it?”

She’d forgotten about her recent wound. She feels a deep twinge in her shoulder, but ignores it. “Not really,” she says. “I mean, I think this is the first time I *haven’t* thought about it. I can’t take a boring convalescence any longer, Aeran, it’s driving me mad. If it’s a choice between my shoulder and sex, I’ll take the sex, thank you.”

He buries his face in her neck, howling with laughter. She chortles and winces, covering her face with a hand. When their laughter subsides, he gently nudges her hand aside and meets her eyes.

“You are ridiculous,” he says.

She shrugs. “It’s much better now, I can barely feel it at all,” she says. “What’s one more scar, anyway?”

He pauses, his smile fading. She glances at him, her eyes sweeping over his chest. Just as he knows the history behind the myriad of scars on her body, she knows his—save for one. The one he refuses to talk about. His silence can only mean one thing—that it is a remnant of the battle at the Spire.

She senses the line again. The fear of asking the one question she cannot ask pitted against her need to know. He has never told her what happened. She knows the lives that were lost, she knows the only place she called home has been destroyed, but she doesn’t know how. And he is the only connection she has to it.

Her fingers hesitantly touch his side, brushing the scar. Aeran freezes against her touch, but he doesn’t protest. She traces the scar, wavering on her choice.

“Raina,” he says, throat dry. “Leave it be.”

"You can tell me," she begins.

He exhales sharply. "I *can't*."

"I can't help you if you don't tell me," she adds.

Aeran sits up abruptly, nearly knocking his head against the alcove ceiling. "I don't need your help, Raina," he says. "Not with this. Leave it be."

She pushes herself up on her elbows, brows drawing together. "I hate seeing you like this," she says. "I know it was a nightmare. I know I wasn't there, I can't understand what it was like. But gods, Aeran, whatever happened, you can't block it out forever—"

He grunts and gets off the bed. "Sounds like this is more about you than it is about me," he snaps. He crosses the cabin, picking up his discarded clothes and roughly pulling them on. "Which," he adds, snorting, "is typical of you, Raina. Nothing can happen without you sticking your nose in business that doesn't concern you."

She sits up and pulls up the quilt, wrapping it around her chest. "What's that supposed to mean?"

He sighs. "Nothing."

"I'd rather you tell me upfront than dance around the subject by insulting me," she says darkly. Part of her mind is screaming at her, telling her to let it go, to backtrack. She crossed the line and she's on the wrong side. But she's as stubborn as Aeran, and she won't back down.

"I'm not—" He sighs, exasperated, and runs a hand through his hair. "I've asked you to leave it be. If you can't do that..."

She stands, pulling the quilt tight around her. "I don't know if I can," she says quietly.

He looks away, an unreadable look crossing his face. "Right," he says, after a long moment. "I need some air."

He pushes past her and opens the door.

"Aeran—"

He disappears through the threshold, closing the door behind him.

Raina is left in their cabin, clinging to her stubbornness even as she curses herself. The room is silent, save for the creaking of the ship and the roar of the vast sea.

She has never felt more alone.

[Feb 15, 2021](#)

Hi friends,

I'm posting this update a little later than usual since I wanted to include today's writing. This week was quite busy as I'm trying to find the right balance between Patreon content and new game content. I'm experimenting with a few things, so the first few months may be a little bumpy, but in general I'm happy with how things are going. The Valentine's Special was a nice surprise (for me and for you) as it wasn't something I had originally intended on writing, but it was a good character exercise and I am really pleased everyone enjoyed it!

I am postponing my first writing tutorial until March. I have a plan of how I want to structure these and they're a little more of a time commitment than I had originally intended. My main focus for the rest of February will be creating new content for the game. I would ideally like to finish all of Chapter 1 by the end of March, so I need to keep that ball rolling.

Chapter 1 Progress

This week I returned to writing new game content for Chapter 1 Route B. I'm starting with the expedition to the Viridian Lady's villa, which is the most complicated sequence of the four options by far.

It's been challenging figuring out how to structure a mystery/investigation in a choice-based, non-linear game. I want to give players several clues that they can use to piece together what happened and where they need to go, but because they can access those clues in different orders, it isn't a simple "Go to Place A → Go to Place B → Go to Place C → Unravel the Mystery" progression. The Action Point system also complicates things as some players will have more places to investigate than others. I'm trying to structure it so that if players gather all the clues, they will know where to go, but if they only have a couple of the clues, they may still be able to figure it out through deduction (or save scumming).

There are three main blocks to the Viridian Lady sequence. Either the player can:

1. Go in through the back (which requires them to pass some agility checks) and conduct a stealth-based information gathering mission
2. Go in the front and request an audience with the Viridian Lady, which requires them to pass persuasion checks.
3. Fail the agility or persuasion checks on either of the above options and be re-routed to a unique failure scene.

Depending on what checks are passed and how the player navigates each block, they will either get the information they need or they won't get the right clue.

The other three blocks (Edgewater, the Cove and the Guild of Mages) are a lot less complicated. They consist mostly of the player going to a place, talking to a person, and either getting the right information or failing to get the right information, so there are fewer branches there.

Another layer of complexity is keeping track of the player's entry point to Route B. If they access it via the Kane fight in Rat Alley, the player will not have enough money to purchase any of the items in the Cove and they may encounter unique dialogue depending on how they dealt with Kane (whether he's dead or alive).

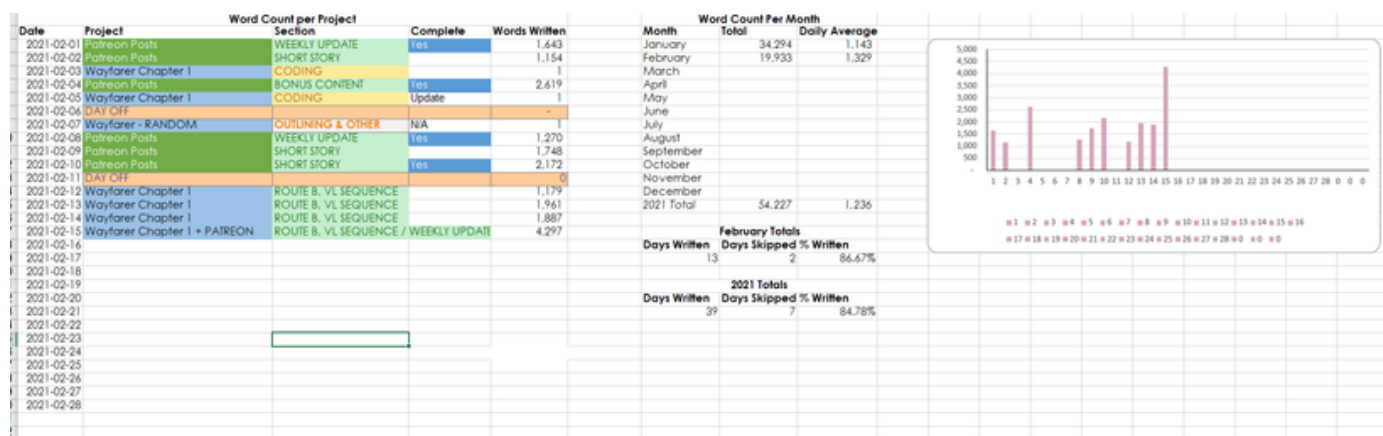
However, if the player accesses Route B via going to the Docks, meeting Zenaida and declining to take her contract, they end up with 250 crowns. While I'm writing the Viridian Lady sequence, I need to be aware that the player may have bought certain items and I am layering those into the available choices. Because of potential item use, chances are the stealth route will be strictly Agility based and the Persuasion route will be strictly persuasion-based.

I'm not sure how long it is going to take for me to write this sequence, but I am clamping down on extraneous options wherever possible. This kind of thing has the potential to grow exponentially and I would rather not be stuck in Chapter 1 for the next four months. I am itching to move the story along and get to Velantis.

Mid-Month Check-In

I've been using a word tracker since January to help me track and understand my workflow better. It's been incredibly helpful having this data available (especially when I look back at a week and go, "Oh crap, I didn't take any breaks this week is that why I'm tired? I need to schedule my days off better").

Here's my word tracker for this month. Days that include a count of 1 are days where I did work on Wayfarer, but not in a capacity that can be tracked by number of words (i.e. coding, outlining, etc).



2021-01-28 Additions

The main game file on both the public and alpha builds has been updated to include:

- minor continuity fixes
- minor typo fixes
- you can now select "pink" as a skin colour and hair colour if you have Melusine ancestry
- Patron credits have been added

If you are not included in the Patron credits and are subscribed at the Apprentice tier or above, please check your Patreon messages! I have messaged everyone who is to be credited and I need to know which name you'd like to be credited under.

WIP Excerpt

As a bonus, here's a WIP excerpt from the Viridian Lady sequence (hasn't been edited). For ease of reading, I have edited out the variable notes I write to myself to keep track of things in the middle of the text, so not all versions are represented here.

The Isle is eerily silent compared to the bustle of the town. The promenade is empty, save for a few cloaked figures who pass without comment, their hoods pulled up to shield them from the rain.

There is something uncanny about the Isle, an off-putting feeling that is difficult to ignore. In any Arathian city, promenades like this would be well-tended, lined with beautiful statues and elaborate shrubberies to match the splendour of the surrounding architecture. But Rona is not an Imperial city and the individuals who occupy these houses could care less about neighbourhood appearances. Where there should be cultivated landscaping, there is a tangle of dark trees and vegetation. Thick roots plunge deep below the flagstones, rupturing the path further down the way, and shiny, dark green vines slink along the edges, slowly creeping along the stones. The beautiful villas are at odds with their environment. Though magic sustains the architecture here, staving off decay, it cannot disguise the overall neglect. Even in the seat of Rona's rich and powerful, nature seeks to take back what is hers.

As you climb, winding your way back and forth across the bluffs, you think you spot a dark figure in the corner of your eye, hovering some ways away in the air. But when you turn to look closer, the figure is gone; all you can see is mist and cloud and rain. A chill runs down your spine. You can't see the patrols, but you know they must be there. Have you drawn their attention? Are they soaring, just out of sight, following your every move?

Your hand flexes around the hilt of your sword, but the familiar grip does little to soothe you.

"Something wrong?" Aeran asks.

"No," you reply. "Not yet. I just can't shake the feeling that someone is watching us."

Aeran continues walking and casually raises his face to the sky. Droplets mists his forehead and cheeks as he peers through the rain, eyes searching the clouds. "There's a sentry directly above us, to the left,"

he murmurs, dropping his chin. "Flying away now, can't see where they've gone. Chances are the Lady will know we're coming."

"Do you think they've recognized us?" you ask.

It's a difficult problem to weigh. In the year you've been in Rona, you have amassed a certain amount of notoriety, but you're far from having a recognizable face. You've also declined to engage with the Seven's strange custom of marking their personnel. Most mercenaries, sentries, bodyguards, agents, and other personnel in the Seven's pocket will wear kerchiefs with their master's colours. When you accepted the Count's contract, you fervently refused to wear a red kerchief, arguing that it would simply get in your way and put a target on your back. The Count, much to your surprise, agreed.

"I doubt it," Aeran says. "For all they know, at this distance we're two strangers on the road."

"Yeah..." You clench your jaw. You wonder whether news of your skirmish with Kane has made its way to the Lady's ears. That would complicate things.

Damn it.

You near the top of the bluffs and the promenade turns sharply, following a sheer cliff face that plunges into the waters below. The sea roars, thunderous and vast, whitecaps crashing against the rocks. The wind blows sharply in your face, making your eyes water; you can taste brine on your tongue. There's an unexpected freshness up here, high above the sea—the stench of rot and decay that permeates the rest of the city has been blown away.

You round the cliff and come to a halt. Aeran nudges you and you step off the road, huddling under the splayed branches of a nearby tree. The Lady's villa looms ahead, perched at the peak of one last bluff. White walls enclose the rectangular complex, backing onto cliffs that drop into the sea below. A single, wrought iron gate blocks the entrance. No guards are posted, but you are certain the Aeda sentries are not far away. If you squint, you can make out a shimmering barrier pulsing around the complex—further protection from unwanted attention. Judging from its near-invisibility, it must be a complicated bit of magic. Not that it will be a problem for you; like all magic, barrier enchantments fail to recognize your existence. You can slip through them at will.

Aeran seizes your shoulder and pulls you down. You crouch, back pressed against the trunk of the tree. Out of the corner of your eye, you see him point quietly at the sky. You glance up and see a trio of Aeda sentries pass overhead, carried through the air on dark wings, silver spears glowing in their hands.

"I have—" Aeran begins.

"If you say 'a bad feeling about this', I'm going to punch you," you interrupt.

He smirks and withdraws his grip on your shoulder. You watch the sentries fly on, disappearing around the far side of the villa. When they're gone, you cautiously sneak forwards, keeping low, clambering over the roots and vines that line the promenade as you creep closer to your target.

Keeping off the road, you lie low in a tangle of roots and vines, eyes scanning the looming mansion ahead. From your vantage point, you can see through the gate to complex beyond. A series of tiered gardens fills the grounds, cascading one over the other until they reach the gate. The gardens are so lush and dense, you cannot see a path through—and then you realize there may not be one. Most of those in service to the Viridian Lady are Aeda—why have a path when you can fly?

The mansion itself is settled on the fourth tier. Nestled between two artificial waterfalls, it is a three-storey white building with sweeping balconies and wide, arching windows. Water cascades from the cliffs above, flowing from an unknown source into elegant pools that surround the mansion. Conjured lights are scattered across the complex, embedded into the villa's walls, floating on the surface of the pools, hovering in the air. Their pulsing glow casts illuminates the whole complex, making it shine brilliantly in the rain. The place radiates the power and opulence you've come to associate with the Rhesainian aristocracy. But just as there is something off about the promenade below, there is something bizarre about the villa. A feeling that it is not quite right. Despite the Arathian trappings, the woman who dwells within is anything but an Imperial aristocrat.

You sit back on your heels and hunker down. The villa is worse than you thought. At first glance, there appears to be no way into the grounds except through the front gate. The drop into the sea below is steep—so steep you're uncertain whether you'll even be able to scale it. Even if you do manage to scale the cliffs, you then have the walls to deal with...

"What do you think?" you ask Aeran.

His eyes scan the gate, peering through to the grounds beyond. "There must be a way for non-Aeda to access the mansion," he says. "Not everyone in her employ can fly."

You nod and brush the back of your hand across your forehead, wiping away rain droplets. Without your cloak, you are soaked to the bone in this miserable weather.

- 1. [PERCEPTION] Scan the complex again and look for another way in. There must be one somewhere.**
- 2. Ask Aeran if he sees another way in.**
- 3. There's no way you can sneak into a place like this. You'll have to go in the front and switch up your tactics.**

[Building a Boss Fight](#)

[Feb 18, 2021](#)

Spoilers for Chapter 1, Route A

One of the most challenging, yet rewarding, things to come out of Chapter 1's development is the Route A boss fight. I have always intended Wayfarer to have a robust combat system—it's necessary to be true to the setting and to the main character's journey. A Wayfarer is a warrior, first and foremost, and navigating dangerous, life-or-death situations is part of how they make their livelihood.

But implementing one in a text adventure is tricky. In a text adventure, combat obviously can't rely on the player's physical skill and responsiveness, as in most real-time combat game. I have seen some IF games implement a text version of turn-based combat, but of the ones I've played, I found that the pace and flow of the story crawled to a halt while you flipped through passage upon passage that read "Character A took 10 points of damage! They have 40 points left. How do you attack?".

Personally, I do not find that engaging.

Creating Combat: An Overview

Wayfarer's skill check and injury system is the result of many months of testing different gameplay elements to find a balance that works for the game's needs.

The ability to either pass or fail your skill checks came out of a desire to play with risk vs. reward elements. Because the protagonist lives a dangerous life, I wanted the player to feel that innately. No matter how well-trained they are, there is still the possibility that everything can go wrong. I wanted to capture a feeling similar to D&D where you hope everything goes according to plan, but one bad dice roll can put you in a sticky situation. By combining the player's skill level with a randomized number, they are walking a fine line between success and failure.

When the game was in early, early development (back in the days when it was a Dragon Age fan game), I quickly discovered that writing multiple options for weapon choice ended up exponentially increasing my workload. Back then, I was dealing with four potential weapon types (sword, daggers, bow and magic) in combination with passing or failing skill checks, which meant that there were at least 8 outcomes for each checkpoint within a combat sequence. It was *far* too much.

Instead of giving the player options in terms of what weapon they can use, I chose to focus on player skills. They will always use a sword to attack (which makes writing combat scenes a lot easier since I can combine passages where appropriate), but the way in which they approach combat changes.

Combat sequences rely primarily on Strength and Agility checks. This way I am still able to give the player choice in how they approach the scene. Occasionally Perception is used, if the sequence ends up in a place where the player character needs to consider their surroundings and a straight-up attack is less than ideal.

When developing the Chapter 1 Route A Boss fight, items came into play. When I originally designed the skill checks, I thought that most players would choose to focus primarily on one combat skill (strength or agility) and one exploration skill (perception or persuasion). I failed to account for players interested in

roleplaying a more non-combative character, someone who relies on their words first and only fights when necessary or when they're backed into a corner (or players who went in blind and ended up with their skills all over the place).

To account for that, I added items. I'd been playing with the idea of adding consumables—any kind of item that the player can store in their inventory and use when prompted or save for later. Coding the consumables was very tricky. Because I wanted the consumable list to show how many the player had left versus the maximum they are allowed to carry, I couldn't use the inventory macro I am using for all other inventory items with the coding getting gnarly (the inventory macro is from Chapel's Custom Macros, highly recommend checking it out if you're using SugarCube to build your game). I came up with my own system for handling consumables. The downside is that the consumable list will always appear in the player's inventory—it was too much work to configure items to disappear from the list if they weren't in the player's inventory, so the consumable list is static across the game.

Items can be used in combat sequences, but only when the narrative syncs up to an appropriate moment. For example, the player character may get a grappling hook from Thelkar, but since it was an additional variation I didn't want to write, they can't use the grappling hook as an impromptu weapon in the fight. And so, the thunderspheres were added specifically to be an item used in combat.

Thunderspheres are Wayfarer's version of hand grenades. I didn't want to call them bombs or grenades since it felt too contemporary (despite both words being used to describe explosives for centuries, connotations in English are weird like that). Thunderspheres are very loosely named after the early hand grenades developed in 12th and 13th century China, called "heaven-shaking thunder bombs" or "thunder crash bombs".

Because the player has to purposefully purchase items in advance, using an item is a guaranteed pass and not attached to a skill check. This can help players who have low Strength and Agility stats make it through some extended fights, provided they reach a point where they can use their item.

Whenever I think about game mechanics, I am also considering how they are reflected in the narrative. I am always thinking about the characters, how they embody the space and how they react to the circumstances they're in. Introducing the thunderspheres and writing the outcome of throwing a bomb and causing a devastating explosion made me realize that using an item isn't always going to be an easy way out—some companion characters may have feelings about the player character's choices and actions. That reaction and the associated approval loss or gain becomes another element.

The final element of combat is timed choices. This feature isn't specific to combat. Instead, it is used whenever I want to heighten the tension of a choice and make the player feel the same kind of rapid decision-making that their character must go through. I tend to put these in places where the text is pushing the action and everything is happening very, very fast. I want to be careful with timed choices and not overuse them (otherwise they start to feel gimmicky). Having a unique option for abstaining or running out of time also adds an additional outcome for me to write, which can be a bit of a problem (I will discuss this further later on).

Structuring a Boss Fight

At this point, I have a list of major gameplay mechanics to consider when structuring the combat scene. These are:

- Successful skill checks
- Failed skill checks
- Items (in this case, just the thundersphere)
- Timed choices

Other gameplay elements I need to consider as I proceed forwards are:

- Companion approval loss and gain
- Injuries
- Unique Origin and/or Ancestry options
- Items that go in and out of the inventory due to narrative reasons (such as having your weapons/gear taken away)

Structuring combat is a tricky balance of narrative pacing, player choice, and exponentially growing outcomes. In addition to the mechanics, I need to decide how many checks I am going to have in a sequence. Too many and I am going to get overwhelmed with the exponentially-growing outcomes; too few and the player will either feel like they don't have control over the combat or feel like the sequence ends too soon.

However, with Wayfarer's skill check system, a single option results in two possible outcomes. In cases where the player is given a Strength check and an Agility check, from the player's point of view, it feels like there are only two choices when, in reality, there are four outcomes. To clamp down on rapidly growing outcomes, I tend to stick to just Strength and Agility, though I sometimes add in an alternative 3rd (or, if we're talking outcomes, 5th) option that isn't attached to a skill check.

Before I start writing, I need a roadmap. Compartmentalization is extremely important in non-linear, choice-based narratives. You need to block off each branch and consider them one at a time, otherwise it becomes overwhelming. I like to keep a checklist of all outcomes, broken down by section, so I can keep track of which outcomes I have covered and which ones I have not.

Every time I hit a major branching choice, I write out the outcome of each decision and label it with the section it connects to. In more complex sequences, like the Route A boss fight, I add colour coding as well to help me keep things separate in my Word document.

BLOCK #2

OUTCOMES - BLOCK 2

1. Get your weapons and fight (Aeran fighting Count). → Rhodarth Melee X
2. Get your weapons and fight (Count disappeared). → Rhodarth Melee X
2. Escape. → Basilisk Fight with Rho X
3. PERSUASION. Bargain V1 – Aeran fighting Count (PASS) → X
4. PERSUASION. Bargain V1 – Aeran fighting Count (FAIL) → Trapped in Water X
5. PERSUASION. Bargain V2 – Count escaped (PASS) → Basilisk Fight with Rho
6. PERSUASION. Bargain V2. – Count escaped (FAIL) → Basilisk Fight with Rho X
7. TRAPPED IN WATER.

(At least my notes make sense to me)

While I do some work with flowcharts early on, I find it too time consuming and it's easier for me to map everything in my head or through checklists. When it comes to coding, Twine's visual map helps me double-check the flow of the entire sequence and make sure I didn't miss any variations. I think if I were working with a co-writer, a full flow-chart for a sequence like this would be absolutely necessary, but I know my own mind pretty well so my checklist system works.

When working on a sequence that sprawls into multiple variations, I have a few different ways I compartmentalize the content. These aren't official terms in any capacity, just what I've started to call them for the sake of my own organization:

- **Section.** Sections are the container for everything else. In a way, they are a little like scene breaks. A section is complete when all blocks connect into the same bottleneck or send the player to a different section.
- **Blocks.** Blocks refer to the large-scale scope of a single, major choice that contains all the various branches within it. In large sequences, there are usually 2-3 blocks. The Chapter 1 Route A boss fight has 4 unique blocks.
- **Branches.** Branches are the individual strands/outcomes of a choice. Most branches will result in multiple, compounding branches.
- **Bottlenecks.** Bottlenecks are points where the various branches or entire blocks converge back together. Bottlenecks are crucial to keep the story and pace on track and moving forwards.
- **Variations.** Different versions of the same scene, with slightly different flavour text or something else that sets it apart. I will often copy/paste the text of one variation into another and then edit in changes. If the flavour text is simple, I can handle the variations all within the same passage by using <<if>><<else>> statements, but for more complicated things (or if I need the visual on Twine's map) I will create a separate passage.

In structuring this fight sequence, I wanted there to be multiple ways it could go depending on how the player reacts. There are 4 main blocks which cover the major different iterations of the fight. I intentionally made some blocks easier to access than others; this is partially for narrative reasons but also because I find it more interesting to have uneven choices—when you stumble across a unique scene that is difficult to trigger, it feels more special.

****Block 1: Fighting the Basilisk On Land**

****This is the easiest block to trigger and the closest thing to a “canon” version of the scene. It is accessed through multiple choices and both successful and failed checks. Depending on the player’s choices, the Count will either summon the basilisk or the player will end up in the water and the basilisk will track them. Block 1 and Block 3 result in the same bottleneck at the end of the sequence.**

****Block 2: Fight the Basilisk in the Water**

****This block is the most difficult to access as it is Ancestry-locked. It starts similarly to Block 1; however, to trigger it, the player *must* end up in the water (either by choice or falling through the trapdoor). The player can be kicked out of this Block and onto Block 1 if they fail their skill checks and are unable to fight the basilisk underwater. If they pass, they will kill it underwater, resurface and an impressed Count will let them and Aeran go. This is the shortest Block and is the only one that guarantees the Count and Rhodarth’s survival at the same time.**

This block was not part of the original plan; it came about because I realized that Melusine player characters should have an advantage fighting underwater. I wanted to stay true to the capabilities of their Ancestry and it’s a unique surprise for Melusine players.

****Block 3: Courtyard Melee**

****This block is intended to trigger almost as often as Block 1, but not quite—it will depend on whether or not the player ends up in the water and how they choose to handle Rhodarth (whether they are successful or not at asking him to stand down). Rhodarth can be executed in this block, which is not possible in the other blocks. It connects to the same bottleneck as Block 1, but there are a few alternative variations depending on the player’s actions in regards to Rhodarth.**

****Block 4: Duel the Count**

****This block is also difficult access as it requires the player to ignore Aeran entirely (something I feel many players will not do; my current player data agrees with this) and a successful Persuasion check. The duel is also one of the most difficult blocks to get through successfully as the skill checks are more ruthless. I wanted to capture the feeling that the Count is a dangerous, difficult enemy and there are several pitfalls in this block to trip players up, including ineffective strength checks and automatic fails.**

SECTION 1: Confronting the Count: Opening

Section 1 covers all the establishing details I need to get through before the fight sequence can start. In this case, I needed to:

- Set up the player character’s promise to Aeran. Trust is an important part of their dynamic and a common theme that will be returned to multiple times. I flagged this choice with a true/false variable so I

could take it into account later.

- Establish a setting description of the Count's villa and courtyard. The fight scene is taking place here, players need to have an idea of the environment they inhabit.
- Establish the Count as an intimidating figure and make it clear that how the player chooses to interact with him will determine how the fight will go.

This leads into the first set of branching choices. The player can:

- **1. Follow Aeran's lead, as he asked.**
- **2. [PERSUASION] Convince the Count killing you will serve no purpose. (PASS).**
- **2. [PERSUASION] Convince the Count killing you will serve no purpose. (FAIL)**
- **3. [AGILITY] Break free from your bonds. (PASS)**
- **3. [AGILITY] Break free from your bonds. (FAIL)**

For all versions of Options 2 or 3, to link up with the promise variable, this choice sets another variable that tracks whether or not you broke your promise to Aeran by taking this choice. Breaking your promise nets negative approval on the next passage.

BRANCH: Follow Aeran's lead.

This branch leads into a set of timed dialogue choices where the player confronts the Count directly. Depending on what dialogue or actions the player chooses to take (or if they abstain or time runs out), these branches can send the player to different blocks.

Choosing the wrong dialogue or actions will send the player into the water and to the beginning of Block 1 or 2 (depending on their ancestry).

Choosing the right dialogue or actions will lead the player to the following choice:

- **1. Fight. Your weapons are in the cart. Go for them.** This option routes the player to the start of Block 3, the Courtyard Melee.
- **2. Escape. Dive into the water and swim out to sea.** This option routes the player to the start of Block 1 or 2, fighting the basilisk.
- **3. [PERSUASION] Bargain. Convince Rhodarth to stand down. (PASS).** This option routes the player to Block 1, fighting the basilisk, but with the variation that cuts out falling into the water. There is also a second variation of this choice, depending on whether or not Aeran has managed to attack and nearly strangle the Count.
- **3. [PERSUASION] Bargain. Convince Rhodarth to stand down. (FAIL)** This option routes the player to Block 3, the Courtyard Melee. There is also a second variation of this choice, depending on whether or not Aeran has managed to attack and nearly strangle the Count.
- **4. Abstain.** Sends the player into the water and the start of Block 1 or 2.

BRANCH: Convince the Count killing you will serve no purpose.

A successful persuasion check will route the player to the start of Block 4, the duel with the Count.

A failed persuasion check will throw the player into the water and route them to the start of Block 1 or 2.

BRANCH: Break free from your bonds.

A successful agility check will route the player to the start of Block 3, the Courtyard Melee.

A failed agility check will throw the player into the water and route them to the start of Block 1 or 2.

SECTION 2: The Fight

FAIL FIRST BLOCK

**** BASILISK ISN'T BLIND YET**

****MC IS INJURED**

****FAIL LEADS TO BLACKOUT**

OPTIONS:

- 1. [STRENGTH] Attack the basilisk. [NEED TO HAVE SWORD] (PASS/FAIL) / You do not have your sword. (if fail, you black out) X**
- 2. [AGILITY] Throw a rock at it and bait it. (Pass/Fail) (if fail, you black out) X**
- 3. [THUNDERSPHERE] Throw a thundersphere at it. [NEED THUNDERSPHERE] (-1 thundersphere) X**

- 1. [STRENGTH] Attack the basilisk (PASS) (NEED TO HAVE SWORD)**

Each block has its own complexities, flow, pace, and structure which would take too long to analyze in-depth here (I'll save it for a walkthrough someday). There are multiple small variations throughout each block which change depending on the player's actions—for example, some failed checks during the basilisk fight may lead to them losing their weapon, thus cutting them off from a choice that involve attacking with their sword. Aeran gets injured in some variations; in others, he doesn't. This is tracked with a true/false variable and an absolute pain to deal with later continuity-wise; I likely won't be implementing something like this in future fight sequences and companion characters with either get injured across all variations or not at all.

The most important variation is in Block 3. When the player defeats Rhodarth (or if he injures them at a specific point, but they are not knocked unconscious), the player has the choice to either:

- Execute him
- Order Aeran to execute him (only available if the player is injured)
- Spare him

Executing Rhodarth will net the player massive approval loss with Aeran and unique dialogue later in the chapter.

Each Block also handles the injury system.

In Blocks 1 (Basilisk Fight on land) and 3 (Courtyard Melee), if the player sustains two injuries during the fight, they will get knocked unconscious by their opponent (either the basilisk or Rhodarth, depending on the context) and route them to the Blackout bottleneck.

A failed check in Block 2 forces the player to surface with an injury and reroutes them to Block 1.

Because Block 4 is unique and the narrative pace of a duel is very different from that of a group monster fight or a two-people-versus-10 clash, Block 4 treats injuries differently. Any failed check will cause the player to get knocked unconscious and route them to the Blackout bottleneck.

SECTION 3: Dealing with the Count

Section 3 is only applicable to Blocks 1 and 3. A successful duel in Block 4 ends with the player killing the Count and freely leaving the villa. A successful basilisk slaying in Block 2 ends with the player character surfacing and walking away free (albeit with an injured Aeran as he takes a bit of beating on land while the player character is gone).

If the player is not knocked unconscious during Blocks 1 and 3, they will be routed to the same bottleneck at the start of Section 3. They are approached by the Count, who makes some sly remarks, and then they must choose how to deal with him. The player's options will depend on how Blocks 1 and 3 went:

- If Rhodarth is dead, the blood oath on his company breaks and Aeran, realizing that Rhodarth didn't have much choice in how he dealt with them, attacks and kills the Count. This is an automatic result, the player has no say here. The player will then be routed to the post-fight bottleneck in the next section.
- If Rhodarth is alive, he attempts to strike the Count and his blood oath activates, preventing him from doing anything more. The player then must choose either to help Rhodarth and fight the Count, or leave Rhodarth to his fate and escape the villa.

If the player chooses to leave Rhodarth, they will be routed to the post-fight bottleneck in the next section. If they choose to help Rhodarth, the section continues with the player attacking the Count.

When attacking the Count, the player will be knocked unconscious and sent to the Blackout bottleneck if they are already injured. If they are not injured, they may get injured once but then they must pass their second skill check in order to win the fight. This context plays by different rules than the Count duel, but I wrote this section first and but considering how long the sequence was beforehand, I found it was too unforgiving to make the first fail an automatic fail in all circumstances.

If the player defeats the Count, they will be given the choice to execute him or spare him. If the player chooses to spare him, Aeran will supersede the player and shoot him anyway.

SECTION 4: Post-Fight

This section occurs if the player is not knocked unconscious. There are multiple loops the game will cycle through depending on what variables were flagged during the previous sequence. It is a continuity nightmare. In brief, here is a list of all the things the game checks (and different scenes and/or flavour text will trigger one after another depending on which variables are flagged):

- Whether the player is injured or not
- Whether Aeran is injured or not
- If the player is injured, what kind of medical kit they have available (checks whether they purchased the enhanced medical kit from Emari and makes it available, otherwise the player character will use their regular kit)
- Whether Rhodarth was executed or spared
- Whether the Count was executed or spared
- Which Block the player ended up on (whether you fought the Count in a duel, fought the basilisk underwater, fought the basilisk on land, or fought in the courtyard melee)
- Whether the player broke their promise to Aeran or not (triggers a unique dialogue scene if they broke their promise)

This section then leads into Malsara collecting the player character and Aeran and thus the fight sequence and its aftermath is concluded.

SECTION 5: The Blackout Bottleneck

Whenever the player gets knocked unconscious, it will route them through this bottleneck and they will wake up on the ship. The scene/memory that plays beforehand depend on their Wayfarer master and, afterwards, it will unlock the first of the Wayfarer tenets.

After this scene plays, the player is routed to a unique sequence on Zenaida's ship. Many of the conversation points that occur in Section 4 can trigger here as well, depending on the player's choices. The player also has a few unique interactions with Aeran that do not trigger elsewhere, namely the opportunity to ask him about his relationship with Rhodarth (which unlocks the Brightblade codex) and a near-kiss for those who took his romance flags.

Additional Thoughts

The full fight sequence, including every block, branch and variation is approximately 40,000 words (I remember it being over 50k before edits, but I was able to cut down a bunch of extra material that didn't need to be there). This level of intense variation is something that I am interesting in playing with, but it will need to be contained. I learned quite a bit about branching structure from tackling the end of the chapter this way and there are a few things to keep in mind going forward:

- Keeping track of continuity is the most difficult part of writing IF. I tend to put a lot of texture and flavour into my action scenes; I'm always thinking about how characters move through the space, how they interact with their environment and each other. If, for example, a character gets injured and

I want to commit to that, then I need to make sure that in every variation they are injured, they are injured the exact same way. This saves me time later on so I can describe them as wounded and not have to backtrack and add in a variable for different flavour texts dealing with this continuity.

- Fight sequences are going to grow organically as you write them, no matter how much you plan in advance. Plan small, and let it grow, rather than deciding on multiple large, sweeping elements ahead of time. The small plan will have enough variation on its own.
- Don't be afraid to clamp down on variations. There is *too* much variation in this sequence; even with a robust Excel sheet, it's difficult to keep track of and the continuity is an absolute pain in the butt.

Not every chapter is going to end in a massive sequence like this.

(On a related note, not every chapter is going to be as large as Chapter 1—some chapters are much more linear and this chapter's size has a lot to do with me testing all of my gameplay mechanics and making sure I have a solid foundation moving forwards).

This is by far the most complicated section of the game so far, and it will likely stay the most complicated. I've learned a lot from writing and executing it this way, so in the future hopefully the system will become more refined.



[Progress Report 2021-02-22](#)

[Feb 22, 2021](#)

Hi friends,

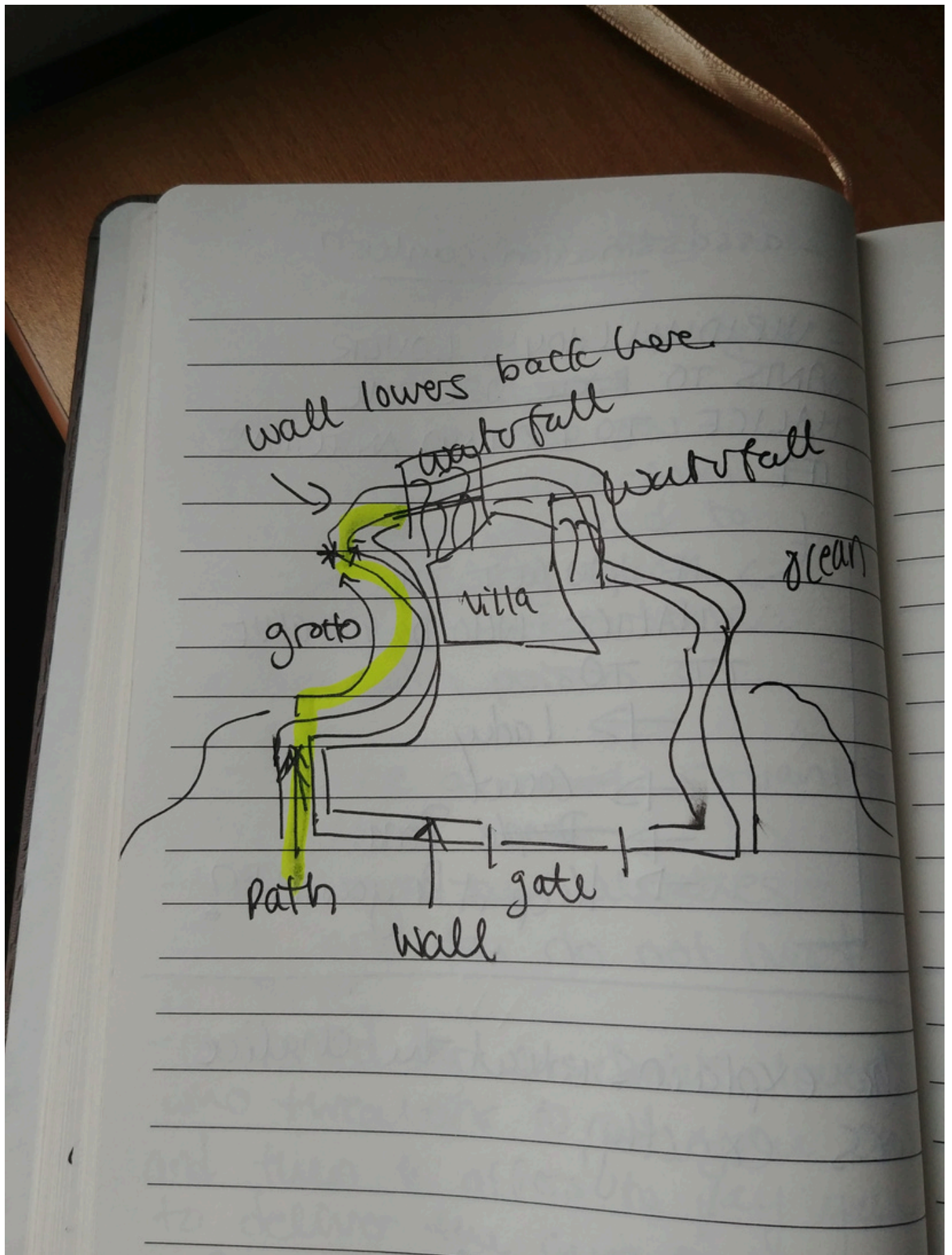
Not too much going on this week. I'm focused on getting the Viridian Lady sequence finished, but since it's more complex than the other areas the MC can explore, it's taking some time. I'm about 12,000 words into it and only have one half of one route written.

I'm trying to clamp down on variations a bit so it doesn't spiral into another 50k section like the Route A boss fight did, but variations inflate the word count quite a bit. It's difficult to keep track of how much new writing I have actually done and how much of it is me copy/pasting previously written text and then editing it to fit 2/3 variations that sync up with alternative player choices. Dialogue trees also inflate the word count; I like to give the player 3 dialogue choices in most cases since it feels like the right balance (2 is too few, 4 creates too many choices I have to write unique dialogue for, especially if it branches further down the conversation).

(That sounded like a jumble of nonsense words... hopefully that makes sense!)

I've finished Aeran and the MC's cliff-climbing adventure, which has some fun game mechanics which I'm excited to code. I've essentially pulled off a text version of what happens when your stamina wheel runs out while climbing in Breath of the Wild and I think it's quite neat.

I also had to write a little map of the Lady's villa just to help keep my descriptions straight:



(The MC and Aeran's cliff-climbing path is the yellow line.) (Also sorry this is sideways, Patreon does not want this image to be displayed vertically for some reason).

I do this kind of thing every so often. Because of my theatre background, I think very visually and I tend to map out the exact placements of objects and things within an environment.

I'll be taking a few days off later this week, but I've got my fingers crossed for finishing the VL sequence by the end of the month. I'm still undecided as to whether I'll code it and add it to the alpha build right away once it's done, but we'll cross that bridge later.

Hope you're all having a fantastic week!

[The Hexade \(Magic System WIP\)](#)

[Feb 25, 2021](#)

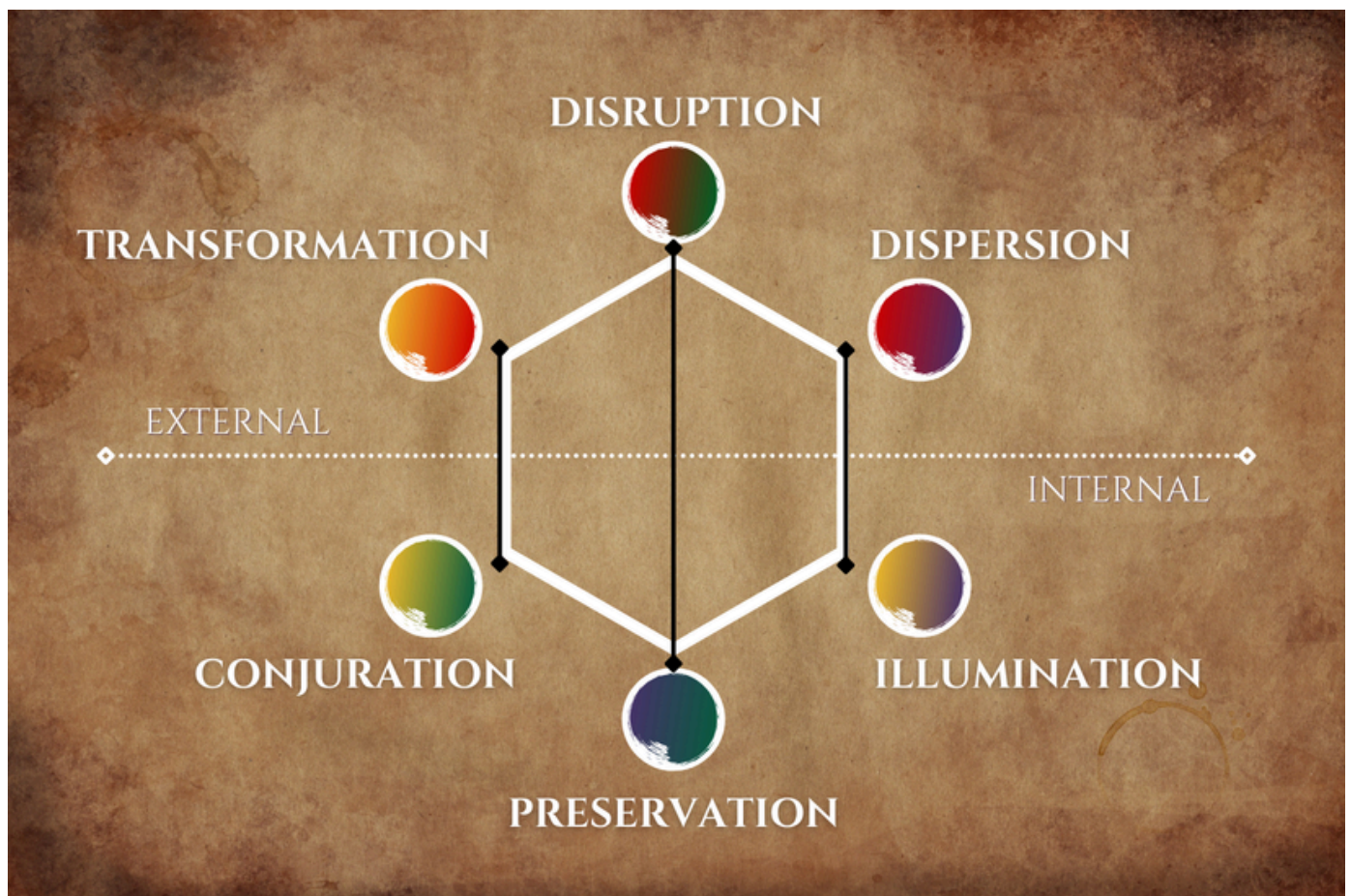
Magic is the art of harnessing of an individual's connection to the world's energies. It is a central part of life in all societies of the known world. The vast majority of the population, regardless of ancestry, is born with a natural affinity for magic. While many individuals can perform small personal spells subconsciously that aid them throughout their daily life, magical talent cannot grow without dedicated training. Those who do undergo training and hone their talents are collectively called Mages.

Every variation of magic can trace its power back to one of six sources, collectively known as the Hexade. When an individual awakens to their magical power, are Attuned to one of six sources. Attunement usually occurs around the age of six or seven. Prior to Attunement, children do not display any signs of magic, though they may interact with it. Children born without magic, who will never Attune (such as Wayfarers), cannot interact with magic even at a young age.

Attunement dictates the type of magic an individual can perform, affect and control.

The Hexade

Also known as the Six Spheres of Magic, the Hexade classifies all brands of accepted magic. There are three pairs of spheres, divided by internal and external magic. Internal magic channels magical energy through and towards the self; external magic channels magical energy to the world around. In addition, Arathian Classification has assigned each sphere a class name, though these titles are not typically used outside the Guild of Mages.



It is a long held belief by the Meissandium (the dominant religion in Rhesainia) that magic is deeply connected to the gods. Each sphere falls under a god's jurisdiction and influence and, by extension, shares a relationship with the Sentinels. While Meissandic doctrine teaches that all magic is a pre-determined blessing from the gods, Rhesainian scholars and researchers discovered several centuries ago that there is a strong genetic component to Attunement.

Arathian Classification

SPHERE	PAIR	CLASS NAME	DIRECTION	MAGIC	ELEMENT	GOD	SENTINEL	RELIC
Conjuration	I	Soulweaver	Internal	Creation & Summoning	Fire	Belennor, God of the Sun	Athor the Just	Axe
Transformation	I	Dustforger	External	Transmutation & Transmogrification	Earth	Adara, God of the Moon	Phairan the Divergent	Bow
Preservation	II	Brightwarden	Internal	Curative & Protection	Water	Lyrana, God of Love	Aureia the Protector	Shield
Disruption	II	Spiritbreaker	External	Force & Energy	Air	Antares, God of War	Biara the Dauntless	Spear
Illumination	III	Lightseeker	Internal	Illusion & Perception	Aether	Metisara, God of Wisdom	Seiara the Farsighted	Scepter
Dispersion	III	Planeswalker	External	Temporal & Spatial	Time	Nashira, God of Fate	Aion the Sly	Dagger

Dual Attunement

In rare cases some individuals may attune to two spheres. These individuals have heightened magical abilities as powers from one sphere combine and mix with the powers of another. In some cases, individuals can be attuned to the same sphere twice, which heightens their powers beyond the usual limits. The Guild of Mages watches carefully for children who are dual attuned and often intervenes to oversee proper training.

Most dual attuned individuals are mages; however, there are other orders and organizations who seek out dual attuned specialists (such as the Corsida Brightblades, who only accept Bloodbinders—specialized Brightwardens who attuned to the Sphere of Preservation twice).

Due to the number of combinations that occur when Attunement overlaps, Arathian scholars have not yet fully classified all of the possible powers that come from such combinations.

[Progress Report 2021-03-01](#)

[Mar 1, 2021](#)

Hi friends,

Happy March!

This past week has been a little strange—a lot of ups, a lot of downs. Not going to spend a lot of time on the downs. I spent a lot of time questioning the game's UI design and came pretty close to scrapping the entire thing and starting from scratch, but I made certain choices for justified reasons and in the end I'm not changing anything, aside from slowly fixing some wonky CSS things.

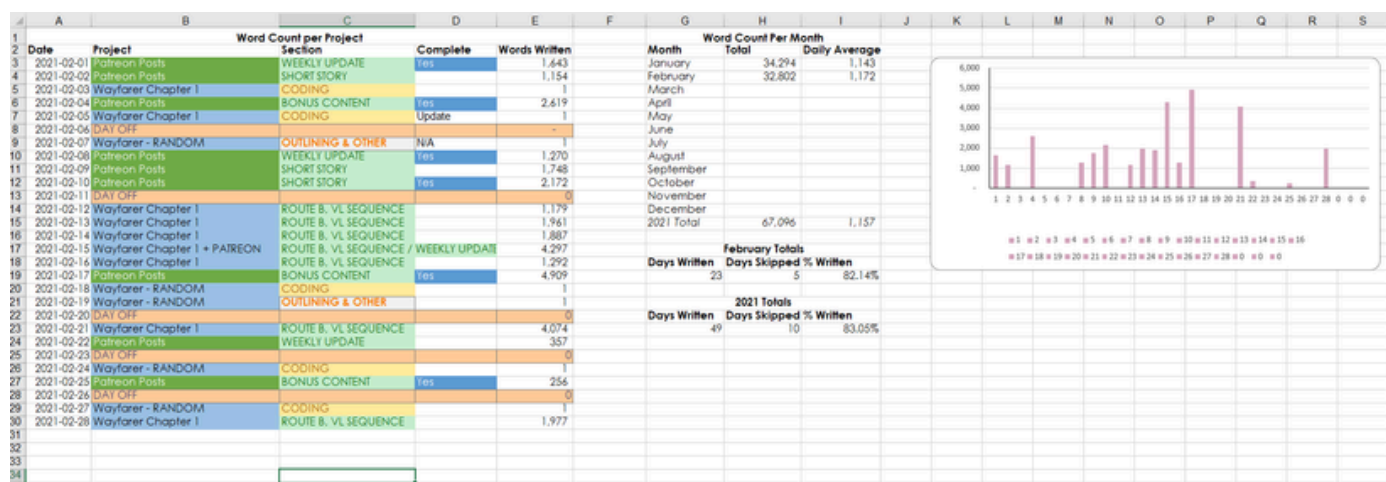
But in other news, my partner and I were able to sit down and figure out how to use Tweego to compile .html story files. Tweego is a command line interface for Twine. Many developers who use Twine choose to use Tweego to cut out the Twine editor and write their games in a plain text editor or a source-code editor. Cutting out the Twine editor completely is something I'm not keen on doing; there are elements of the Twine editor layout that benefit my workflow and abandoning it would mean that I'd have to spend a lot of time adjusting and learning new systems to get back to the place where I was.

We ran a bunch of tests to combine story files and everything connects properly, including transferring player variables and player history between files. So, the good news is that I can continue to work in the Twine editor as I have been, with each Chapter forming its own story file. I am incredibly happy about this since it means I don't have to change my workflow or learn a new notation.

The Viridian Lady sequence is coming along. Writing is slow since I've been distracted by non-writing elements of Wayfarer's development, but I've pushed to about 13k words of new content in a month. Now that I've got my schedule for Patreon pretty much figured out, I'm hoping that March can be a more writing intensive month and create the majority of the new Chapter 1 content and update the Alpha Build as I finish each section. Still pushing for finishing Chapter 1 in April, but we'll have to see how things go.

End of the Month Check-In

This is the progress on my word tracker for February:



Hope you are all having a great week!

[Rona \(Setting Worldbuilding\)](#)

[Mar 4, 2021](#)

From the very beginning, I always envisioned the game starting in a “tutorial” area that was separate from the main setting. There were a few reasons for this:

1. I wanted a contained area for the player to explore where I could test my game mechanics. Going into this, I had a plan, but I wasn't exactly sure how to implement all of the mechanics I had in mind and I didn't know how the process of executing them would go. Keeping the first chapter contained meant that I could try out different things without worrying about keeping track of every decision across later chapters. Mechanics I am testing in Chapter 1 include:
 - Approval loss and gain
 - Faction approval loss and gain
 - Romance gain and balancing the different continuities depending on how many romance points the player has gained with a character (Aeran is my guinea pig, sorry Aeran)
 - Balancing different continuities and flavour text depending on companion/faction approval
 - Fight scenes
 - Trickle-down consequences, where a decision you made earlier comes back to haunt you (or help you) later on, or where multiple decisions build together towards a certain outcome. I specifically don't want it to be as easy as “go back three pages and choose a different option” if the player gets an outcome they don't like, I want outcomes to grow organically over multiple choices

- Inventory management and haggling

In many ways, Chapter 1 is a microcosm of the entire game.

2. I wanted to establish the scope and breadth of the world before trapping the player in Velantis for the rest of the game. It also gives me the time to properly establish Aeran, how he and the MC work together, and what Wayfarer life is like before the player gets shoved into a very specific set of circumstances.

When Wayfarer was a Dragon Age game, I had the player start in a small coastal town separate from the main setting so I could have the player experience their recruitment into the Inquisition first-hand, rather than relaying the facts through exposition later on. Shades of this has transferred over to the game, namely:

- Chapter 1 takes place in a coastal “backwater” town
- The player character has a mission/goal they are pursuing outside the main action
- The player character is approached by an outsider who wants to recruit them into their organization for a mission
- Regardless of their decisions, the player is either willingly or unwillingly recruited into the organization and embarks to another city

Rona has changed a lot over time. When I was creating Wayfarer's setting, I had envisioned the city as a small town in a coastal wetland. For some reason, I had images of Myst's Channelwood setting in my head when I was writing. I haven't touched Myst in years—I was a little kid when it came out and I never progressed very far (the atmosphere freaked me out, there was one world where you discovered a dead body in a chest, and the point-and-click puzzles were too difficult for me, so I got frustrated easily). I have never finished this game, I don't think I have even looked at it since I was 8 or 9, but I remember Channelwood very clearly: trees growing out of the water, with a village composed of boardwalks and huts in the trees.



As I was trying to figure out what the surrounding environment looked like, I researched different coastal wetlands in search for that “trees growing out of the water” look. I sourced visual references from everything from the Louisiana wetlands to the wetlands of Thailand.

Image unavailable - T.B



I was attached to the idea of Rona being a city built in a place where you really shouldn't have a city. I kept thinking visually about a tug-of-war between the environment and human interference. Rona was originally supposed to be a small village, but when I added the Exploration mechanic, the city grew. I knew I wanted 4 areas for the player to explore and to serve different functions. Adding locations like the Cove (mercantile district, where the player can buy items for later use) and Edgewater (the slums, where the player's home is located) grew the city organically. And because the city grew, the lore justifying its layout had to grow as well.

Originally there was only one crime lord dominating the city. The Crimson Count was supposed to have complete control over Rona. By adding the "missing artefact" mission, I had to figure out who opposed him and who had conflict with him. Adding the Viridian Lady as a rival expanded Rona's political system and then I added on to that with the creation of the Seven.

Around the same time I was thinking about Rona's particular position on the map and why it was so far flung from the game's main setting. Its history of being a failed Arathian colony came from a couple of places. The first source of inspiration was the history of Londinium, post-Roman Britain, and how Roman settlements changed after the military left. The second was the history of the Republic of Pirates in Nassau, Bahamas in the early 18th century.

(As some of you know, my MFA research revolved around early 18th century piracy and I tend to draw on that research subconsciously.)

I had already established a pirate colony in Wayfarer's world (the Dravaden Isles) and, in a way, Rona became an extension of some of the worldbuilding I had done there. I wanted the city to feel like it existed outside any kind of standard national laws, that it had rejected the systems that had been in place under Imperial rule, but it still had its own rules and structure. Instead of just being crime lords and pirates, the Seven developed a more political edge in the way they interact and control Rona.

Keeping with my pirate inspiration, the Seven are named after different historical pirates, with the exception of the Crimson Count (don't know where I got Cere Nalos, that name just popped into my head one day and I ran with it):

- **Anselma Malley** – Malley comes from Grace O'Malley, a 16th century Irish pirate
- **Flora Goldhorn** – Goldhorn is Hornigold reversed. Benjamin Hornigold was an early 18th century English pirate, active during the Republic of Pirates. Flora comes from Flora Burn, an 18th century English pirate active during the 1740s and 1750s.
- **Leva Vane** – Leva comes from Olivier Levasseur (French pirate, early 18th century) and Vane comes from Charles Vane, another early 18th century English pirate.
- **Sayida Burn** – Sayida is a misspelling of Sayyida al Hurra, a 16th century Moroccan pirate. Last name also comes from Flora Burn.
- **Mari Rack** – An absolute gobbledegook mashup of Mary Read and Jack Rackham, two early 18th century English pirates and also two historical characters in the play I wrote for my MFA. Mari Rack's alias, the Calico Lord, is plucked from Jack Rackham as well (he was sometimes referred to as Calico Jack Rackham because of the colourful clothes he reputedly wore).
- **Samwell Every** – Samwell, derived from Samuel Bellamy (another pirate part of that early 18th century pirate group, the Republic of Pirates was very, very busy). Every, adapted from Henry Every (late 17th century pirate, and possibly one of the most famous pirates in history).

I think a fundamental part of fantasy worldbuilding is that even if you don't tell the audience ever little detail, it's still important for you, the author, to know those details. You don't need to state every little piece through exposition, but the more grounded those details are to you, the more grounded they will feel in your writing.

[Progress Report 2021-03-08](#)

[Mar 8, 2021](#)

Hi friends,

The first week of March has been extremely busy on the game development front! I am pushing through new Chapter 1 content. I have completed just over one third of the Viridian Lady sequence and also drafted the Route B version of the encounter with Malsara (if the player goes to Rat Alley, she will

always waylaid the MC and Aeran after they visit their first location and then the player must decide whether to go with her and talk to Zenaida or refuse to follow her).

I've written about 18,000 words of new content since March 1 and the new material is currently sitting at 30,000 words (prior to edits). I'm a little tired, but I am very happy with the progress and I can't wait to get this section written and coded, I think it's going to be a lot of fun to play.

Alpha Build

At my current pace, I can't quite accurately predict a date for the alpha build update. I'm still trying to decide how much material I want to complete before I update the alpha build. This has to do with the coding process (in general it's easier for me to connect sequences together when I have existing material; it's more difficult to add new sections in after the fact, especially if it's extremely interconnected or intertwined). But I have a general goal of updating the alpha build by mid-March, so we'll see where this week takes me. Fingers crossed for finishing the sequence!

Patreon Updates

This month's bonus content for all Patrons will be a writing tutorial on characterization and character creation. I'm currently drafting out a few ideas and the tutorial's structure. I will be releasing it on March 25.

I am doing my first Creator Q & A this month! If you are in the Recruit tier or above, please [check out the Q & A post here](#). We've had a few questions submitted, but I need a few more to round things out. I'm aiming to do this the last week of March, so if you'd like to submit a question, please do before March 22.

Misc Updates

Rory Yaya, the artist who does Wayfarer's artwork, is doing a Wayfarer character portrait series! You can check out her new portraits for Alexia, Aeran, Ren, Calla and Melchior on [her blog here](#).

I love Rory's art so much and she is an incredible artist to work with. Please do check her out on [tumblr](#), [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#).

I hope you all have a great week! Enjoy this WIP snippet from the VL sequence.

WIP

"Regardless what Cere Nalos has told you, the Chalice is a powerful artefact," the Lady says. "And so, Wayfarer, my question is this—what will you do if you find it?" She draws closer, standing merely inches away. The quiet buzz of the magical energy running down her blade fills your ears. "Would you attempt to break its bindings and unravel its magic? Would it even be possible with an artefact of such ancient potency? Or will you return it to Nalos, intact, collect your reward and disappear into the horizon?"

You pause. You've been focused on *finding* the damn thing, you haven't thought about what you will do with it when you do. You've been hired to hunt artefacts in the past; the world is littered with them. Anyone with a basic understanding of rune bindings and engineering can create objects that contain or channel magic. Aside from slaying monsters, breaking curses, and hunting rogue mages, finding missing artefacts ranks high on the list of services performed by a Wayfarer. Usually in such cases, you wear gloves or use another physical barrier when handling the artefact to prevent unintentional erosion of its enchantments or bindings.

The idea that you could return the Chalice to the Count without its powers intact had not occurred to you. But considering what the Lady has told you about the Chalice's origins... it may be a moot point all together.

You raise your chin and meet the Lady's eyes.

1. **"I was hired to do a job. That's all that matters."**
2. **"I don't know. I'll decide when I find it."**
3. **"Frankly, my lady, what I do is none of your business."**

[The Marcian Conspiracy \(Rhesainian History - WIP\)](#)

[Mar 11, 2021](#)

It is known throughout Rhesainia that the Wayfarer Order does not involve itself in politics. In order to pursue the intricacies of their work and to move about the world without restriction, Wayfarers must remain beyond the touch of political affairs. While the Order has an official ambassador (a Wayfarer master appointed the responsibility of representing the Order among the courts and rulers of the world), they officially remain neutral when it comes to internal and international conflict.

With one exception: the Marcian Conspiracy.

A Troubled Line of Succession

The Marcian Conspiracy (1228-1232) was a period of political upheaval within the Arathian Empire. Emperor Calas ard Nesarian's ninety-year rule was marked by expansionist campaigns and a relentless push north to expand Arathian borders. With the emperor occupied by the war, the day-to-day management of the Empire was left to the joint rule of his three favourite children: Ariston, his eldest son, Lucilla, his youngest daughter, and Marcius, his adoptive son.

When the emperor succumbed to hveslan exposure on the front lines in 1228, the Imperial line of succession was left in question. Following Imperial tradition and the influence of the late emperor's

mother, Asenna and Nesarian, the Imperial senate supported Ariston's right to succession. He was crowned Emperor mere days after his father's death.

Ariston's rise to power was not favourably viewed outside the senate. Empress Eirene, Calas' wife and a powerful Savant, had a longstanding feud with Asenna. She harboured public dislike for her mother-in-law's influence over her son and saw Ariston as weak-willed and feeble-minded. Though Ariston wore the crown, Asenna was the true power behind the throne. In a bid to oppose Asenna, Eirene put the full weight of her influence and Guild connections behind her daughter Lucilla. Swaying a large portion of the aristocracy to their side, Eirene and Lucilla began a secret campaign to undermine Ariston's rule and depose him.

Over the next several months, conflict grew between the two opposing parties. While the Imperial family maintained a perfect façade, Erenvor simmered with tension. As Ariston and Lucilla politely continued as normal, senators were found poisoned, aristocrats were arrested under false charges, and fights broke out in the streets. It would only be a matter of time before the siblings declared an all-out war.

Enter Marcius.

Rising Tensions

With his siblings distracted over their right to succession, Marcius left Erenvor and travelled to the front lines to escort his father's body home. There he was given a missive by the late emperor's most trusted general. The letter stated, in Calas' own hand, a statement of his wishes: that Marcius, and no other, should inherit the throne.

Compared to his siblings, Marcius was quiet, calm and collected. He was well-liked by the Imperial population, particularly the working classes, and he had a keen eye for administration that both Ariston and Lucilla lacked. He had no intention of ruling beyond his role as co-regent. However, his family's scheming and his father's secret will prompted him to take action.

With the support of his late father's generals, Marcius abandoned the northern campaign and marched the military home. The return of the late emperor's favourite son, supported by the Imperial army and hailed as the new Emperor, should have put an end to the conflict in Erenvor. However, upon hearing of their father's posthumous declaration, Ariston and Lucilla set aside their differences and sprung into action.

When the Imperial army returned to Erenvor in 1229, it was met by the Imperial guard and a host of Guild mages and first-class warrior orders, including the Corsida Brightblades. Marcius faced a choice: either attack the city of his birth and condemn Erenvor to a siege that would devastate its population and resources, or surrender and be tried for treason. Marcius chose a third option: fake his death, disappear into the city and oppose Ariston and Lucilla from the inside.

With Marcius' disappearance, Calas and Nesarian's will was discovered among his generals and declared a false document. Ariston and Lucilla returned to their scheming. While Lucilla, thanks to her mother, had the full weight of the Guild behind her, Ariston had control of the Imperial court. Though

Ariston remained Emperor in name, in truth the city was divided: half controlled by Ariston and Asenna, half by Lucilla and Eirene. Concerned with outmaneuvering his mother and sister, Ariston had little time for the business of ruling. His popularity sunk, even among his supporters.

Meanwhile, in the streets of Erenvor, rumours spread that Marcius and Nesarian, the true ruler of Arathia, had survived. While popular support grew among the lower classes, Marcius himself orchestrated arrangements with select wealthy merchants and politicians, planting the seeds for a bloodless coup. But before he could depose both Ariston and Lucilla in one fell swoop, Lucilla acted.

The 1231 Coup

In 1231, Lucilla and Eirene orchestrated a coup and attempted to poison Ariston and Asenna. Betrayed by those closest to her, Lucilla's plan failed and she and her mother were placed under house arrest, pending trial for treason. Eirene passed away a few short months later, and Lucilla was exiled to the Daidara Temple in northern Arathia.

In the aftermath of Lucilla's coup, Ariston believed he had complete control of Erenvor and, by extension, the Empire. The Imperial military and two full contingents of Brightblades answered to him. The Guild mages who supported Lucilla were given a choice: support Ariston's rule or face arrest. Most chose to support the Emperor; those that did not were tried for treason and executed, exiled, or placed under the compulsions of a blood oath.

As Ariston consolidated his power, he faced one problem: his plummeting popularity. Asenna believed that the approval of the populace was beneath him. Ignoring the growing unrest in the capital, Asenna believed all opposition to their rule was over and pushed Ariston to continue his father's campaigns. Despite a series of small revolts throughout, Ariston followed his grandmother's advice and began plans for a new northern campaign.

Wayfarer Involvement

The consolidation of Ariston's power, particularly in regards to Arathian Guild mages, was a growing issue for Marcius. Though he had hoped for a bloodless coup, many of his connections withered when Lucilla's influence was excised from the city. Without strong connections of the Guild of Mages, Marcius had no way to oppose the sheer magical might Ariston now commanded. But Marcius had one connection he never thought to use, until now: a friend from his youth, a friend who had been taken to the Spire many, many years ago, and now roamed the world as a Wayfarer.

With great caution, speed and secrecy, Marcius sent a letter to the Spire, pleading for the help of Darius Avennor. Avennor was intrigued. He was Arathian, native to Erenvor—though he had distanced himself from the Empire, he had a strong dislike of Ariston, Asenna and their practices. In particular, he opposed how Imperial politics had become intertwined with the Guild of Mages, a connection Ariston was eager to grow. Several other Arathian Wayfarers whom like Avennor, had cut themselves off from the country of their birth, were interested in Marcius' proposal.

Avennor's former master, Brissa Varyn, cautioned him not to go, insisting that Wayfarers should not involve themselves in political strife. But Avennor was insistent. Despite the warnings of Brissa Varyn and Rindan Cenric, and the disdain of Grandmaster Amali Sero, Avennor and six Arathian Wayfarers departed for Erenvor.

The 1232 Coup

Despite his military strength, Ariston was unable to quell the ongoing riots. More than once, he heard whispers of his adoptive brother's name and a growing conspiracy that the true successor was alive and would return to take the throne. Assured the rumours and riots were nothing of note, Ariston left the capital in the early months of 1232 and began the long journey north to the border. He left Asenna in power, naming her regent in his absence.

On the 7th of Summermarch, Marcius, Avennor and their supporters enacted their plan. A large-scale revolt swept the city. Asenna watched as the revolutionaries pushed towards the Imperial palace. They met little resistance, aside from the Imperial guard. Marcius found the lack of opposition unsettling. It wasn't until they breached the Imperial gates that Asenna unleashed the full power of the Arathian Guild mages, massacring the revolutionaries on the palace steps.

Aftermath

Marcius, Avennor and the few survivors were arrested and tried for treason under Imperial law. Upon hearing of the trial, Brissa Varyn was dispatched to Erenvor, where she pleaded for Avennor and the six Wayfarers who accompanied him. As Wayfarers, they were no longer Imperial citizens, and should be released to the Order. Her request was denied.

As Wayfarers could not be bound to a blood oath, all six were executed. For Avennor and his followers' actions, the Wayfarer Order was expelled from the Empire and its territories, on pain of death. Brissa Varyn was allowed to retrieve their Alassar weapons, including Avennor's bow and arrows, which she later passed to her next student, Aeran Kellis.

Placed under house arrest, Marcius waited two months for Ariston to return from the front lines to judge his brother. Ariston did not show Marcius the same leniency as he gave Lucilla. His choice was simple: undertake a lifelong blood oath or face execution. Unwilling to be bound to his brother's demands for the rest of his life, Marcius chose execution.

Lasting Consequences

Twenty years later, Emperor Ariston and Nesarian's Imperial rule is uncontested. Lucilla remains in Daidara Temple, composing a history of her father's rule. Marcius is remembered as a power-hungry, jealous despot. Elaborate tales that have grown since the Conspiracy pit him as the villain, responsible for corrupting Lucilla and Eirene and pitting them against their blood relatives. Further tales have led many to believe that Marcius himself was under Avennor's influence and the Order was responsible for the coups and revolts that devastated the capital.

In recent years, Wayfarers have been allowed to traverse Imperial territories once more, though they are regarded with extreme suspicion, hostility and hatred. Most Wayfarers avoid the Imperial capital outright.

[Progress Report 2021-03-15](#)

[Mar 15, 2021](#)

Hi friends,

I was going to start off with a Caesar joke, but I am little drained so we're just going to forgo that. This past week has been extremely busy. I am closing in on getting the Viridian Lady sequence done. If it feels like I've been working on this section forever, it's probably because it's true. I knew it was going to take a while, but this is the most content heavy branch of the possible Exploration sections in Chapter 1 Route B.

Game Updates

The new content is currently sitting at ~40,000 words prior to edits and I have a couple more sections to write. Since it's a stealth mission, there are a lot of different paths the player can take, with three major ways the scene can end. This section introduces a new character who has quickly become one of my favourite minor characters. Her name is Hera Ambrose and she is the Viridian Lady's girlfriend. She's an archaeologist/historian/scholar and the secret reason behind the VL's magical antiquities collection:

"I know, I'm invisible." A short, plump elven woman emerges from behind the draped statues, inquisitive brown eyes looking you up and down. She is dressed in flowing brown trousers and a tunic, overlaid with a sleeveless gold overcoat belted at the waist. Curly blonde hair escapes from a bun piled high on her head, the loose locks bouncing against her neck as she moves. Round spectacles perch across a wide nose spattered with freckles.

She eyes your blade and rolls her eyes as she squeezes through the maze of desks. "Oh, put your sword away," she says as she squeezes through the maze of desks. "No one's going to lay a finger on you—especially not me. All this sneaking around has been quite exhilaration, but frankly it's gone on for far too long."

You scowl. "I—"

"Hera Ambrose," the woman continues. She reaches the centre of the maze, spins the chair around, and casually throws herself into it. "I have a proposal for you."

I love her.

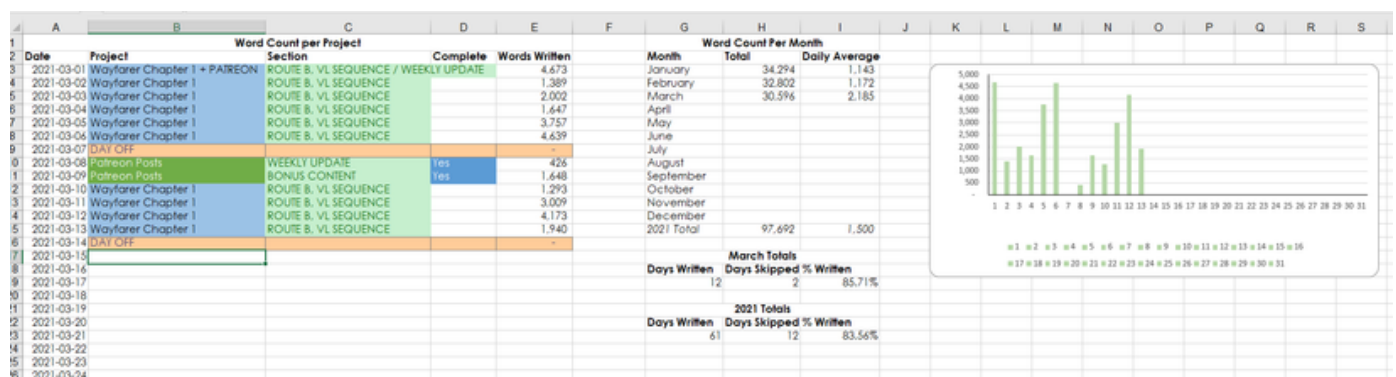
I am hoping that I can finish writing this sequence by Friday and start edits and coding. I still have a list of updates to do on the public build (slowly fixing the UI, updating the Patron credits, fixing continuity errors, updating/changing lore, the letter from Cenric/Sero/Varyn that gets added to the player's inventory needs to be re-written and changed to account for a few new things). I accidentally imported the wrong stylesheet into Twine when updating the game's CSS a few weeks ago and broke a bunch of things. I need to fix the errors I made there (nothing too big, mostly have to redo a few minor design things and background images on the Codex pages). I have a new design in mind for the Journal, especially for the Companion relationship page, but I'm not sure when I'll sit down and work on it—it's more of a backburner thing.

With all that in mind, I am tentatively aiming for March 29-31 to update the alpha build with the VL sequence.

Speaking of the alpha build, itch.io has Patreon integration. I haven't quite worked everything out yet, but I am thinking about switching to an access key format for the alpha build rather than having a pinned link and sharing the alpha build's password. Not sure when I'm going to move forwards on that, but it's something I'm thinking about.

Mid-Month Check In

Excluding today's work, here's how March is going. I probably need to take more days off, but I am really pushing to get the VL sequence done.

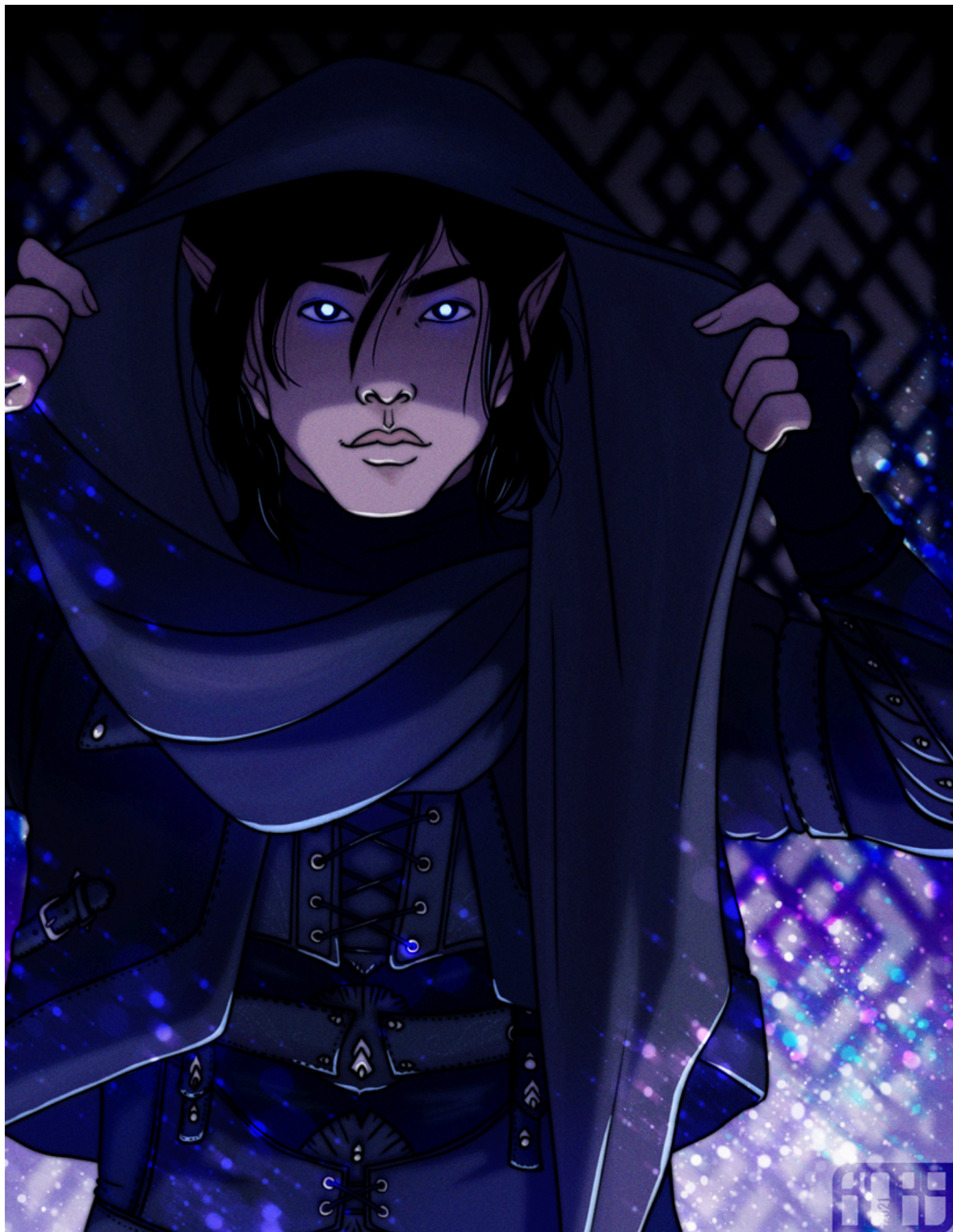


Misc Updates

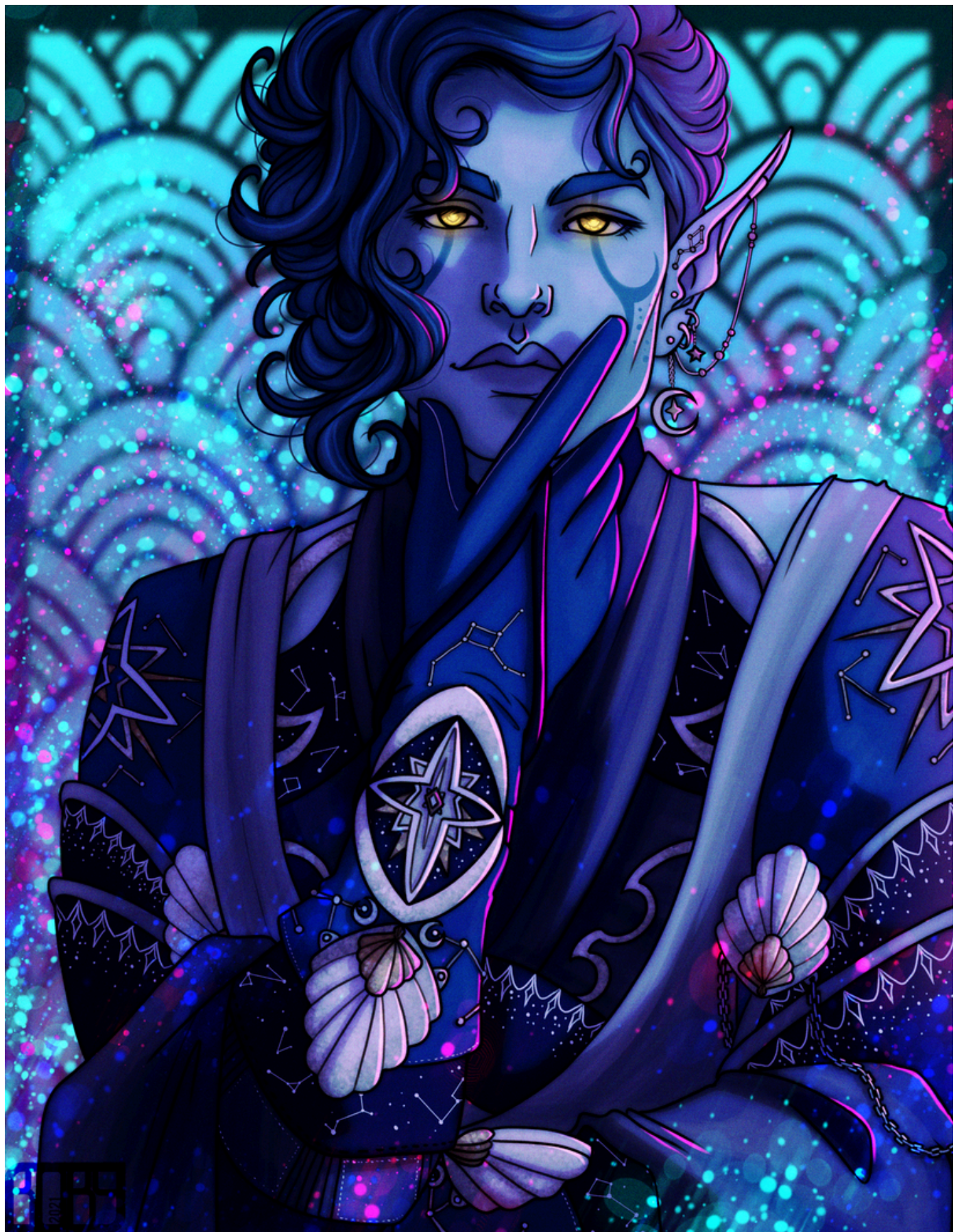
Rory has finished the complete set of new Wayfarer portraits, including Nelani and Felix! You can find them all on [her blog](#) and [her Instagram](#), but I'll share them here, too:

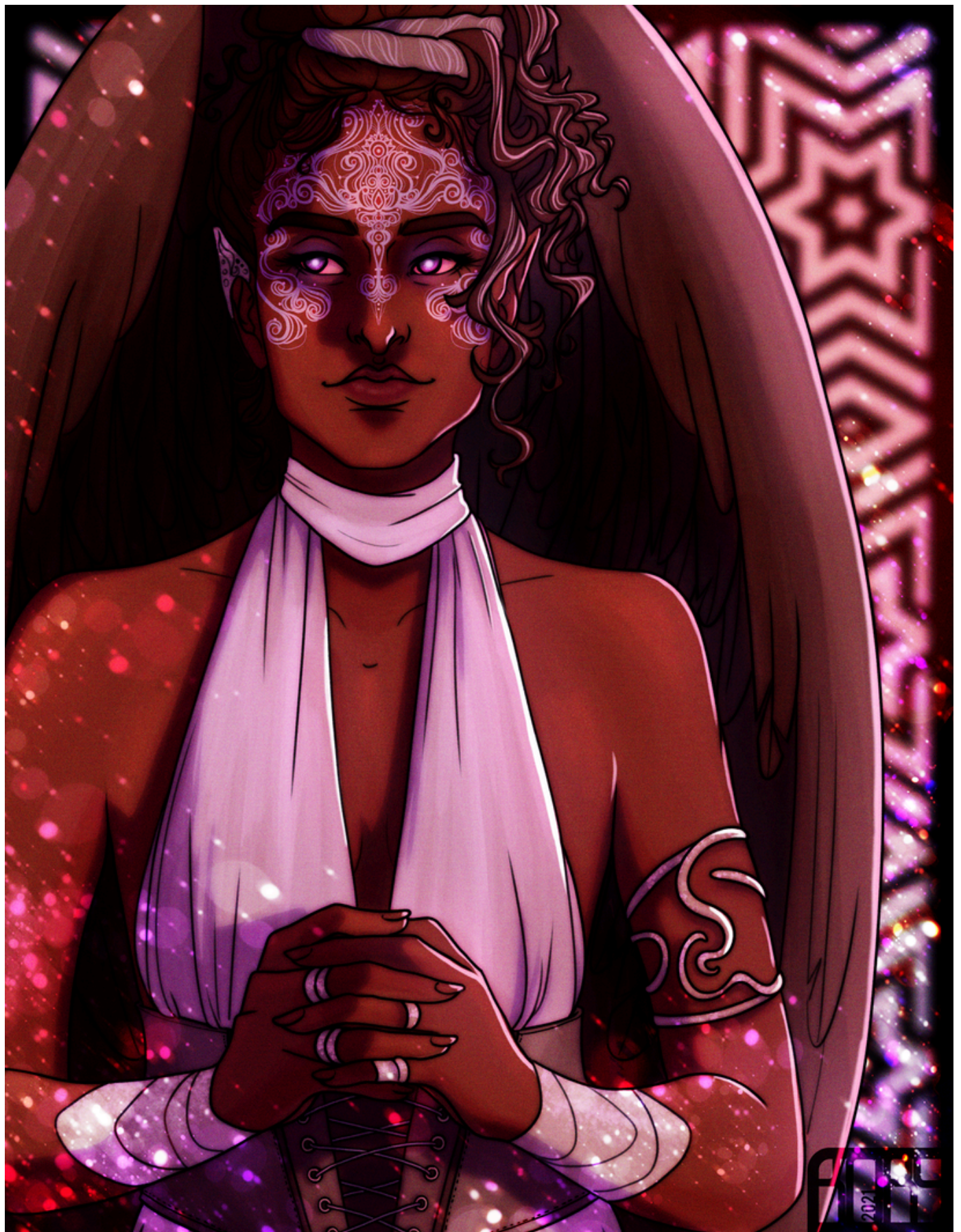


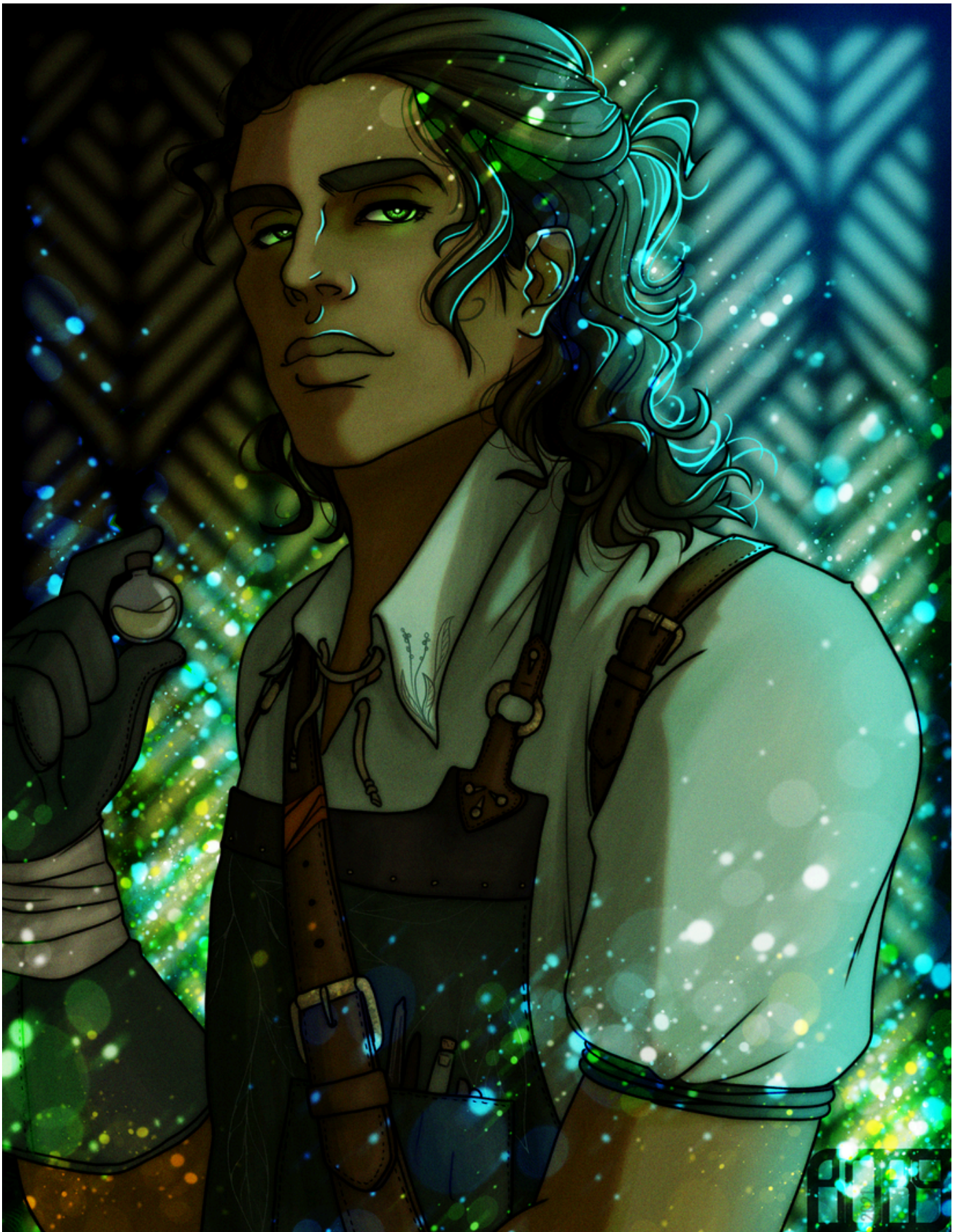












They're all so pretty, I love them so much.

Have a great week!

[Character Profile: Alexia Antonis](#)

[Mar 18, 2021](#)

Spoilers for Alexia's backstory, but no spoilers for the major points of her character arc. If you want to go into her character arc completely blind, I suggest skipping this post.

This is an edited and re-vamped version of her character profile originally posted to Wayfarer's World Anvil page. I've taken down the original post to make edits on it, so for now this is a Patreon exclusive.

Alexia is the daughter of two renegade mages, Caius and Arva Antonis. Born in Erenvor during the Marcian Conspiracy, the infant Alexia accompanied her parents to rallies and secret meetings. Despite their ties to the Arathian branch of the Guild of Mages, Caius and Arva were staunch supporters of Marcus and Nesian's claim to the throne. Fearing backlash from the emperor, they fled the Imperial court and took refuge in the capital's slums.

Caius and Arva were present during the 1232 Coup and fought in the revolt that reached the Imperial palace. When the rebels were massacred on the steps of the Imperial palace, Caius and Arva managed to escape. They lived on the run for a few years, moving from location to location, but never managing to make it outside the capital.

When Alexia was six, they tried one final attempt to flee the city, but they were captured. The trauma of witnessing her parents' arrest awakening Alexia's magic, far earlier than normal. She displayed a devastating Attunement to the Spheres of Conjunction and Preservation. The rarity of her powers was immediately noticed by the Guild of Mages. Such a valuable asset could not be wasted on the daughter of Imperial traitors.

Separated from her parents, Alexia's memories were altered, wiping away any recollections of her parents. For two years she lived in the Imperial palace, watched over by Imperial court mages. Raised with great care and no knowledge of her parents' deeds or the infamy of her last name, Alexia was a quiet and sombre child. She rarely spoke and seldom engaged with the other children at court. At age eight she was deemed old enough to begin honing her abilities. The Guild, much to the Imperial's court frustration, sent her to Ameidan Tower in the neighbouring Kingdom of Vestra for training.

Life at Ameidan Tower

Alexia's life at Ameidan Tower was relatively normal. Though she was younger than many of the other novitiates, she blossomed in her new surroundings. Quiet and attentive, she showed great promise and talent. Watched carefully by the Guild, her instructors groomed her for a future in court magic. Focusing primarily on her Conjunction skills, she became particularly adept at creating and controlling fire. Alexia adapted well to her new life, excited for her future prospects and dreamed of becoming a famous court mage.

Return to Erenvor

As she grew older, the bindings on Alexia's altered memories weakened. Plagued by dreams and nightmares of her parents, Alexia began searching for answers. When her instructors refused to answer her questions, she knew she had to look elsewhere. Using her new status as a Guild Acolyte, she manipulated her instructors into sending her to Erenvor alongside six other acolytes under the guise of serving a trial term at the Imperial court.

While in Erenvor, Alexia walked a delicate line between serving as a Guild mage and finding answers. The more she pushed, the more memories she recalled from her fragmented childhood. She began to doubt the Guild and her position at court. When she shared these doubts with a friend, the Guild was alerted that their ploy was close to being discovered.

The Council of Mages was concerned about what would happen should their most promising pupil discover the truth of her origins. Not wanting to lose control over one of the few dual attuned Acolytes of this generation, Grand Archsage Sabien Quirinus took matters into his own hands. He orchestrated Alexia's removal from the Imperial court and relocated her to Diradan Tower in Velantis, the headquarters of the Guild of Mages. Only fifteen at the time and desperate not to lose the people she called family, Alexia resisted. Subdued with enchantments and a renewed memory alteration, she was sent away in a dreamlike haze and didn't fully understand what happened until she awoke in her new home across the Lotharic sea.

Diradan Tower

Alexia did not take well to Velantis. While she had been an excellent student at Ameidan, her time at Diradan was marred by stubborn resistance and explosive outbreaks. She struggled to make friends, pushing many of her peers away. She refused to attend classes, regularly disregarded her assignments, and frequently argued with her instructors. When she did attend class, her work suffered and she quickly became one of the most inept students of her year.

Recognizing something of herself in Alexia's struggles, Archsage Umbria Bellaris took her under her wing. Like Alexia, Umbria was also dual attuned—to the spheres of Transformation and Preservation. Umbria was relatively young and untested in her position, and her eccentricities and interest in magical research and experimentation made them an unorthodox pair. The Council of Mages frowned heavily upon Umbria's tutorship, but under Quirinus' watchful eye, they allowed it.

Alexia flourished under Umbria's teaching. The two formed a close bond, similar to that of mother and daughter, though Umbria was only ten years older than Alexia. Recognizing that Alexia's talents in Preservation had gone completely untapped, Umbria pushed her in a new direction. At age twenty, Alexia was graduated from Acolyte to Savant, one of the youngest mages to do so.

It was customary upon graduation for Guild mages to be inducted into a royal court or sent to one of the many Guild chapters located in smaller cities around the world. Quirinus, however, refused to let Alexia leave Diradan. Frustrated at the control the Council exerted over her, she disappeared into research and study. She continued working with Umbria, this time as a colleague. Their experiments in

Preservation magic slowly unravelled the bindings on Alexia's altered memories. Pushing against the enchantment, Alexia eventually shattered it completely—and all her memories, and the Guild's manipulation, came flooded back.

Angered at what had been done to her, Alexia planned to flee the Empire entirely. She was stopped by Umbria, who persuaded her to stay. The Guild was breaking. With its internal politics coming to a head, new factions and sects were emerging. Umbria invited her to join the Order of Lethalis, an order of Imperial mages pursuing the end of corruption in the Guild. Alexia agreed and was inducted into the Order.

Not long after, a massive explosion of magical energy ripped apart the western wing of Diradan Tower, causing intense damage to the infrastructure of the tower and the surrounding area. Multiple witnesses spotted Alexia fleeing the scene. She was proclaimed guilty and a fugitive of the law. Hunted by the city guard, Alexia found her way through Velantis and eventually disappeared into the Undercity.

[Progress Report 2021-03-22](#)

[Mar 22, 2021](#)

Hi friends,

The end of March is going to be pretty busy! Aside from some major game updates, I have a few other things/commitments I am working on.

Game Updates

The Viridian Lady sequence is finished! It is in draft form and is currently sitting at around ~57,000 words. I still have to edit it before I can start coding, but completing it is a huge step in Chapter 1's progress as this is the most content-heavy branch in the chapter. I am going to let the draft sit for a bit while I work on other Patreon-related things, but I am hopeful that I can meet that March 31 timeline for updating the alpha build. And, of course, before I update the alpha build I have fixes I need to make to the public build.

On my list of things to do for the next game update:

Public Build

- Fix some UI issues (I am saving a major re-haul of some areas I don't like for another day, so these are minor edits)

- Add a setting to change the handwritten font for letters to the default font
- Update for lore and continuity changes
- Write new Master letters (the MC will have two different letters in their inventory at the start of the game)
- Change the lockpick mechanic (it will no longer be a consumable, but rather an item that you can keep using as long as it is in your inventory, like the grappling hook)
- Update/re-write some existing codex entries
- Add Patron credits

Alpha Build

- Add continuity flags & content to the Route A material to account for the player jumping back onto Route A from Route B
- Edit Viridian Lady sequence
- Code Viridian Lady sequence and add to game

Bonus Content

I am working on this month's all-access bonus content piece. As I mentioned before, this is going to be a writing tutorial on character creation and characterization. I am hoping that I can complete it for Thursday, but it may be delayed by a few days.

I hope you have a great week!



[Mar 24, 2021](#)

AM = Anna M. / Idrelle.

CG = Chilled Glasses.

CG: Good evening, Patrons, and welcome to your first question and answer session with the writer of Wayfarer, Idrelle. I'm your host, Chilled Glasses, and most importantly I will not be talking in that voice the entire time.

AM: *(laughing hysterically)*

CG: So, we've got some questions today that you guys have submitted and we're going to be talking to Anna about some things about the creative process—

AM: Yeah.

CG: —some things about the game and lore, and any particular follow-up questions that I deem necessary.

AM: *(laughing)* Thank you.

CG: Just so everyone knows to start with, this will very much be Anna answering most of the questions, but because I have been around for the entire creative process of this project so far, I may be chiming in now and then with a little bit of additional input or clarification. That's not because I'm inserting my own opinions, that is because everything that we're talking about here are things that me and Anna have talked about before as well.

AM: Yeah. And we're giving this a try for format in terms of the Q & As as something a little more conversational than me just writing answers to questions and then posting it, so let us know if you like this format.

CG: But all right, without further ado we're going to be starting with a few questions about the creative process in general. We have a multi-part questions here:

What are your biggest sources of inspiration? What are some rituals that you do / don't do when you hit a creative block?

So we're start with the first part of that question: What are your biggest sources of in spiration?

AM: All right, so I'm going to divide this into two sections. So there's my inspirations in terms of books and other writing (and novels and that kind of thing) and then there's inspiration in terms of video games and video game writing and narrative design and all that good stuff.

So, I think in terms of actual fantasy prose writing, my biggest source of inspiration is Brandon Sanderson. He is straight-up my favourite author. I've been reading his books for a really, really long time, but... He is my favourite fantasy author because of the way that he considers worldbuilding and magic systems, and he also like... I find his characters really compelling, his stories take a really long time to unfold but they're very satisfying when you finally get to the end, and he has a really entertaining grip on dialogue and banter. That's always something that I appreciate is good dialogue between characters because I'm a playwright, right? *(laughs)*

There's just a lot of things that I love about his writing and I think that since I've been reading his books for such a long time that has definitely impacted me as I've continued to write myself over the years.

CG: Something, too, that I find, particularly with Brandon Sanderson, that I think we're starting to see the seeds of in Wayfarer is... One of the things that Brandon Sanderson does really well is that neither the setting, the magic system, the characters, or the story exist in a bubble. They are all part of one thing.

AM: Yeah.

CG: And so the story, the characters, and the magic system, or just the general setting of the world that they're in, they can't exist without each other. Whatever the current world situation is plays a huge part in the story. Whatever the mechanics of the magic system really affects the characters. And because he's so great at writing characters and writing dialogue, the characters are the thing in the end that drives the story, but it still feels like they are living within the rules or the climate of whatever setting that they are a part of.

AM: Mhm.

CG: And... In discussions with you, I think that what we've seen so far with Chapter 1 is that has been a big piece of importance for you as well. The Wayfarers aren't just moving through the world doing whatever they want to because they're Wayfarers and they are cool—

AM: *(laughing again)*

CG: They are moving through a pre-existing political landscape. And they are just part of that.

AM: Yeah. Like I think that with, at least in the way that I consider character development is that characters can't... Characters don't exist in a bubble. The most important thing that I think about when I make a character is what was the environment they grew up in and how does their current environment impact them. And environment can mean so many different things, it can mean the place that they're living in but also you're thinking about socio-economics and politics and all of the things that go into people, you know, and the way that we live.

CG: Setting doesn't just mean "Aeran grew up somewhere that had a lot of forest and it was around this year". Well, no, the setting that someone grew up in is everything that you just said and that affects them so much more than "they grew up somewhere where it rained a lot."

CG: Definitely Sanderson is your biggest inspiration in terms of general fiction and books—you also mentioned game inspirations.

AM: Yes.

CG: Would you like to talk more about those?

AM: Sure. **(laughing)**Um well, because Wayfarer is interactive fiction but I've been really invested in applying RPG mechanics to interactive fiction to see what spawns from that and see how that can impact the story and make it feel like it's a novel, but it still feels like a game.

And in terms of game inspiration—obviously Dragon Age. It's not a secret, most people know at this point that this game started as a Dragon Age fan game and then I moved it into an original world, so some characters have crossed over. And I don't think I'll be able to completely shake its Dragon Age roots—

CG: Sorry, what's Dragon Age?

AM: ...

(Both laughing)

CG: But no, yeah—

AM: Yeah—

CG: I would say that seeing the project back when it was a Dragon Age fan game, you've pretty much shaken your Dragon Age roots.

AM: Aw, thank you.

CG: If you take a look at, yes, it's a fantasy world that has a bunch of different races and a magic system and a player character with companions—

AM: —who you can romance—

CG: Like yeah, sure, that falls within the Dragon Age formula, but it also falls into the formula of a lot of fantasy games.

AM: That is true. Looking at the collective, like, what has been done in recent years or even recent decades in terms of “how do you structure a fantasy RPG where you have a player-created main character who interacts with a variety of different people on their journey.”

CG: There's that old adage that everything's already been done before and if you take a look at this, oh it's got Dragon Age inspiration, it's got Witcher inspiration, there's inspiration from all places, but I don't think that your game feels like an interactive fiction version of any of those.

AM: Well, inspiration is tricky because so much happens when you're writing, so much happens within your subconscious that you don't even realize that you were inspired by a certain thing until someone points it out or you realize it six months later and you're like "Oh yeah."

Because I think with inspiration... Something that a lot of my writing mentors said again and again is that you become a better writer by reading a lot, and I think it's a similar thing with game design. You learn how to structure a game by playing a lot of games. And so I think with that in mind, I am probably subconsciously pulling from all of my favourite games in different aspects.

CG: Question 2: What part of your creative process do you find the most rewarding in terms of effort versus time inputted?

AM: So... *(laughing)*I find this a little tricky to answer. The part of the process that takes the most time, like significantly the most time, is writing all of the content. And so I really enjoy that part, but I don't really get to see it in full until it is completely coded and actually in the game. So it takes a really, really long time, but it is satisfying to have everything come together.

CG: And what would you say, if we're looking at the writing process being the main crux of your time spent on the game, what is the most rewarding part or common thing that happens in that writing process?

AM: I think it's either writing scenes that I've been looking forward to writing for a really long time—and I have scenes like that in every single chapter, there's moments all over the place where I've had this in my beat chart for such a long time, I'm like "Yes! I finally get to write this thing!"

But then it's also like having an idea for how a particular mechanic will happen and then writing the content for that, and then I get really excited about coding that and having that work.

CG: I have been there for a lot of times when you were struggling with that one particular area and it's always nice to see you get through it.

AM: Yeah.

CG: Do you write with "kill your darlings" in mind or do you lean into things that feel indulgent? Conversely, how do you implement scenes or mechanics that you are not fond of but know the story may be better for them?

Another multi-part question. We'll start with the first part: Do you write with "kill your darlings" in mind or do you lean into things that feel indulgent?

AM: So, first draft: indulge yourself. Write whatever the heck you want to write. But when you're editing, that's when you start drawing back on things and then you have to decide to let go of certain sections.

Especially with this particular project, there have been things I have written in the first draft where I realize if I keep this in the game, it's going to cause problems later on down the line in terms of either

expanding the content by WAY too much for it to, like... I would have to add in another ten thousand words and it's not really justified for this particular moment? Or it ends up being unnecessary, or it draws things out for way too long.

There is an example that I'm thinking of that will be in the alpha build when I update it next. But basically there's a situation where Aeran and the MC are on a stealth mission and they are hiding in a closet (as you do). And as I was going through the different options in how to deal with that situation—because they're hiding in the closet and there are sentries passing by in the corridor right outside.

There's a couple different solutions for how to get out of this situation: they can keep waiting until the guards leave, if the MC has dreamweed, then they can use the dreamweed to knock them out, there's an agility check where you can knock them out with force, and then I was thinking, "Oh, well, you should really put in something and have it as a Strength check for the people who have more points in Strength."

And I wrote the outcome of that, and to make the Strength check different from the Agility check—because the Agility check physically knocks out the guards, so the Strength check needs to be different because I don't want to double-up on the two—the Strength check ended up being if you succeeded at it, then the MC kills the guards.

And then I was writing a section later on, several scenes down, and I was like, you know this doesn't make sense. If they've killed the guards and other sentries have found those bodies, they are not getting out of this villa alive. So I was like, okay, we're either going to have to cut this or we're going to have to re-write this in a way so that they don't end up killing the guards on a Strength check because this creates way too many problems in terms of continuity later on.

CG: Lessons from within the writing process: murder has consequences.

AM: Murder has consequences! Who knew?

CG: Conversely, how do you implement scenes or mechanics that you are not fond of but know the story may be better for them?

AM: I just go ahead and do it. I think with any writing project, regardless of what it is, like whether it's interactive fiction or if it's a play or if it's a novel or whatever, you are always going to end up writing scenes or different situations that you don't like. Or maybe you find them boring or maybe you find them frustrating or maybe you have writer's block with this scene and *I just don't want to write this thing*.

But if it's for the benefit of the narrative arc or, in this case, the benefit of the game mechanics and I need to have them there, then I just have to force myself to do it. *(laughs)*

CG: Fair enough.

AM: Yeah.

CG: Question 4. My question is around the scope of the current game. I'm curious how you decided the length of it (I can see 17 chapters on the blog), and in general – the amount of locations and characters? I'm curious if after you decided it would not be a Dragon Age fangame, did the scope increase or decrease?

And as a related question – there are a lot of not only story but also tech and learning Twine etc, did you ever think of making a small experimental project first and then return to Wayfarer?

CG: So, I'm actually going to start with some random bits of this question first since I know they are fast answers.

AM: Mhm.

CG: Did the scope of the game increase or decrease when it was no longer a Dragon Age fan game?

AM: Yes.

(pause—laughing)

AM: It increased.

CG: There we go. I was going to say this is not a yes or no question.

(Both laughing)

CG: But yes, it increased because it was originally going to be—I believe you phrased it as essentially an Inquisition agent mission.

AM: Yeah. And I think in my original beat chart like way way way way back, it was going to be like maybe six or seven chapters? It was a pretty standalone, contained adventure. But basically in taking those characters and shoving them into an original universe and all the worldbuilding and all the plot restructures... I shouldn't even say "plot restructures"—it's a new story! It's a new story. It's just a completely new story.

And just to be playing in my own universe... I have to do the work to set up everything that I wouldn't have to do in a fan game.

CG: Totally.

AM: Right? It's like fan fiction. Fan fiction you can... If you're writing fan fiction of a pre-established IP you can just jump right in. And everyone knows who the characters are and everyone knows what the setting is, you don't need to explain anything, you can just go. Whereas with your original work you have to do *all* that groundwork. And that takes time.

CG: Yeah. And in general, the amount of locations and characters? So we tried to actually math this out

AM: Yeah.

CG: And essentially the overall answer is Read and Find Out.

AM: *(laughing)*

CG: But with locations—you don't have a firm answer on that right now, right?

AM: No, because I'm still playing with a few different things and there are things I still need to do. Like the map of Velantis, I know roughly where everything is and what all the different districts are called, but because I haven't made the final version of the map yet I don't have a specific answer for that?

CG: Oh, yeah. And for characters. 90% of the characters haven't been written yet, in terms of any named person that you're going to run into. But to break this down, how do you divide up your main characters?

AM: So, it's divided into basically Companion Characters, who are the characters who are with the player character for the duration of their journey, and then Faction Characters. So, there are six factions in Velantis who you will engage with in different ways. And each faction has about three or four different characters attached to them. Some of them are antagonists, some of them aren't. It's very flexible because, again, it's all choice-based and it depends on how you interact with them. And siding with certain factions will make other factions dislike you... *(laughing)*

CG: So, kind of as we worked out the math—

AM: Mhm.

CG: It's your seven main characters, somewhere around 18-20 different faction characters, and we're looking at over 30 major named characters of varying importance to the game. And beyond that, we'll see.

AM: Yeah, because the way that I work—especially on something that has as large a scope as this game does—is that I don't decide absolutely every single possible detail before I start writing. Because otherwise I would be worldbuilding for years before I actually got around to writing.

This is kind of similar to the research problem that happens if you're writing historical fiction where you just keep researching and just keep researching and then you still feel like you don't know enough about the things that you need to know, and then all of a sudden you've spent two years researching and you haven't written a single word of the project that you want to write.

So, similarly with worldbuilding and outlining and plot structure and all that kind of stuff, there comes a point where you have to say: "I have done enough. I don't know all the answers. But I know the answers for the major things." So I can start writing and actually start working, because a lot of things will resolve themselves... You won't know the answers to them until you start writing.

The most important thing is to have a beat chart, which maps out the main plot points of your story.

CG: Speaking of the beat chart, how did you come to the length of the game? It was through that beat chart, correct?

AM: Yeah. And as I was doing the beat chart, I had it in mind that I wanted each act to be roughly equal in terms of the number of chapters. So Act 1 is going to be about five chapters and Act 2 and Act 3 will be six.

And the other thing I had in mind as I was doing that structure, I was thinking about the chapter structure of games like Final Fantasy VII: Remake and Final Fantasy XV, which have a very long list of chapters for the player to work through. Final Fantasy VII: Remake, I think, has seventeen chapters and Final Fantasy XV has fifteen chapters (because of course it does, *(laughing)* I wonder why they made that decision!).

And something that I noticed when I was playing both of those games is that some chapters are more linear and they have a very defined start point and end point and it just shuffles the player through all of these plot points towards a very specific end. And then other chapters are a lot more open in terms of how you can tackle things and how you can navigate the events.

So that was something—in terms of inspiration and in terms of my plotting—that I was thinking about.

CG: And the last part of this question: because there's a lot of story tech and learning Twine that you had to go about, did you ever think of making a small experimental project first and then return to Wayfarer?

That was kind of what the Dragon Age game was, wasn't it?

AM: Yeah, it was. Because that was the first thing I had ever done in Twine. And because I was playing with RPG mechanics right from the beginning, that taught me a lot about how I wanted to go about things. I think the main thing that I learned from doing it, even though... like... I didn't progress very far. I didn't finish the Dragon Age fan game. I only got maybe about 5% into it. **(laughing)** But that was enough for me to realize that I needed to cut back on certain ideas, make things a little bit simpler in terms of certain mechanics—

So, for example, in the Dragon Age fan game, because I was trying to mimic what BioWare does in the actual games, I had multiple classes, which meant multiple weapon types, and then you could use strength and dexterity and magic, and all of these different stat checks and stuff. And it ended up being way too much.

The reason that the main character of Wayfarer uses a sword and only a sword is because the Dragon Age fan game taught me that it is way too much work to write fight sequences with multiple different weapon types, especially if you have stat checks involved as well.

Because then not only are you writing passes and fails for each check, you're writing multiple versions of each pass and each fail depending on the weapon type. Because you can't just... At least in the way that I write action sequences, I can't just replace \$weapontype with a variable and say: "You swing your sword. You swing your dagger. You swing your... bow and arrow?"

I think with something that is a lot more simplified and is like "You attack with your bow. You hit for 10 points of damage."—something like that, it's fine there. But the way that I'm writing action sequences, it doesn't work.

CG: All right, that's everything for Creative Process. Moving onto some questions about the game and lore.

It's probably looking a little too far forward and I understand if it's too far in the future, but I keep seeing mysteries pile up in Rhesainia and it makes me wonder if there are any plans to use this setting for future projects?

AM: At the moment, no. But it is a very big world and there is definitely the possibility of more stories being written in it. But I think that is too far in the future for me to consider right now. I need to finish this game first.

CG: The seventeen chapters of this game.

AM: ...yes.

CG: Will we have a base camp/home base kind of space to "go back to" in Velantis? I know all the party members probably won't hang out in one spot since they're all living in the city as it is so they probably have their own places to live, but I'm curious if the Wayfarer will have one.

AM: Yep. You will have a hub. And it will be for the chapters where you have Exploration sequences, like that will be your starting spot and then you will decide where to go. It's kind of like a hub world for all of the characters to intersect and stuff. That's kind of necessary with the amount of characters there are.

CG: Will it be possible to miss out on recruiting any of the party members?

AM: Not for the main cast. But there are secondary party members that you can miss. There is one specific character who... You encounter this character in Rona and if your actions lead to them dying, then they will not show up in Velantis.

CG: Death is a thing that makes a commute like that a little difficult.

AM: A little bit, a little bit.

CG: With the various romance interests already decided, I'm curious: Did you create them first, and then find a way to work them into the story, or did you plot the story out first and the characters came naturally?

AM: So, with some of the characters it's... their creation is a little bit... weird... in that specifically Alexia, Ren and Calla were all made—oh, and Aeran (sorry, Aeran)—um. Alexia, Ren, Calla and Aeran were all created for the Dragon Age fan game. So when I made them, I had a completely different set of expectations in mind. Like the reason that Alexia, Ren, and Calla are respectively a human, an elf and a dwarf is because I was thinking about, you know, the—

CG: The main Dragon Age races.

AM: The main Dragon Age races, right? And Aeran, in particular, he was supposed to be a tutorial character in the vein of Tamlen, or... what... hm... I forget. I'm blanking on some of the other tutorial characters in Dragon Age: Origins.

CG: Tamlen, Merrill—

AM: Outside of the Mahariel origin.

CG: There's the knight—

AM: What's the dwarf?

CG: —who joins you in the human noble one—

AM: Yeah, I'm trying to remember what the dwarf's name is in the Aeducan origin.

CG: The merchant that you end up meeting—

AM: Yeah.

CG: —on the surface?

AM: Yeah.

CG: Does it start with an O?

AM: No... I forget.

CG: Whatever. Not important.

AM: FINE DWARVEN CRAFTS!

(Laughter)

CG: So, they came originally because you had crafted them to fit the Dragon Age staples. And then everyone else, they've been coming hand-in-hand with the story?

AM: Yeah, because it's really difficult for me to separate character and plot because the characters create the plot, but then the plot creates the framework for the characters, so both happen at the same time.

But the way that I work is that I use placeholders a lot. So I know that there is a role that needs to be filled, but I don't necessarily know right away who is going to fill that role. And then as I continue to do my worldbuilding and as I continue to do my writing and all of that, it becomes clearer as to who fills that role.

So, Mel and Nelani and Felix came out of that because I had gaps in my story and I was like "Hmm... There is a character who needs to fill this gap." And then they came out of different narrative needs that I had.

CG: So, all of the above, in how they come into play.

AM: All of the above.

CG: Question about the player character:

The Player Character seems to have a relatively set personality, with the opposed more so deciding how they react to things. What made you decide to go this way and why do you think it's important?

AM: Uh, so, this is a personal preference thing.

So, I have found—again, emphasizing personal preference—I have found that, at least, when it comes to interactive fiction, it's really, really difficult to do blank slate characters in a way that is engaging for me, personally, as a player. Because I often find that they are so vague and left so open to interpretation. And even if the game is employing mechanics where you can get different results and get different flavour text depending on what personality choices you take and which different personality choices are established, I still find that the bulk of the text itself is not enough to establish a character who has a defined character arc.

And when I think about the games that I have enjoyed roleplaying the most, it tends to be games that have a defined role for me to fill. Either through something like the Witcher 3 or Horizon: Zero Dawn where it's a predefined character and you're choosing how they interact with different scenarios, but all their dialogue still makes sense for them, it's still in character for them, even if it leads to different reactions. Or something like Dragon Age 2 where, again, you have a little more flexibility in the way in which you play your Hawke—or your version of Hawke—but it's still within a certain framework.

Like that framework... yes, that framework puts restrictions on the type of roleplaying that can be done, but you can still have a character that works towards a defined character arc and towards a defined end.

CG: And it allows people to interact with them in meaningful ways instead of having to keep everything incredibly shallow because they have to account for your character being so many different things.

AM: Yeah.

CG: Last question. Can you imagine Wayfarer being anything other than an interactive fiction game, such as an open-world RPG, a visual novel, a first-person shooter—

AM: *(laughing)*Ah.

CG: Or is it set in stone with what it is?

AM: Well, never a first person game, because I can't play those, they make me sick. So, no. But, no, in all seriousness, the way I am designing this game is that it is intended to be interactive fiction. I think it would have to change drastically in order to fit a different genre. Because there are things and ideas that I am playing with in its structure that would be pretty much impossible in, say, a normal video game.

For example—this is something you told me when you read the first draft of the fight with the Count at the end of Chapter 1... in the A Route... where... I forget what you said, it was something along the lines of you weren't expecting it to branch into four different ways...?

CG: What I had said was that with the way that this game is going, you essentially as a player think that you probably understand where the branches are and where they'd be going and where they'd be back to bottlenecking. So, like, with the fight with the Count: okay, so there's probably a Persuasion check where you avoid the fight and every other route leads to a fight—

AM: Mhm.

CG: But the way that it goes, there's so many different types of fights that can happen. Different ways they can start, different ways they can end. There's a few points where they can end up linking up with another version of that route, but if you were a game designer actually trying to design and code that set piece, it would be virtually impossible because you're going to spend so much time on a version of the fight that 75% of the players will not see. And it's why regular games have more of that bottlenecking problem, because you are going to have to code the Fight at the Count's Manor, which means there may be some small variables that can be changed within that. Maybe there's more enemies, maybe there's easier enemies, maybe you have this equipment or you don't, but regardless the fight will always be The Fight.

But with yours, it's Fight A, Fight B, Fight C, Fight D.

AM: Yeah.

CG: And you can enter into those in different ways. You will never see semblances of the other ones.

AM: Yeah.

CG: Just with the branches, there are differences between satisfying branches and non-satisfying branches. And the ones that are satisfying are the ones where you don't just feel like you're being sent down a different path, but you actually are.

And with the replay value of Wayfarer, you'll have your one playthrough and decide to go back and do it again and make different choices. And then you won't even see your previous playthrough.

AM: Because my intention when I started designing this project was that I wanted to create something that had a lot of replay value, but also something where the replay value doesn't come from just reloading and trying different things, it comes from you do one playthrough, you have one experience, you do another playthrough, you get another experience.

I'm never intending for everyone to see absolutely every single part of the game. It's too much content. You're probably not going to find everything. Please don't try.

CG: It's why it can't really exist as an open-world RPG because game studios are going to be hampered by time eventually. And you can't be affording to spend large portions of your development process coding things 25, 40, 60 percent of players will never see.

AM: Yeah. Because something I've been playing around with a lot with the design of this game is leaving little surprises for players who take certain options. For example, talking about the Count fight again at the end of Chapter 1, if you are Melusine for your ancestry, you will have an alternative version of the fight with the basilisk, because that fight happens under water. But because that fight happens under water, there's a whole bunch of different... The ending of that fight ends up being just naturally completely different from everything else. It's almost like an easter egg. I don't think a lot of people have found it.

CG: But yeah. [Wayfarer's] an interactive fiction, it works best as an interactive fiction, and it's interactive fiction to stay.

AM: Well, it's intended to be interactive fiction, so. Like there are things that this form can do that other forms cannot do, right? And that's kind of like the enjoyment of it. Like as a game developer I'm interested in pushing the form and seeing what you can do with it.

But that's one of the reasons why failing your stat checks has become so important. It's not just about choosing to do certain things, but it's also... Okay, you've chosen to do something, but does it work or does it not work? And then what happens when it doesn't work? Or what happens when it does work?

For example, one of the things I've been really enjoying is that Persuasion checks... The passes and fails will have different dialogue that the player character says depending on whether you pass or you fail. Because I've always found it weird with persuasion checks in a lot of fantasy RPGs where you say exactly the same line regardless, and then you're given a percentage of whether you're going to pass or fail, but you say the same thing. And you either pass or fail depending on what your chances are or where your stats are at or whatever.

And, as a writer I was thinking about this, and... what's the difference? If I'm persuading someone and I'm bad at it, chances are I'm going to say the wrong thing or say the right thing, but in the wrong way. But if I'm very coercive or I have really good persuasion skills, then I'm going to say exactly the right thing in exactly the right way. I've been having fun putting in that difference of dialogue.

CG: All right, that is all the questions we have for today. So, definitely let us know what you thought of this format—a little more of a podcast-esque long-form conversation. And we'll probably be doing something like this again one day.

AM: Yeah, not sure when. Probably several months down the line from now when there's more content out and that kind of thing, but yeah.

CG: But all right, thanks for joining us for this little Q & A everybody.

AM: Thank you for stopping by.

CG: Hope you have a fantastic rest of your day, night, or whatever time it is there.

AM: All right, good bye, friends!

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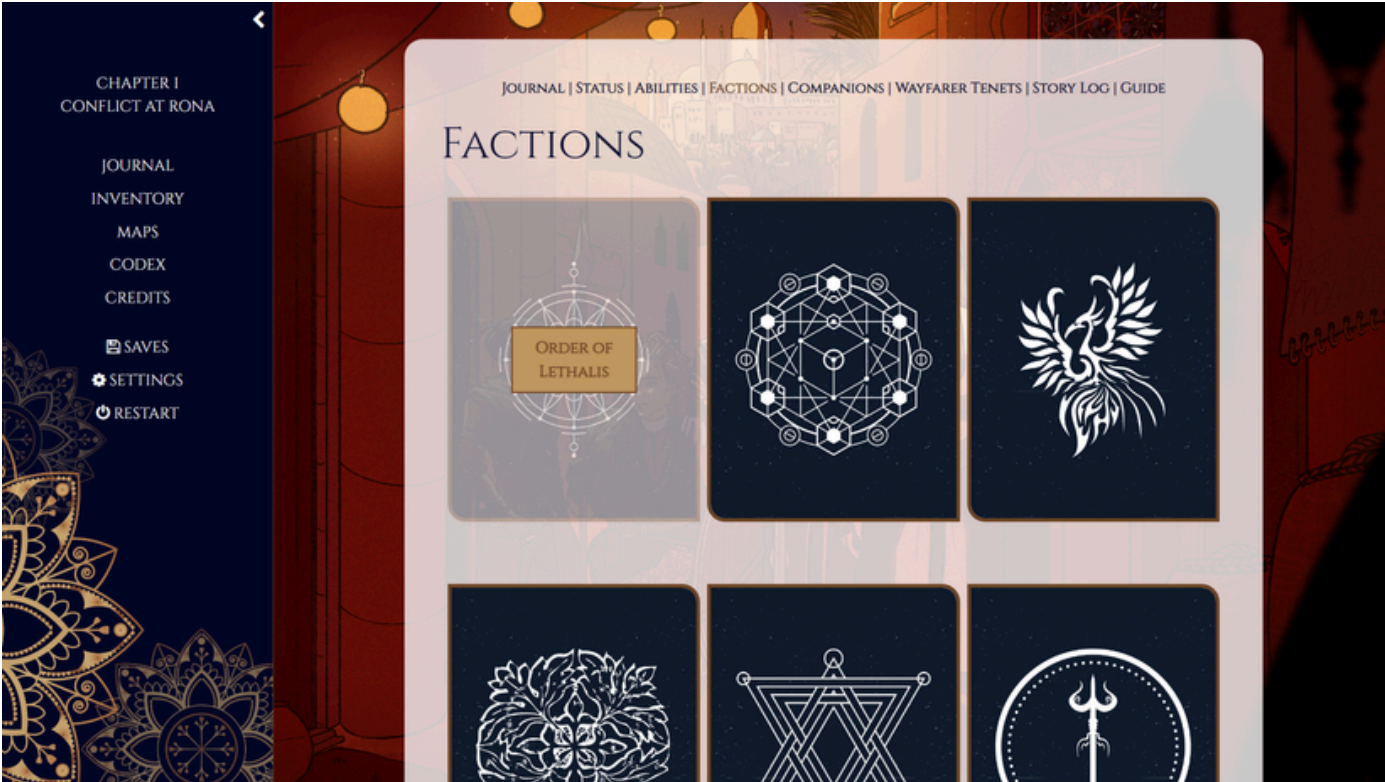
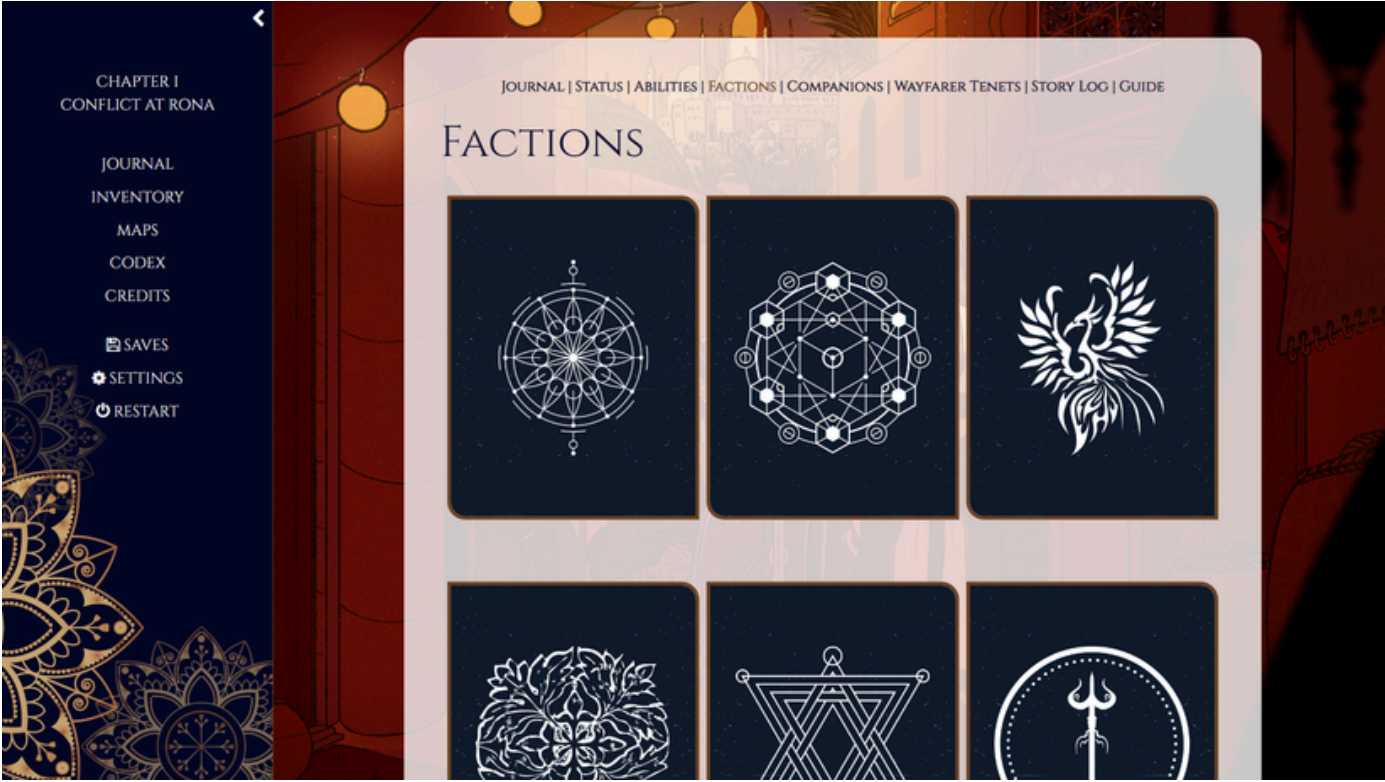
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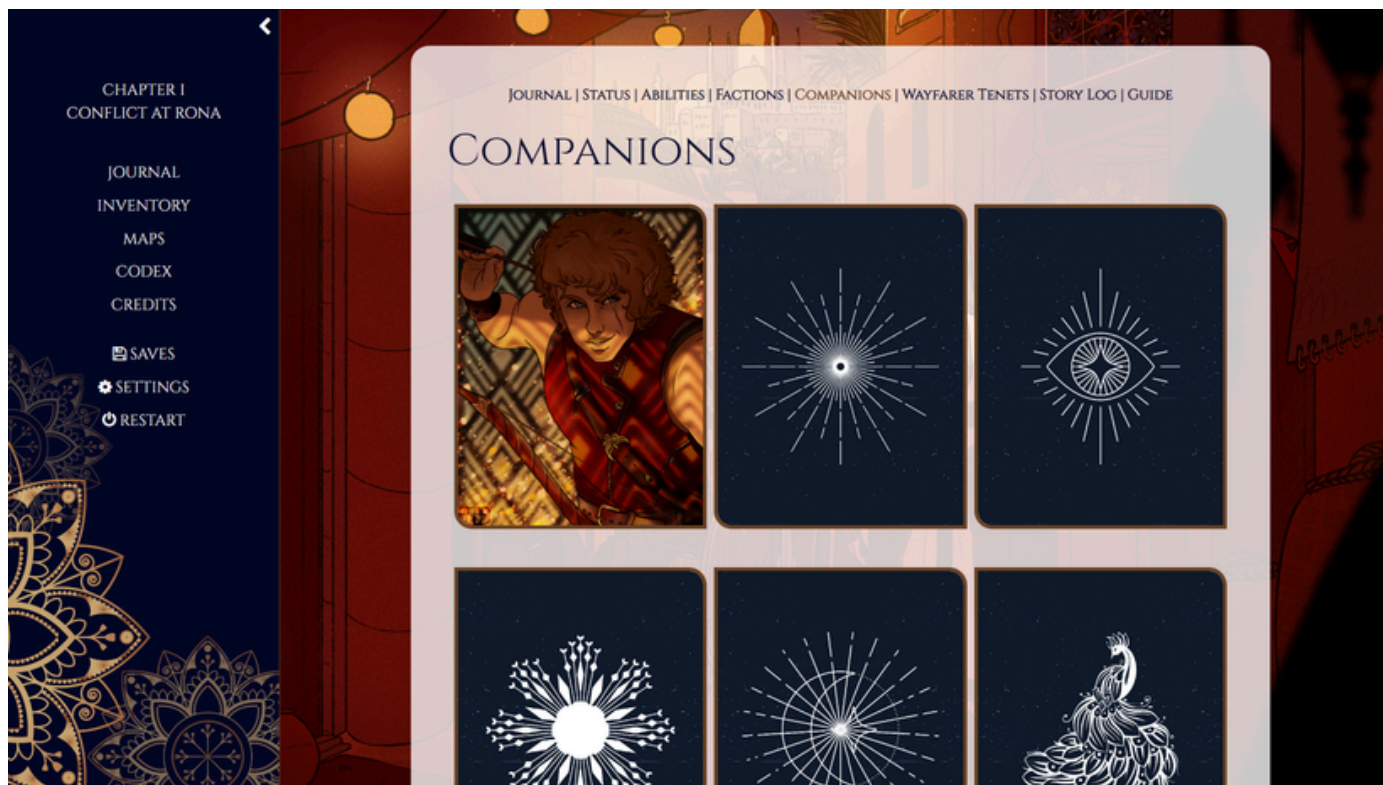
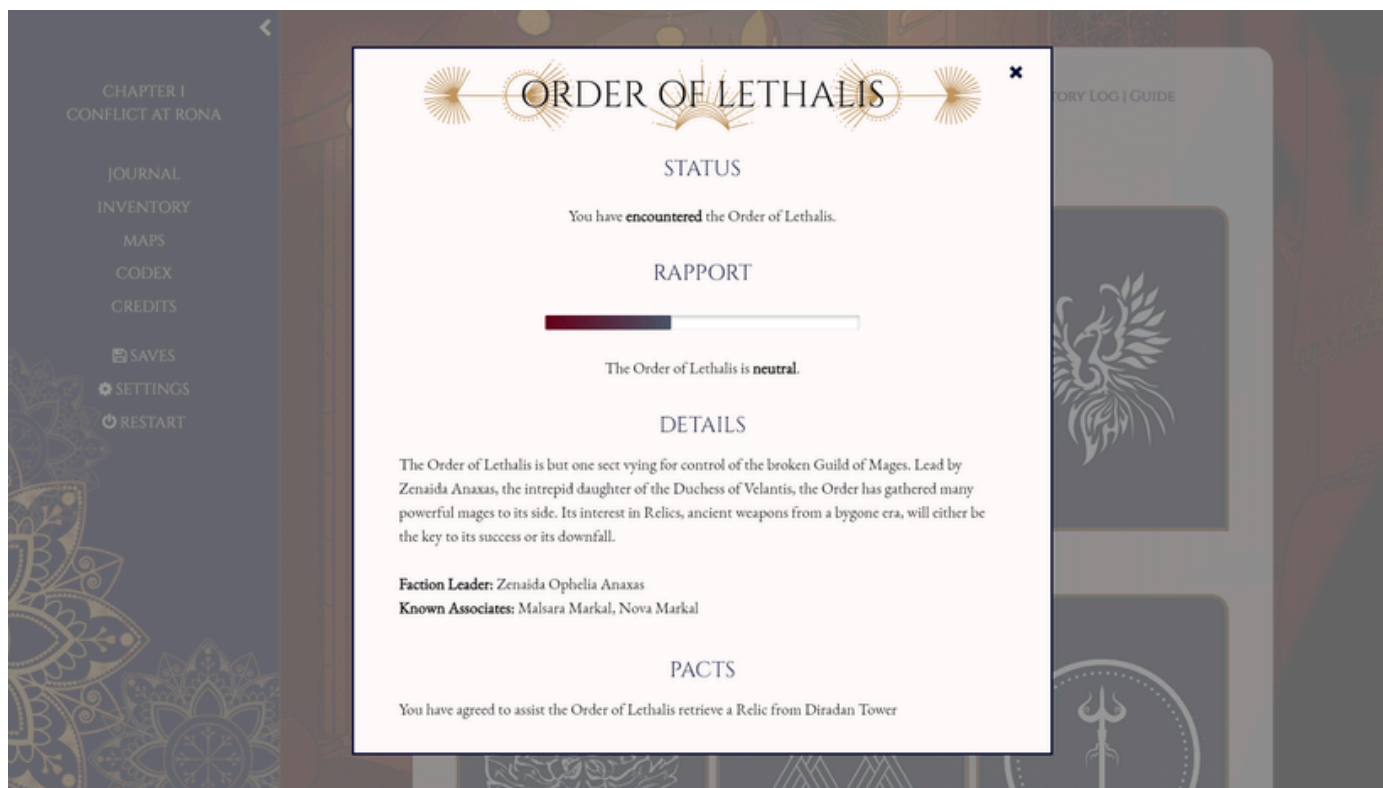
Hi friends,

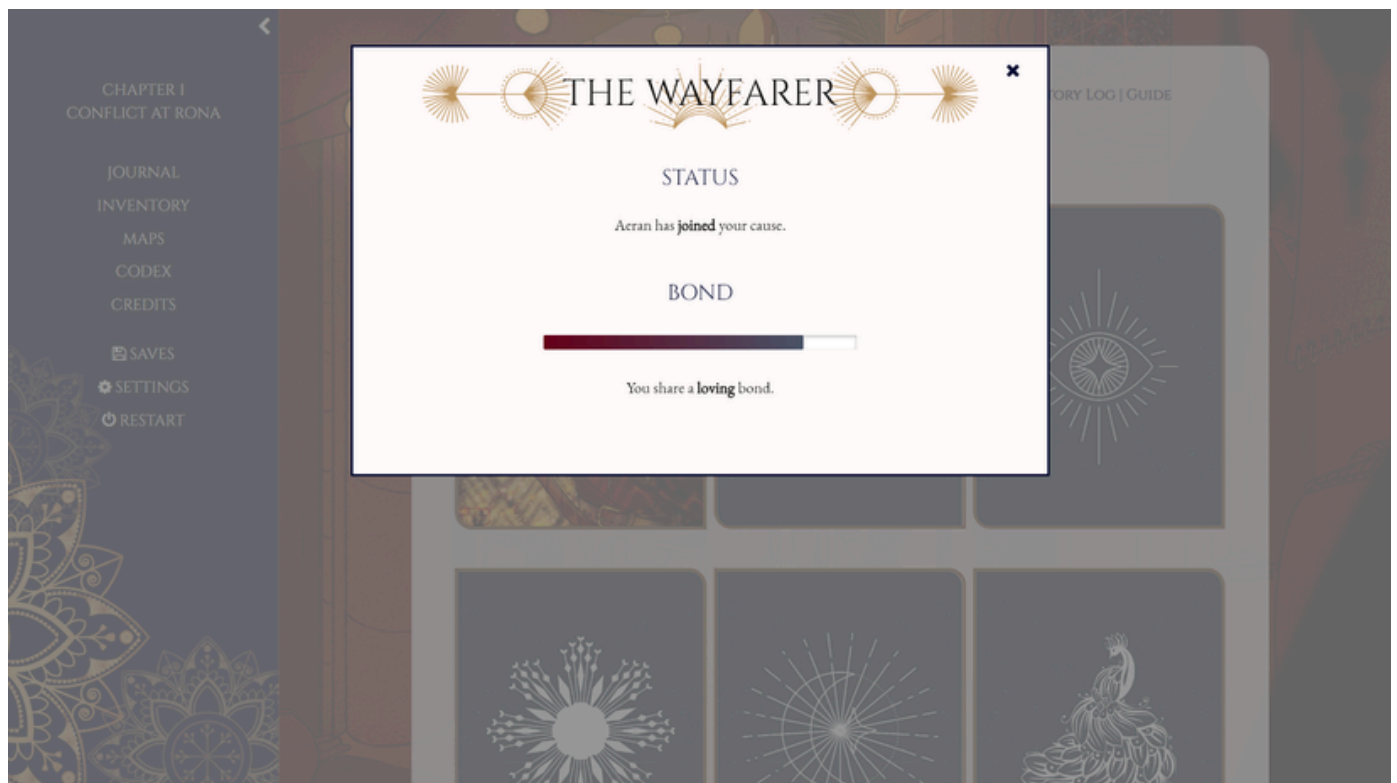
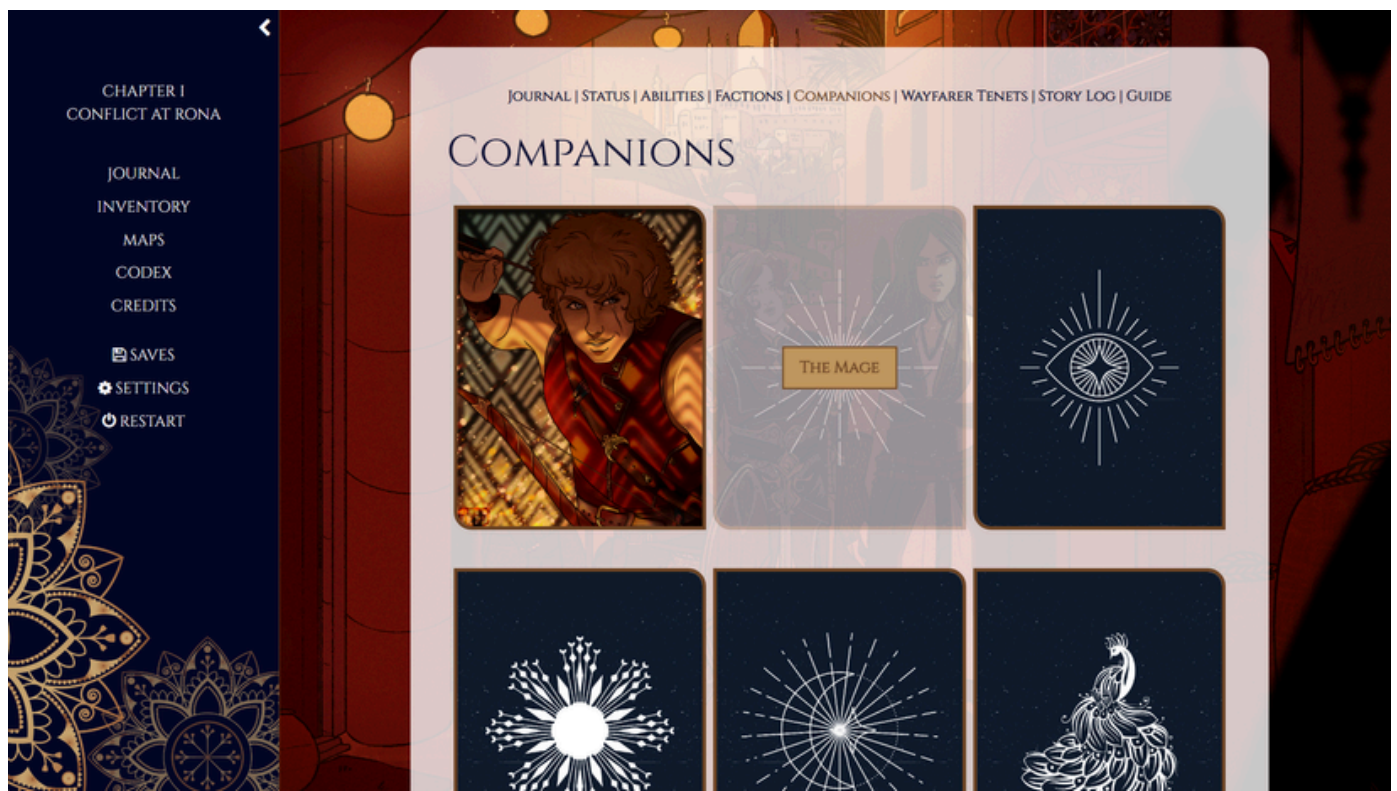
As March rolls to an end, I admit I have been struggling a bit to meet my deadlines. As I mentioned in the bulk message I sent out, I've been having some health problems related to my eyesight (nothing serious, just the result is that I need decreased screen time, which ultimately impacts my ability to work on the game). I have been doing some drafting by hand, namely sketches of city maps and a few outlines of upcoming short stories. I am not where I would like to be at the end of this month, but that's how development goes sometimes.

Game Updates

As of today, I have completed all of the edits to the public build I intended to do before the alpha build is released. I made my life a little more complicated by redesigning both the Faction and the Companion pages in the Journal. I had an idea for a card system, where each faction/main character has a "card" associated with them, and you click on that card for the relevant information. (This is partially inspired by media/character pages designed by a few tumblr theme makers I really like).







These designs aren't 100% set in stone yet, but I do like the direction I've gone for them.

I also tweaked the dialogue box design, which affects all pop ups in the game (including: Saves, Restart, Settings and regular dialogue boxes). I've been attempting to redesign the entire thing to have an elaborate frame around the pop-up, but that is far too complicated for me and I wasn't really sure where to start doing that. Instead, I added a background header to the title bar (which needs a few tweaks as sometimes I find it hard to read the title on top of the image).

A few other additions:

- Added a setting that turns off the handwritten font for codex letters
- Fixed some issues with the font size settings
- Fixed a bug where the MC receives +1 Random Stat in the Prologue. Previously, they didn't receive any stats. They will now receive +1 random stat.
- Attempted to place a "Return to Game" button in the sidebar, but ran into an unfixable issue where the Inventory duplicates when they player clicks "return to game".
- Moved the chapter header to the sidebar. The chapter number and title will now appear above the sidebar menu.
- Lockpicks are now no longer consumables. They are a reusable item, like the grappling hook, and can be used as long as they are in the MC's inventory.
- Added a "Pact Forged" icon to the MC's dialogue options when they accept their contract from Zenaida (this will also be tracked in their records in the Journal)
- Re-wrote the letter the MC receives from their master (it is now a letter specifically from Brissa Varyn)
- Added letter titled "A summons from the Grandmaster" to the Codex
- Edited some lore in the Rona codex (look for the word greendrift! It's important!)
- Edited some timeline references (the MC and Aeran have been in Rona for six months, Luthais is specifically referred to as a greendrift in place of a street urchin)

If you have access to the alpha build, you can check out these changes early before I update the public build! Integration with itch.io is still forthcoming, but you can find the link and the password in the alpha build post pinned at the top of the Patreon posts.

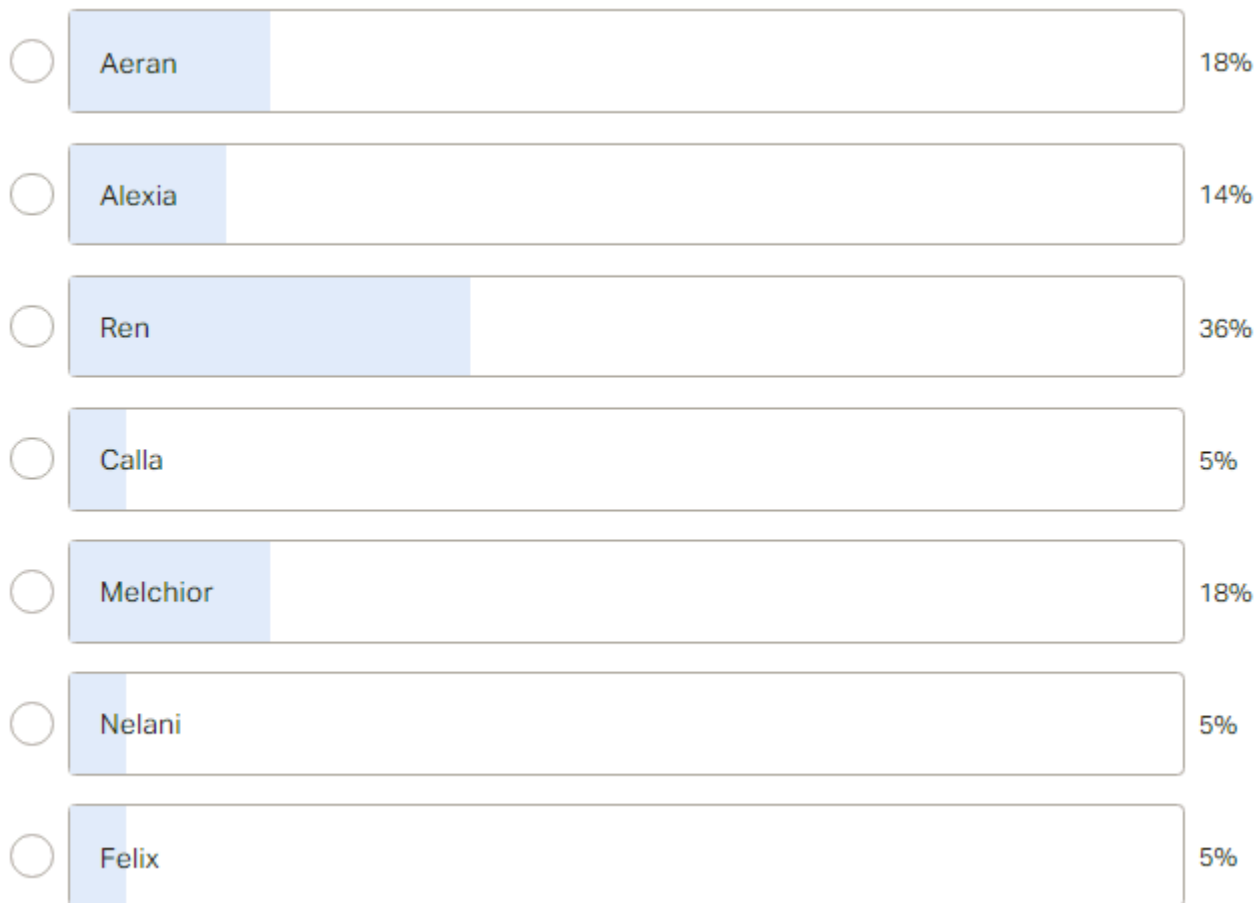
Alpha Build

While I am pushing to get the alpha build update out as soon as possible, I unfortunately haven't been able to start editing the VL sequence, let alone begin coding it. Because of my set backs this week, I don't think I will be able to get it out for March 31, but this weekend is a lot more likely.

Thank you for your patience!

Patreon Updates

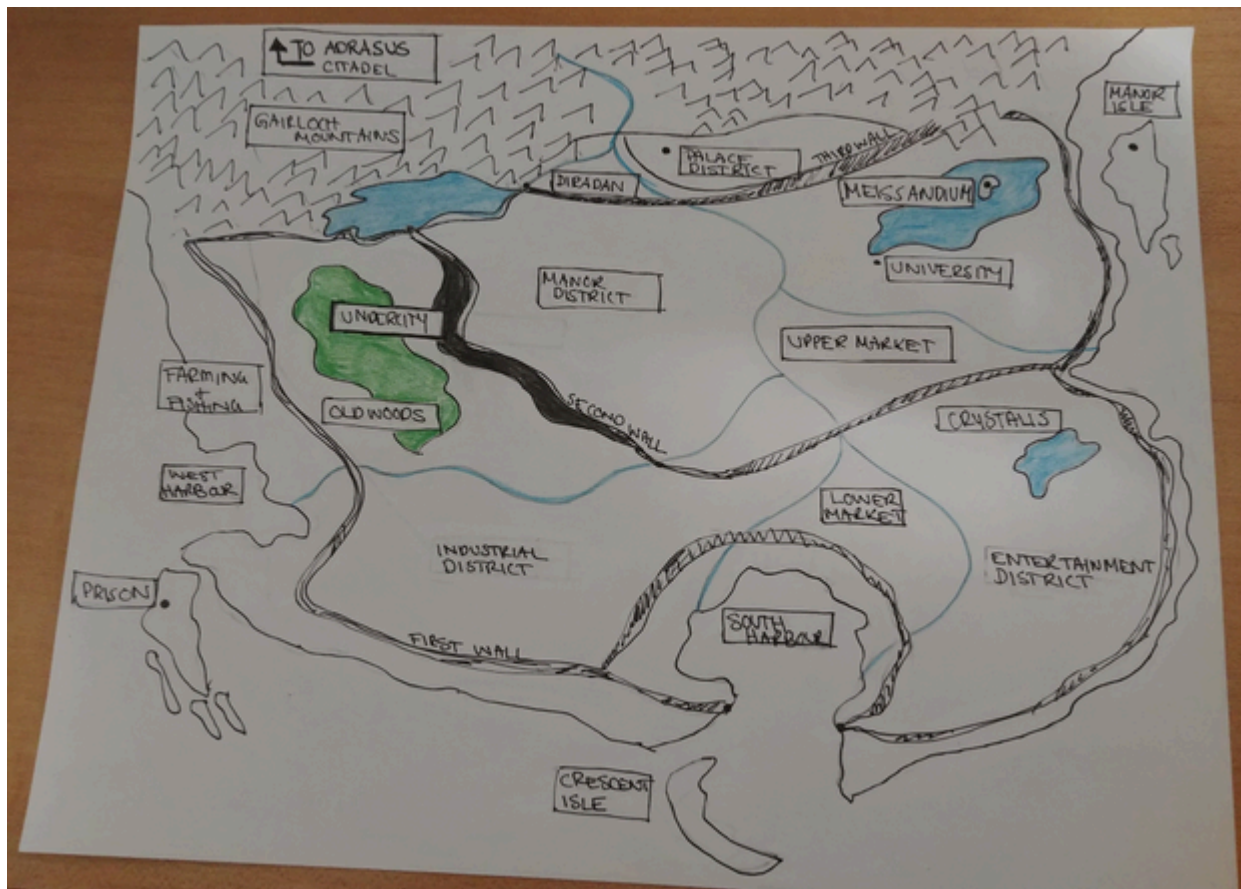
This month, we ran a poll about main character side stories. For a while Ren and Mel were tied, but Ren is currently winning by a landslide.



I don't have a set schedule yet for the side stories, but I am hoping for one per month. I am currently drafting a Ren short story as next month's bonus content and I'm pretty excited for it. It will be a quick look into life in Velantis and will introduce two major characters for Ren's arc, Raven and Ves.

The poll is open for two more days, for those who want to sneak in a last minute vote!

Have a great week!



[A Map of Velantis \(Draft\)](#)

[Apr 1, 2021](#)

This is a very, very, VERY rough draft of a map of Velantis that is a placeholder until I can convert this to Wonderdraft and sketch it out with its cartography tools.

I've known for a while what I want the city to look like—it's a peninsula, it's squeezed between the sea and the mountains, it's a walled city with three tiers, there are a handful of weird landmarks scattered across the peninsula.

I'm still debating on place names, so everything is a rough placeholder (none of these names are going to transfer into the game itself). With that in mind, here's a brief guide to the main setting of the game.

Outer Wall

Fishing and Farming – exactly what it says on the tin. This is where the city gets its food supply. Primarily uses the West Harbour.

Prison – Velantis' high security prison is located on a isle off the coast. Why they need so much space, no one knows.

Crescent Isle – Overlooks the South Harbour. Home to ancient ruins that date back to before the Astrandium (over 3000 years). Said to be cursed. Sometimes the Isle is cloaked in mist, which makes navigating into the harbour difficult.

South Harbour – Main harbour. Guarded by twin statues of the twins who were said to have founded the city over 1000 years ago.

Lower Tier

Industrial District – Factories, artisans, crafters. Large Arcanists' Guild presence here. Also houses the Faran Quarter, which is home to many Faran humans and dwarves who were displaced after political upheaval in Farandor about 200-300 years ago.

Lower Market – large commercial district. Direct access to the South Harbour.

Entertainment District – follows one of the rivers. Pretty area, lots of gardens and walkways. Home to theatre, art galleries, museums, and other such things. Large Melusine quarter located near the lake. Mel's theatre company works from here.

Crystalis – A giant spire formed from pure crystal that lodged itself partially in the lake. Is a tourist attraction and has a museum. Crystal dates back to the Astrandium and is the focus of major study from the University of Velantis. It is one of six identical crystals found scattered across the world.

Old Woods – Creepy. Old. What goes in doesn't come out. Leave it alone.

Undercity – a deep, unnatural rift in the land, now home to Velantis' slums. It is nearly impossible to see the sky from the bottom. The lake above flows down a waterfall and feeds the channel that cuts through the bottom of the Undercity.

Second Tier

It is illegal to travel through the second and third tiers while armed.

Manor District – Home to wealthy merchants and the Velantian elite.

Upper Market – Commercial and Financial district for the Velantian elite.

University – The University of Velantis is one of the oldest academies in Rhesainia. The entrance exams are rigorous and those who study often go on to become influential individuals not just within Velantis, but the Arathian Empire. Those who pass the entrance exams study for free, so theoretically anyone from any background can become a student. However, only the wealthy tend to be able to afford the demanding study it takes to pass the exams, so the system is still rigged.

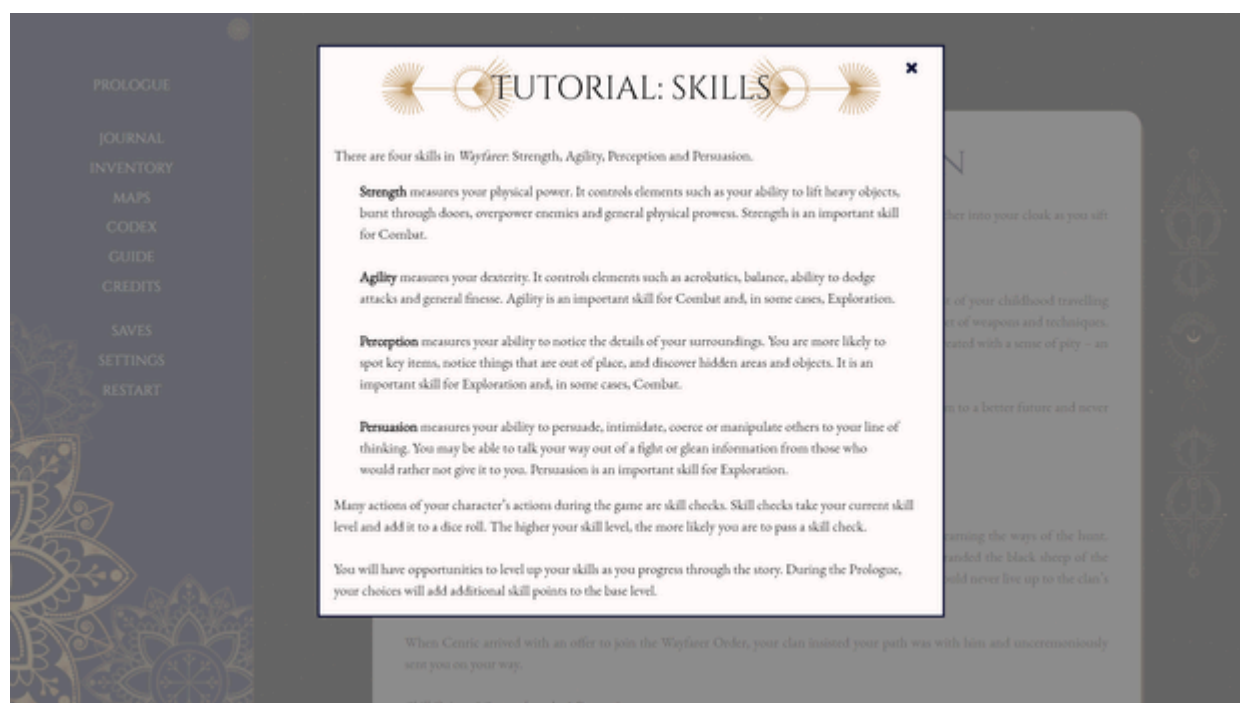
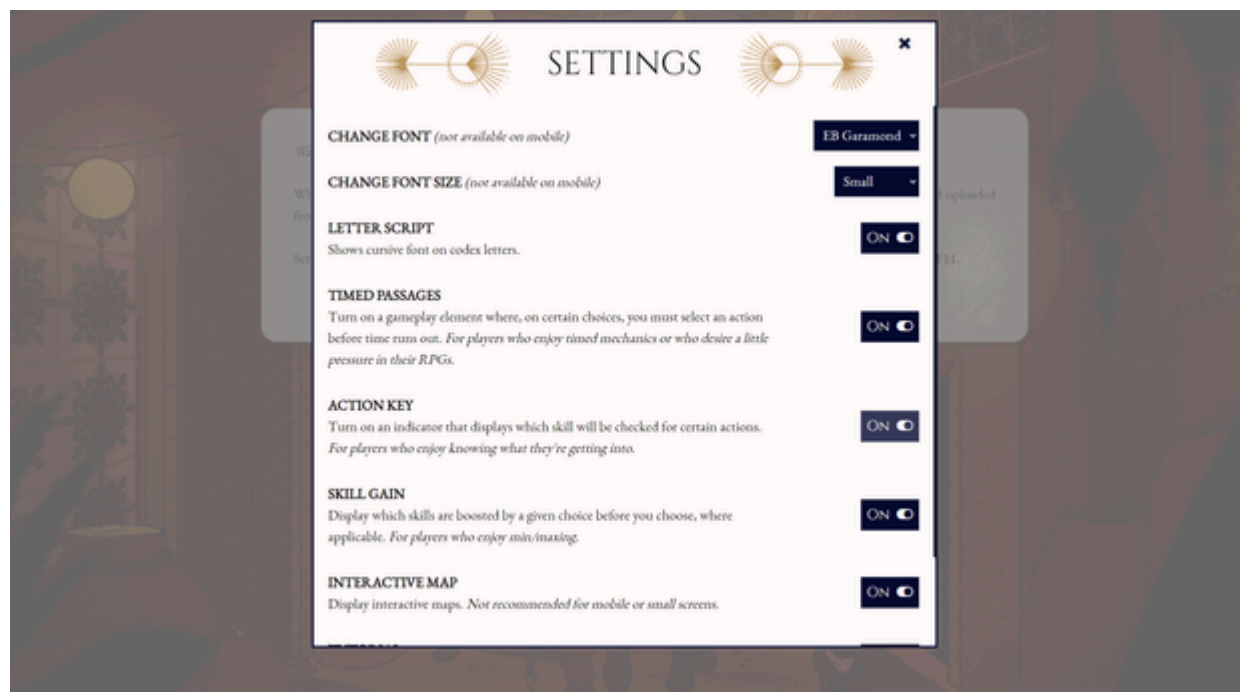
Meissandium – The largest and most influential temple for the Meissandic religion. Home to their religious leaders. The temple is located on an island in the middle of a lake.

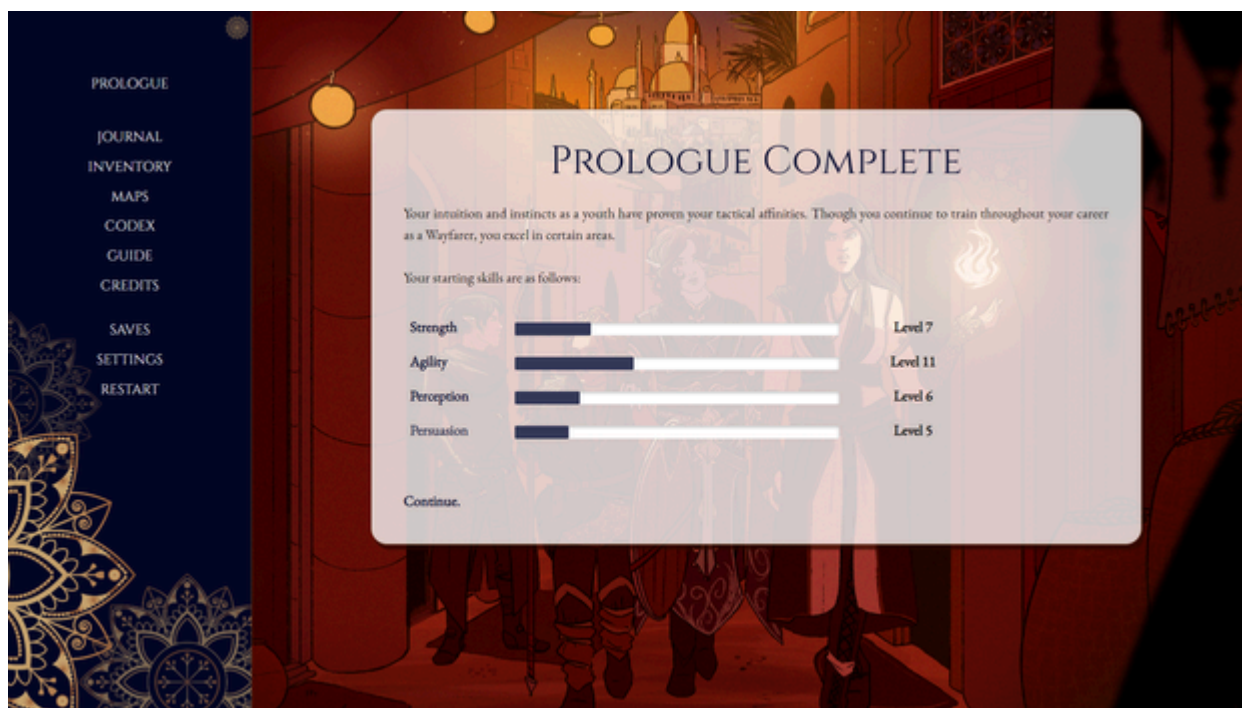
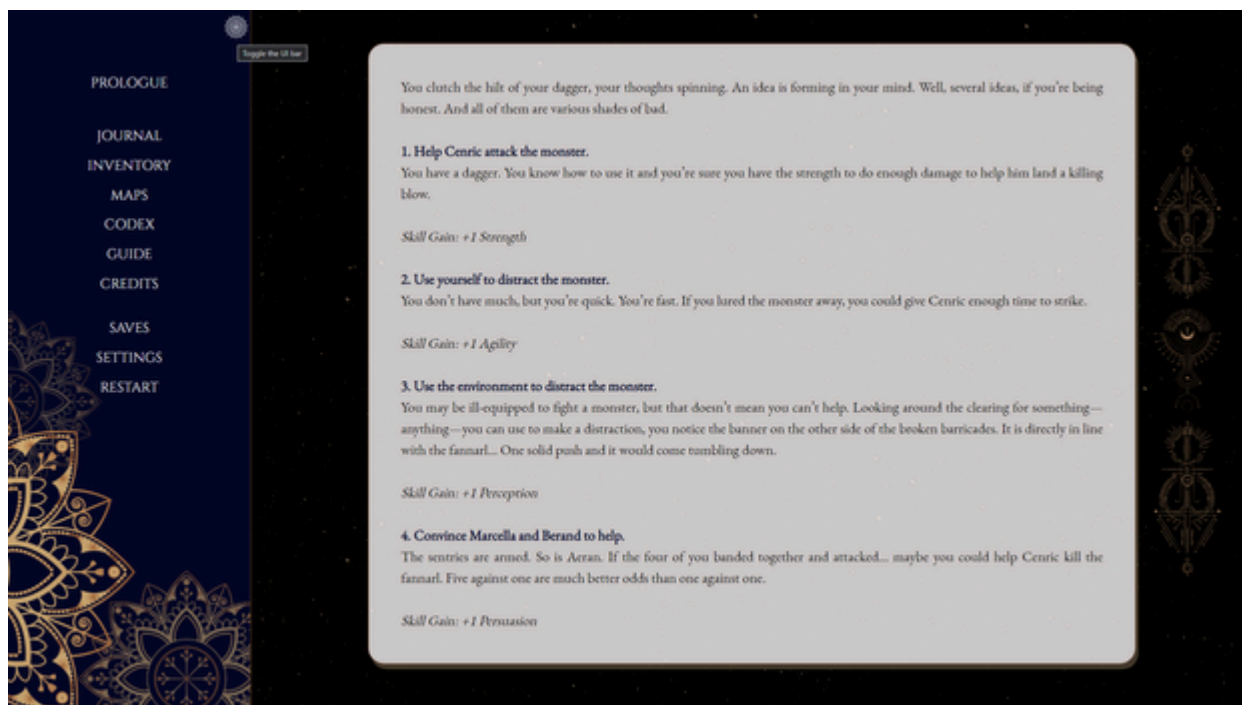
Manor Isle – Vacation homes and villas for the city's elite.

Third Tier

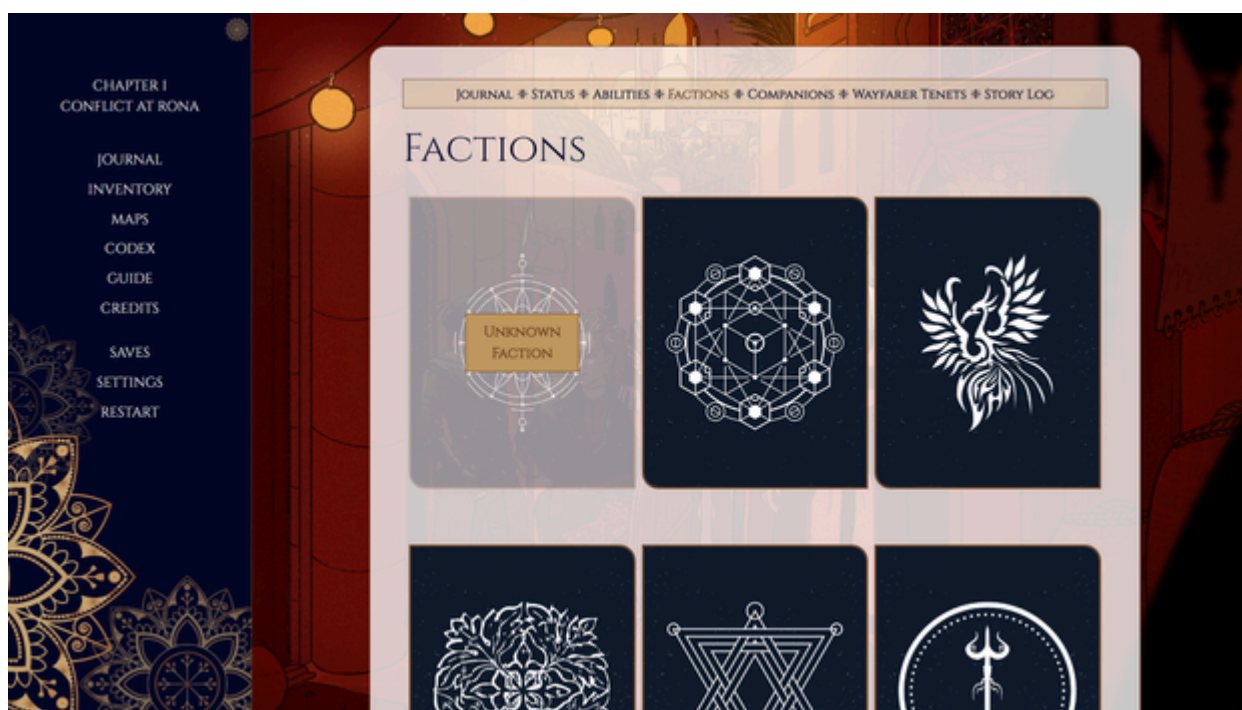
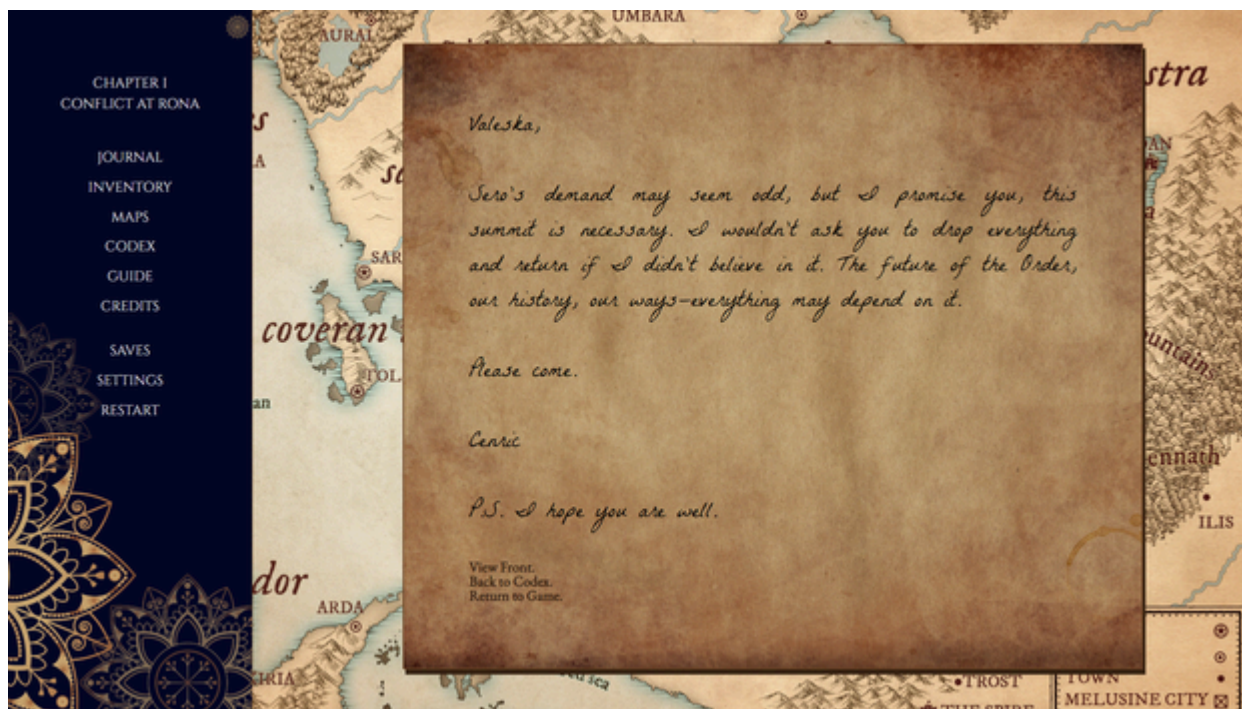
Diradan Tower – Home to the Council of Mages and the headquarters of the Guild of Mages. Part of the tower overlooks a large dammed lake that flows into the Undercity.

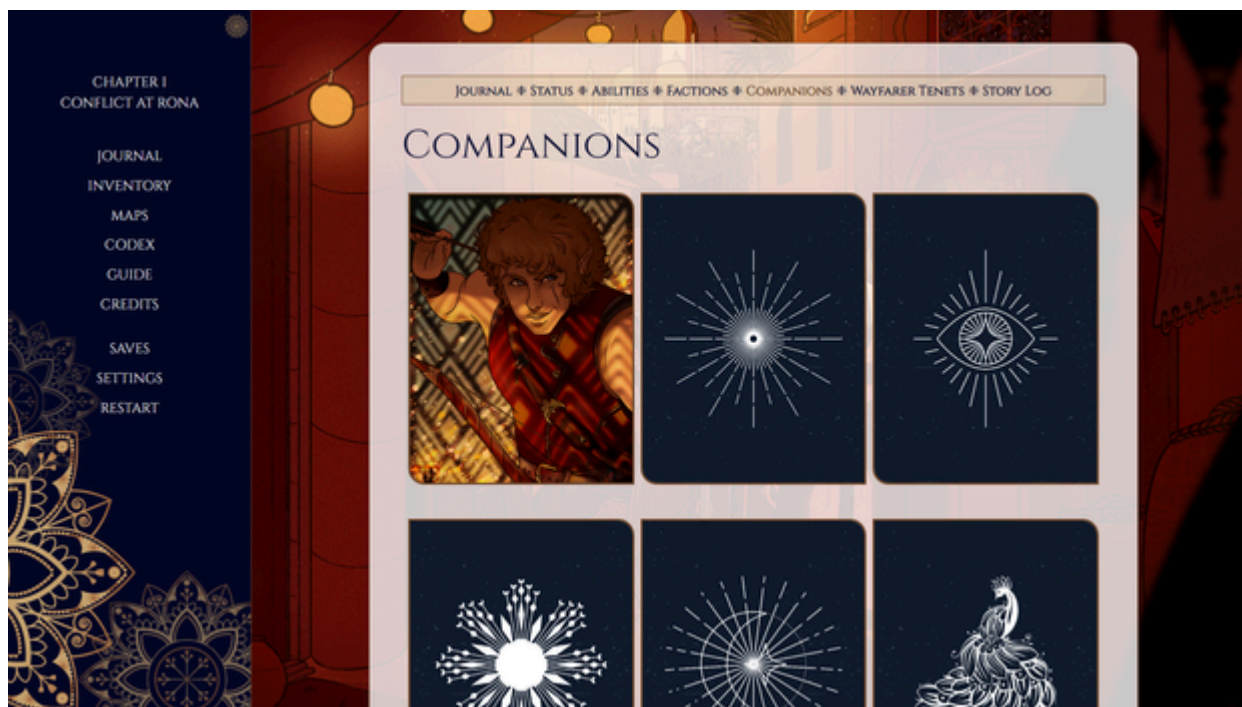
Palace District – Ancestral home to the Velantian royal family, now home to House Anaxas. The complex is built into the surrounding mountains and has lakes, grassy hills, gardens and waterfalls.











[Progress Report 2021-04-05](#)

[Apr 5, 2021](#)

Hi friends,

Happy April! Progress on the game is still going slowly as I'm having continuing issues with dry eyes and screen time. I have taken time off and have radically reduced the amount of time I am spending at my computer, but unfortunately that means that I am not able to get as much done as I usually do.

I am hopefully seeing my eye doctor this week and I am trying to write some segments by hand (just so progress doesn't stall completely).

Game Updates

I am almost done the UI updates for the public build. This became a much more all-encompassing process than I had originally anticipated. There are a lot of small CSS adjustments for polish that aren't noticeable unless you know where to look. You can take a look at some screenshots of new materials above. Here's a list of new UI changes:

- Removed the Font-Awesome icons next to Saves and Restart that are part of the base SugarCube stylesheet
- Created a custom Toggle button for the sidebar (pixelated on mobile; working on figuring out how to clear the image on smaller viewports)
- Added box shadows to all passages to add more dimension against the background
- Added a header box on the Journal pages
- Moved the Guide to be accessible from the sidebar right away, rather than from the Journal
- Adjusted the sidebar for Combat screens (new combat icon and new background)
- Updated the header image on dialogue boxes (Saves, Restart, etc)
- Made significant progress on mobile optimization. It's not 100%, but fonts and headers should resize for smaller viewports. The UI bar cannot be resized without destroying its functionality (not sure why), so it must be collapsed if you're playing on mobile. Dropdown boxes still do not trigger on mobile (tried a new JS solutions, nothing worked on my Android phone at least).

Some other changes:

- The Settings pop up launches on one of the opening pages after you click "New Game". This is to ensure players don't skip over elements that may be helpful for their particular playstyle (according to my data from my Chapter 1 feedback poll, the vast majority of players do not click on Settings)
- Skill Game and Action Key now default to being "on" rather than "off"
- Added a tutorial popup in the Prologue that explains skills and skill checks

I also made a significant change to skill and skill check mechanics. After bashing my head against percentages, my partner helped me out with a skill formula and I have completely redone the way the player's starting skills are handled.

The player now starts with a base skill level of 5. The Prologue / Quick Character Creator still gives the player 9 skill points across all choices (2 from your origin, 4 from your Wayfarer master, and 3 individual choices) to increase their skills from the base level.

Dice rolls and the number required for a successful pass are all higher than they were before. It is now impossible to 100% fail OR 100% succeed a normal skill check (there are still some skill checks that are purposefully easy or difficult than average). There is a level of risk across all choices.

In general:

- Level 5 – 40% to pass
- Level 6 - 45% to pass
- Level 7 - 50% to pass
- Level 8 – 55% to pass
- Level 9 - 60% to pass
- Level 10 – 65% to pass
- Level 11 – 70% to pass

This new system allows for more flexibility as the player grows their stats. I found the system before encouraged players to continue to grow the stats they were already good at, which would eventually lock them out of choosing certain options entirely because their skill level would be too low. If I am committing to the idea that EVERY choice is a risk, then there cannot be 100% chance of success or failure.

The player will not be able to see their chance of success before they select an option; however, I am planning on including that as an unlockable trait down the line.

If you have access to the Alpha Build, these updates are now available. You will have to start a new file for the skill check changes to take effect (playing on an old file will result in an immediately loss of every skill check). This will be true of the public build when that updates (hopefully later this week, I want the changes to sit for a bit first).

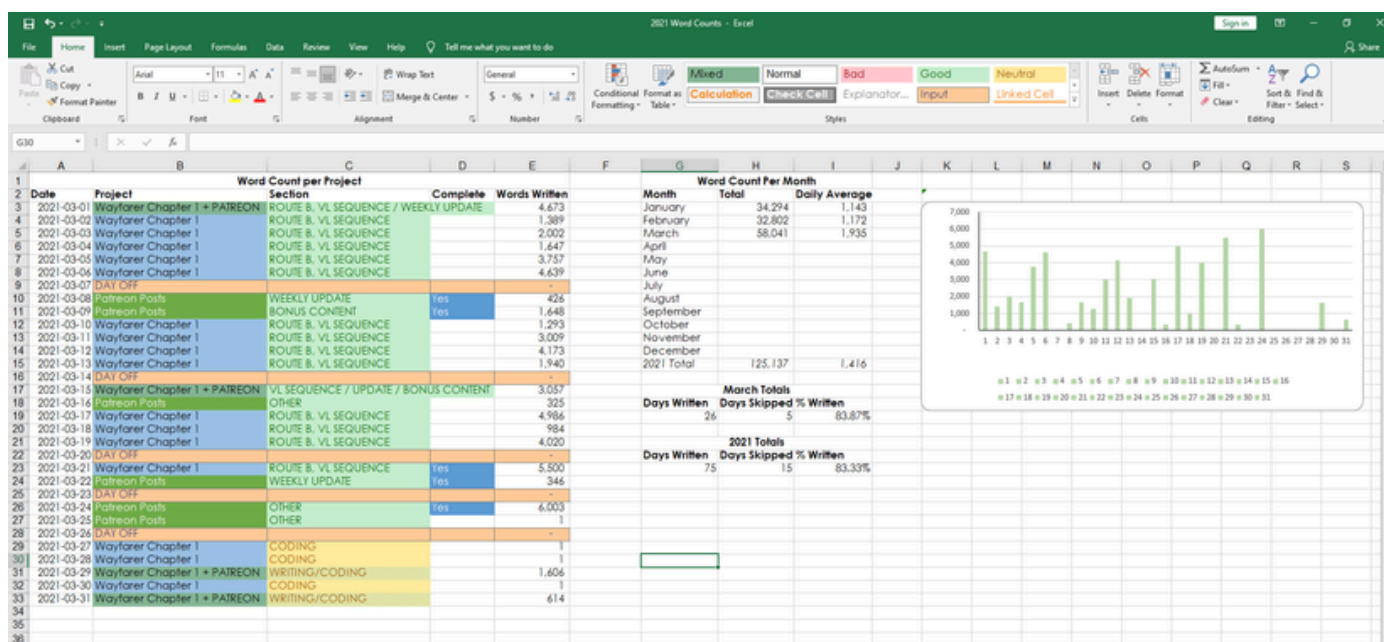
With the UI updates and optimization mostly done, I am finally moving on to editing the Viridian Lady sequence. I have attempted to edit it by hand, but it's a little difficult and slows the process down more than it helps. Because of my decreased screen time, I'm not sure how quickly I'll be able to edit and code and check for issues. Thank you for your patience!

Patreon Content

I am slowly drafting April's Patreon content by hand. I started writing the Ren short story, but it's still very much in it's early stages. I am still planning on getting the writing tutorial out this month as well, but it will depend on how much screen time I can manage in the coming weeks.

End of March Check-In

This is my progress from March.



Not all of it was game-related in terms of writing, but I am pretty proud of myself for reaching over 50k this past month.

Misc

If you're part of the Discord server, you probably know about the April Fool's joke we did for the server. My partner (who also helps mod the server) recorded a joke playthrough of the Kane fight in Chapter 1, in character as "Professor Warblesnatch", an uppity, over-the-top professor of archaeology who started as an off-hand joke. If you want to take at least a couple points of psychic damage, [you can watch the video here](#) (there are no jump scares, loud noises or other such things associated with April Fool's).

Have a great week!



[A Wayfarer Retrospective](#)

[Apr 8, 2021](#)

The Wayfarer UI has gone through many, many different versions. Some are okay. Some are not great. With the additional UI changes out for the alpha build, I thought it would be fun to look back on some of my past attempts to build the visual look and roast myself for my choices.

This is a bit of an experiment in terms of bonus content. I did try to edit it down as much as I could, but I recorded the audio unscripted and it snowballed a bit. Please let me know if you'd enjoy more video content in the future!



[Political Regions of Rhesainia](#)

[Apr 11, 2021](#)

The past two centuries have re-shaped the political borders of Rhesainia many times. The early 11th century saw a golden age for the Lotharic city states, small independent nations near and around the Lotharic Sea. These principalities included Calaide, Umbara, Corsida, Edessa, Nemain and Velantis. However, their independence was not to last.

Timeline

1030 - 1040 - Lotharic city state Golden Age. The Arathian Empire pushes its trade routes, capturing many small islands along the coast of Arsenia and throughout the Azure Sea.

1041 - 1145 - An extended period of conflict marked by relentless invasions from Farandor. Farandor aims to dominate the Lotharic and Azure Seas, and concentrates its forces on coastal islands and regions. It also pushes deep into Artanisian territory, eventually capturing and burning the Artanisian capital, Tyridia.

The Lotharic city states form an alliance to push the Faran invaders out of their territory, but there is little they can do against the Faran troops. Corsida, Nemain, Edessa and Calaide fall to Farandor, with Umbara and Velantis standing as the alliance's last bastions.

1146 - The Arathian Empire forms an alliance with Velantis and Umbara and extends their aid to push out the Faran invaders. Once liberated, Calaide and Corsida become vassal states and are incorporated into the Empire.

1146 - 1160 - The Arathian Empire wages a decades-long war to push out the remaining Farans. In doing so, it folds more Lotharic territory into its control. After Umbara is captured, Velantis is the last independent city state. After putting up a strong resistance, the city falls in 1160, its royal family is executed and House Anaxas is installed as the city's rulers.

After assisting Artanis in pushing out Farandor, the Empire keeps a foothold in its river delta.

1227 - Rona separates from the Arathian Empire, becoming an independent city. The Seven take control.

1234 - The Arathian Empire extends its influence over the outer reaches of Artanis.

1243 - 1252 - The annexation of Artanis main territories begins in 1243 and the nation becomes part of the Empire in 1246. With the Empire's attention on its northern border, political borders around the Lotharic and Azure seas remain the same into the present day (1252).

Note: White on the map refers to neutral Aeda and Melusine territories.

[Wayfarer \(Alpha Build\) by Idrelle Games](#)

[A browser game made in HTML5](#)

<https://idrellegames.itch.io/wayfarer-alpha-build>

[Wayfarer Alpha Build 1.0.4.](#)

[Apr 15, 2021](#)

Hi friends,

The first update to Wayfarer's alpha build is here!

What It Includes

- 57k words of cumulative new content
- The completed Viridian Lady villa mission
- Multiple scenarios and solutions for the aforementioned mission

To access the new content, you must select the Viridian Lady's Villa (South Isle) (also just "South Isle" on the map) as your first location during your first Explore session. If you go to the Docks, you must

refuse to take Zenaida's contract.

If you haven't started a new file since before the April 10th update, you will need to do so now (otherwise you will fail all of your stat checks).

How to Access It

You can access the alpha build through the link above. PLEASE SEE THE CURRENT ALPHA BUILD POST FOR THE PASSWORD.

Bugs and Errors

This content is very fresh and hasn't been thoroughly playtested. If you notice any bugs, feel free to [file a report here](#). (But please don't feel obligated to!)

Bugs won't be updated very quickly as I have to compile files and create a new master file every time I update, but I hope to fix issues over the rest of the month while I write the next portion of new content.

If you have any questions about the alpha build or your alpha build access, don't hesitate to let me know!

[Progress Report 2021-04-17](#)

[Apr 19, 2021](#)

Hi friends,

Apologies for skipping last week's update! April has been a little hectic and as Chapter 1's content progresses, I am considering moving to a bi-weekly update schedule rather than posting one every week. (This would be to cut back on repetitive "hey, I wrote stuff!" type updates).

Game Updates

The public build was updated with the UI changes and stat overhaul on April 10.

The alpha build was updated with the full Viridian Lady sequence on April 15. If you missed it and are a part of a tier that has access to the alpha build, there is a new alpha build post pinned to the top of the Patreon posts.

With the update out, I am taking some time off. Afterwards, I am hopefully going to polish off the Ren short story that's scheduled to be this month's all-access bonus content, and then start drafting the next

sequence of the alpha build.

Main Cast Profiles

I have re-worked the character page on my tumblr blog. If you want a sneak peak at some of the upcoming major story characters, you can check it out here!: <https://idrellegames.tumblr.com/characters>

(The link won't work on tumblr's mobile app, but the page is responsive so it should open correctly in your mobile browser).

This isn't all of them as some major players remain unnamed.

Mid-April Check In

The first half of this month was pretty tough since I was working around issues with my eyes and decreased screen time. I was primarily editing and coding, so not a lot of writing has been done in comparison to other months.

Word Count per Project					Word Count Per Month		
Date	Project	Section	Complete	Words Written	Month	Total	Daily Average
2021-04-01	Patreon Posts	OTHER	Yes	615	January	34,294	1,143
2021-04-02	DAY OFF			-	February	32,802	1,172
2021-04-03	DAY OFF			-	March	58,041	1,935
2021-04-04	Wayfarer Chapter 1	CODING		1	April	6,264	330
2021-04-05	Wayfarer Chapter 1 + PATREON	WRITING/CODING		913	May		
2021-04-06	Patreon Posts	VIDEO RECORDING		1	June		
2021-04-07	Patreon Posts	VIDEO EDITING		1	July		
2021-04-08	Wayfarer Chapter 1	CODING		1	August		
2021-04-09	Wayfarer Chapter 1	CODING		1	September		
2021-04-10	Wayfarer Chapter 1	EDITING		1,082	October		
2021-04-11	Patreon Posts	VIDEO EDITING		1	November		
2021-04-12	Wayfarer Chapter 1	EDITING		1	December		
2021-04-13	Wayfarer Chapter 1	CODING		1	2021 Total	131,401	1,145
2021-04-14	Wayfarer Chapter 1	CODING		1			
2021-04-15	Wayfarer Chapter 1	CODING	Yes	296	April Totals		
2021-04-16	Patreon Posts	WRITING		2,844	Days Written	Days Skipped	% Written
2021-04-17	Patreon Posts	WRITING		505	15	4	78.95%
2021-04-18	DAY OFF			-			
2021-04-19	DAY OFF			-	2021 Totals		
2021-04-20					Days Written	Days Skipped	% Written
2021-04-21					90	19	82.57%
2021-04-22							

Patreon Changes

Nothing is going to change as of yet, but I am considering dropping the Follower tier (the lowest tier). Because of ongoing issues with the itch.io/Patreon integration and the way it handles checking currency conversion and the minimum pledge level, the easiest solution way for me to rectify the problem is to not have a pledge level at all. I really want the integration to work smoothly since generating manual access keys will become time consuming as the game grows and I want it to assist me with management rather than causing more issues on my end.

Changing it to have a \$0 minimum pledge would mean that all tiers on my Patreon would have access to the alpha build and consequently I would have to drop the Follower tier.

There are some other issues with this change that I need to fully research first before I pursue it. I am **not making any changes** to the tiers as of right now. If you are a part of the Follower tier and have any

questions or concerns, please message me on Patreon. If I move forwards with this, I will send you a message with details and how your pledge is affected before I make any changes.

Thank you for all your support! ♥

[Scattered to the Winds \(Ren & Raven Short Story\)](#)

[Apr 22, 2021](#)

Raven has two problems.

The first is the powerfully built woman looming over her kitchen table. With her sleeves torn at the shoulder to display tattooed arms corded with muscles, a jagged scar across one cheek, a well-used leather scabbard strapped to her hip, the hilts of at least two daggers poking out the top of her boots, she perfectly fits the look of an Undercity thug. She grabs a flatbread wrap from a nearby plate, munching on it as she watches the kitchen staff with a wicked look in her eye.

The second is the missing stocks from the open pantry. It drew Raven's eye the moment she entered the kitchen—door ajar, shelves dotted with empty spaces that hadn't been there the day before.

She sighs and smooths down the front of her skirt. One of these problems is going to be far easier to deal with than the other.

"Hatch, Arden," she says, looking past the glowering thug. "Kiraël needs help with the tables. Go check on her, please."

"But—" Arden's hands squeeze her kneaded bread dough.

There's a loud thud behind her as Hatch presses his knife straight down through a parsnip and into the cutting board.

Arden looks from Raven to the thug and back again. "But madam—"

"No complaints," Raven interrupts sharply. "Go help."

Arden ducks her head and withdraws her hands from the dough. She wipes them clean on her apron and taps Hatch on the shoulder. He nods and puts down his knife. Throwing one last look at Raven, they shuffle from the kitchen and disappear into the hall. The door snaps closed behind them.

The thug grins and picks up another flatbread, chortling as she shovels it into her mouth.

"I'd appreciate it if you kept your grubby little hands out of my food, Roxis," Raven says. "Not unless you're planning on paying for it."

Roxis rips a mouthful of flatbread free. Roasted vegetables and dressing ooze over her fingers. "Not planning on paying for anything," she says. "Not when Therian's patience is running mighty thin."

"Oh, Therian will get his money," Raven replies flatly. "By week's end, as promised. I stay true to my word—which is more than I can say for others."

Roxis' eyes narrow. She raises a finger to her mouth and licks off the dressing. "You insulting my boss? Calling him a liar?"

"I'm offering criticism," Raven says. "If he's charging me to protect my establishment, I expect to receive that protection." She reaches across the table and sweeps the plate out of the thug's reach. "So far, I'm not impressed."

Roxis snorts. Her eyes linger on the pile of flatbreads and she scarfs down the one in her hand. "You don't—" She pauses, her words muffled by the food in her mouth. She finishes chewing and wipes her mouth with the back of her hand. "You don't seem to understand how this works."

"I know perfectly well how it works," Raven retorts. "It's the same deal as Nor's. And Everion's before her. And Corsac before them. Therian's no different—"

Roxis snarls and flies across the room. She seizes Raven by the throat and slams her into the wall. Raven chokes, gasping for breath as Roxis' hand presses sharply into her throat, pressing up on her tiptoes in a desperate bid to alleviate the pressure.

"Sounds like an insult," Roxis hisses. "Sounds like you should pay for that—"

A small smile pulls at the upper corner of Raven's lips. She looks calmly into the thug's sneering face and lifts her chin. "Will I now?"

She tugs at the web.

Raven doesn't know what mages call it—the hundreds of millions of pathways that connect all living things together. She can't see them, but she can feel them. In her mind, she visualizes the pathways as an infinite golden spiderweb. Through years of trial and error, she has slowly come to understand how to use her magic to manipulate the pathways. Emotions are complicated. Pull one thread and you loosen another. There's a delicate balance to it.

Most days she subtly manipulates the threads, quietly affecting those around her. Sometimes she barely recognizes that she's doing it. Her magic is as natural to her as breathing. For those under her protection, she eases the bad and heightens the good. For the patrons that come to her hall, she makes them more competitive, more daring, more willing to risk their crowns. And for those clients who seek

out the hidden services provided by her establishment, she suppresses everything, leaving them devoid of all emotion and giving them the unburdened silence they desperately crave.

But now is not the time for subtlety.

Raven tears at the web, pulling on the threads until they nearly snap under the pressure. Roxis shudders and lets go, a million emotions flooding her senses. She collapses on the floor, shaking and laughing, tears welling from her eyes.

Raven walks calmly towards Roxis' twitching body and kneels next to her. She seizes Roxis by the front of her shirt, yanking her up off the floor. "Tell Therian I don't appreciate threats," she murmurs. "He will get his money in full and on time—and not a moment before. He can squeeze the others in the Narrows dry, but not me."

Roxis nods, still shaking.

"I'm glad we understand each other," Raven says and releases her. Getting to her feet, she walks calmly to the backdoor and thrusts it open. She waits patiently while Roxis slowly stands and shuffles out of the kitchen, step by trembling step. The thug passes through the door and disappears onto the narrow staircase outside.

Raven slams the door and bolts it shut. She sinks to the floor, her back pressed to the door, too exhausted to even reach the closest chair. She slumps forwards, chin brushing her chest, brown hands linked behind her neck.

It has been a long time since she unleashed her magic like that.

She exhales a long, slow breath, raises her head and leans back. *That's one problem dealt with... now for the harder one.*

She stares across the kitchen at the open pantry. The stolen jars stand out, like missing teeth in a broken mouth. Minutes pass. She can hear distant laughter and indistinct chatter from the hall. It must be a good night...

Good, she thinks. We're going to need it...

She catches a faint glimmer on one of the shelves. She narrows her eyes, wondering if it was a trick of the light. Slowly, she pushes herself up and pads across the kitchen to investigate.

The gaps on the pantry shelves are littered with small broken trinkets. A rusted dagger with a hilt inlaid with gold. One half of a pair of beaded earrings. A silver locket without a chain. A gold ring with an empty pronged head. A delicate chain bracelet with a broken clasp.

Raven presses a hand to her forehead. Sighing wearily, she sweeps the trinkets into her skirt pocket and shuts the pantry door. There's no avoiding it now; the second problem is *definitely* going to be

harder than the first.



The air is cool on the roof. While Raven is hesitant to call it refreshing by any means, it is a pleasant change from the stuffiness that plagues the gambling hall. It's one of the hazards of running an unlicensed establishment—windows are boarded up, doors are shut tight, and there's very little airflow.

Not that it matters much in the Undercity.

Raven shuts the trap door over the ladder and picks her way across the roof. She can feel the coarse, pitted stone through her worn sandals, a far cry from the smooth floors of the hall below. Like most Undercity buildings, the roof is flat and encircled by a small half wall, overlooking the sharply angled corrugated tin that protects the rest of the building. Though weather is rarely a concern in the Undercity (Raven can't remember the last time she saw rain), its citizens pretend that it is.

A few decrepit wooden stakes support a frayed red canopy that blocks out the rocky overhang above. On other buildings, this area would be used either for storage or as a ramshackle apartment, rented out for a bargain price. For Raven, the roof is where she has carved out a small piece of personal privacy. A threadbare blanket and a couple withered pillows rest in a corner, surrounded by potted plants. The plants' long, tangled vines creep across the floor, inching towards the half wall.

She steps over a snarled vine and turns to the far end of the roof. She doesn't have far to go to find her target.

Ren sits precariously on the half wall, dangling his legs over the edge. Despite the nondescript black clothing and the hood pulled over his head, Raven knows it's him. He may seem like a faceless, nameless shadow to others, but he can't fool her.

"If you need anything, you know you can just ask," she says, sticking her hands deep into her pockets.

He's silent for a long moment and absently swings one leg back and forth.

"Ren—"

"It's a trade," he says. "Was it not enough? I can get you more."

The trinkets lie heavy in Raven's pocket. She thumbs the earring, running the pad of her finger over the sharp edge of the gemstones. "You don't need to pay me. Stop by and talk with me. That's more than enough. I'd rather that than waking up once a month to find my pantry raided—"

"You know I can't."

Her finger pricks the earring's pin and the sharp point pierces her skin, drawing blood. She withdraws her hand and gently sucks the wound. "Is that the League talking?" she asks. "Or you?"

Ren's shoulders slump. He hates confrontation, especially with her. She half expects him to leap off the roof and disappear into the mysterious void he visits when he triggers his personal magic.

But he doesn't.

Raven steps up beside him and places her hands on the half wall. She turns to him, uncertain of what to say in the silence, and spots a small black cat curled sleepily in his lap. He gently pets it, stroking its back, and it purrs contently.

So that's what's keeping him here.

Raven folds her hands together and looks across the street. The lopsided, spindly buildings are stacked precariously on top of each other, crawling up the rockface like lichen. Windows are carved out of their thin walls, leading out onto sloping tin roofs or small, tight balconies. Narrow staircases zig-zag across the exteriors and merge into bridges, forming a convoluted network of haphazard scaffolding that stretches across most of the street. Signs etched with conjured lights stick out at odd angles, advertising the establishments within in clashing, pulsing light. It's difficult to see the street below, but she can hear the hollow din of hundreds of people milling through the trenches like ants scavenging for food.

But if she looks up, it's another view entirely. She has to push herself out dangerously over the edge, but if she tilts her head in the right direction, she can just make out the sky. Sometimes, at night, she can even see stars.

It wasn't always like this. She's fortunate her hall is on the top floor. She paid dearly for it years ago, but she's benefited greatly from her location in the upper levels, away from the dangers of the trenches. Life in the Narrows isn't easy and Raven is proud of the life she's carved out for herself. Her life—and no one else's.

"How's Ves?" Raven asks.

Ren pauses, his hand resting on the cat's back. Through the web, she can feel distress radiating off of him like heat from a flame.

"Fine."

So Ves isn't fine. Or Ren's relationship with them isn't.

She has a feeling it's the latter.

Raven swallows hard and nods, delicately reaching out through the web. If she can ease the simmering anguish, calm the pot before it boils over—

Ren turns sharply, dark eyes flashing from beneath the shadow of his hood. *“Don’t.”*

She freezes and releases the pull on his emotions, guilt flushing her cheeks. She has a longstanding rule to never manipulate her friends’ emotions without permission, but Ren seems so drained...

“I’m sorry,” she says. “I thought it would help.”

“Ves is all right,” he continues flatly, ignoring her comment. “Better than all right, last I heard. I haven’t seen them in... some time. A month, maybe.”

She nods. She hasn’t seen Ves in years. Once they were freed from the Undercity, they never returned. What she knows of them comes from directly from Ren... and the dark rumours of an avenging Aeda with mechanical wings whose indiscriminate wrath strikes down the poor and the elite alike.

“Look,” Ren says, “do we have to talk about Ves? That’s not why I came here—”

“Then why did you?” Raven interrupts. “Because if this what your visits are turning into, maybe you’re better off not coming at all.”

He hesitates, an answer on the tip of his tongue. Before he can answer, the cat opens its bright green eyes and lets out a loud, irritated meow. It rolls onto its back and paws at Ren’s hand, outraged at the sudden lack of pets.

“I’ve been watching you for months,” he says finally. “You think you’ve got things under control, but the whole Undercity knows about you now. They know where to go when the dreamweed fizzles out and the firewater dries up and they just need something to blot out the world. And the more people come to you, the bigger the target on your back—”

“Strange to be morally judged by an assassin,” she snaps, irritation flaring. “What I do would be perfectly legal if there wasn’t a black mark against the whole fucking Undercity.”

“I don’t care what you do,” Ren replies. The cat paws at his hand again and playfully mouths his knuckles. He gently disentangles his hand from the biting kitten and scratches behind its ears. “I care that people want to kill you for it.”

Raven’s fingernails dig into the backs of her hands. She thinks of Therian and his plan to extort the Narrows for all the crowns it has. He is not the first gang lord to claim the district. She’s seen dozens of them, each one exactly the same as the last. The same threats, the same practices... Even the year that brought an officially sanctioned magistrate to the area did nothing to alleviate the violence and decay that saturates the Undercity. The magistrate was no different than the gang lords.

“I can handle Therian,” she says.

“And Therian’s not the League.”

Her gut twists.

"The League is watching you," Ren continues. "They wanted you when we were kids and they haven't forgotten how you snubbed them. Do you realize how valuable your magic is to—"

"I don't want anything to do with them," Raven snaps. "That's your life, not mine."

"I know."

He picks up the cat by the scruff of its neck and thrusts it into her arms. She accepts the cat, holding it tight to her chest as it mewls in protest. Ren stands abruptly and balances precariously on the lip of the half wall. Anyone else would fall, tumbling headfirst into the trenches far below. But not Ren. He has an unnatural sense of balance and absolutely no fear of heights. That combination paired with his personal magic has led to acts no one else would dare attempt.

Ren raises his arms and lowers his hood, his dark cloak flaring around him as he moves. Raven catches a glimpse of the daggers strapped to his belt. She purses her lips and glances up at him, cradling the cat in her arms. His face is pallid and drawn, and there are dark circles under his eyes. His unbrushed black hair is pulled back in a messy tail that must have been tied days ago. He looks like he hasn't slept in a week.

This isn't the first time she's seen the signs.

"You're going to do something stupid," Raven says flatly.

Ren glances at her. If anything, her remark brings out the barest hint of a smile.

"Nara," he says.

Raven stares at him blankly. The cat mewls and wriggles in her arms. "What?"

"That's the cat's name. Please take care of her."

Another warning sign. The last time he prepared for a dangerous mission, he showed up three hours before dawn with a litter of feral kittens, requested she find them new homes, then vanished without another word.

"What are you going to do?" Raven asks desperately as Nara meows and squirms, trying to wriggle free. "Ren, please just—"

Just talk to me.

The words fall silent, too difficult for her to say.

He meets her eyes. "I'm not doing anything for anyone this time," he says. "Whatever happens next, I just want you to know that I did it for me. Goodbye, Raven."

Ren steps off the roof.

Raven rushes forward, the cat leaping from her arms and darting away across the roof. She leans out over the halfway, peering through the glaring , multicoloured lights, but she sees nothing. Only a hint of dark violet mist, swirling through the air. A silent after-effect of Ren's magic.

It is already dispersing, as if it was never there.

Raven sighs. "You're such an idiot," she murmurs, slipping her hands into her pockets.

Her fingers touch the assortment of trinkets Ren left in her pantry. They won't be useful as they are, but perhaps she can dismantle them, peddle the gemstones and melt down the metal. Then she might have enough to pay Therian's dues and get him off her back...

Maybe the trinkets were never intended as payment. Maybe they were an apology.

A final one.

Raven raises her head, eyes searching for that tiny sliver of sky so far above.

"Goodbye."

[Progress Report 2021-04-26](#)

[Apr 26, 2021](#)

Hi friends,

Just a quick update for this week. I was originally not planning on writing one today so I could get onto my bi-weekly update schedule, but there are a few things in the works that I wanted to write about.

Patreon Goals

Most excitingly, I've reached my next Patreon goal! Woohoo! I cannot thank you all enough for your continuing support of the game's development. At this goal, I can now start looking for a graphic designer to do a logo design for the game. This is something I've wanted for a while and I'm trying to think in advance and look at licensing fees for merch opportunities (and that kind of thing). I have an

idea of what I want, but I'm expecting this to be an on-going thing to find the right artist and go through the commission process.

If you know of any graphic designers who do fantasy artwork/logos or related things, please let me know!

Discord Emotes

With some of the funding from Patreon, the Wayfarer Discord server will now have a collection of custom emotes! Dana Mucci created the emotes; she's a freelance illustrator who specializes in Twitch art and emojis. She was a lot of fun to work with and I am really happy with how these came out. You can check out [her portfolio here!](#)



Game Updates

In last week's poll, The Cove had the most votes to be the next section of the game I work on. This section is significantly less complicated than anything in the Viridian Lady's Villa, so I'm expecting this to go a bit faster than before. I have about 4000 words of new content created for this section. I am hoping to get it finished and add it to the alpha build when I do my next typo/bug corrections.

After a lot of contemplation and grappling with game mechanics, I have decided to drop the player's ability to jump from the Chapter 1 Route B onto Route A. What I'm calling Route A is all of the content that occurs after the player character accepts Zenaida's contract and refuses to search the city for the

missing chalice. What I'm calling Route B is the player character's investigation of the town, which is accessed by either going to Rat Alley or going to the Docks and not taking the contract.

After the player goes to Rat Alley and does their first Exploration section, Malsara will always show up and try to bring the MC and Aeran to Zenaida. Currently, at the end of the VL sequence, the player can either choose to go with her or refuse her outright. This was supposed to link up with the content the player gets if they go to the Docks. However, there's a gameplay issue with the player running out of action points if they do this while wounded (getting wounded in Rat Alley docks 2 action points, going to the first Exploration section docks 1 point, talking to Zenaida docks 1 point). This means that players who went to Rat Alley, got injured, did their first Exploration section, then talked to Zenaida and accepted her contract would not be able to visit The Cove to buy items or Edgewater and have that conversation with Aeran. This feels unnecessarily harsh to the player as it would lock them out of content that most other players would see and shorten the Chapter. I could cancel those action points entirely, but this would affect the Route A content and I would have to write more additional content to account for continuity.

I also didn't write the Route A content with multiple points of access in mind. I would have to write additional content to account for the player possibly meeting the Viridian Lady before they talk to Zenaida, alongside a handful of other variations. Because of the way Route A content is coded, it is really difficult for me to go back in retroactively to add content.

It is going to be a lot easier on me moving forwards if Route A remains locked behind going to the Docks. It may make more sense for the MC to choose whether or not to follow Malsara during Route B, but getting all of the continuity to line up to reflect that choice is way, way too difficult for something that is going to cause a bunch of game mechanics and balance problems anyway.

I'll have to rewrite some content at the end of the existing VL sequence, but on the whole I'm happy with this decision.

New Update Schedule

I'll be posting another weekly update next Monday just to get things sorted for May before I jump over onto my bi-weekly schedule. I have a few changes I'm thinking of making to bonus content. I'm feeling a little worn out with my schedule and I'm considering going down to 3 bonus content posts a month rather than 4, at least while I'm trying to get these next sections of Chapter 1 done.

Thank you for your support! Have a great week! ♥

[Perfectionism and the Feedback Cycle](#)

[Apr 29, 2021](#)

I'm a recovering perfectionist.

I can't really pinpoint when it started. But I did take music lessons as kid and studied piano throughout elementary and high school. My piano teacher was ferocious. She prided herself on being the best teacher in my hometown. Her students ranked first, second and third in every music competition, she had the best track record for pushing promising young musicians through the Royal Conservatory of Music, and many of her students got into the most prestigious post-secondary music programs.

My piano teacher scared me. She embodied such powerful "I'm not mad, I'm disappointed" energy that messing up at lessons became an ordeal of being weighed down with guilt and shame for not practicing harder. I was a passable student at best. I love music and I love piano, but is a complicated instrument. And when I was a kid (and especially when I was in high school and developing interests in theatre and writing), I didn't have the attention span or the time to sit down and drill scales and arpeggios, do my studies, and then finally tackle my assigned repertoire.

Classical music demands perfection—not a note out of place, no rhythm out of sync. And it takes time and an awful lot of work to develop that level of precision. I would habitually practice the same opening phrases again and again because I would stop as soon as I hit a wrong note, go back to the beginning and try again. From the top. Ad nauseum.

The overall outcome of that habit was, of course, that I'd only learn about 15% of a piece. I'd never get to the rest of it because I was so focused on making the first part "perfect" before moving on that I never *would* move on.

When I first started writing regularly, it was the mid 2000s, I was in high school and I was knee-deep in Star Wars fan fiction. I couldn't wait to finish school and get my homework out of the way so I could sit down the write. I was fueled by the adrenaline rush that came from posting my work online and seeing the comments rush in.

Because the forum I was a part of was owned by Lucasfilm, the entire site was rated PG-13 and, from what I can remember, was fairly well-moderated. There were writers from all walks of life circulating the fan fiction forums and a robust subforum dedicated to writing resources and discussing things like plot structure, character development, and other such things. It was a safe place for a teenaged writer to learn how to write and, for all intents and purposes, I learned more about writing from those forums than I did in my grade 12 creative writing class.

When I think about those years and the sheer *amount* of writing I finished (short form stories, long form novels, collections of flash fiction, totaling around 50 individual completed works), I think that was the last time I had an unrestricted period of boundless creativity in my life. I had an idea and I would go for it. I didn't stop to think about every single aspect of what I was writing and judge whether it was a good writing choice or a bad writing choice, I was just do it. And even if it was the height of silly, nonsensical, cliché-fueled garbage, I still wrote it. I finished it.

I had an idea and I would pursue it fearlessly until it was done, perfection be damned.



Almost every writing mentor I've had, both during my undergrad and graduate programs, have stressed the importance of finishing your work. These are seasoned professionals: published authors, produced playwrights, optioned screenwriters, people with decades of experience in the industry.

The first draft is always the worst. Sometimes it's a battle between you and your wandering attention span. Sometimes you're clawing out progress word by word until you stumble over the finish line, other times you're gleefully running over it in a caffeine-fueled sprint because you're so close to being done you might as well just get it done, mistakes and bad writing be damned.

You can't share something that doesn't exist and your first job as a writer is to make it exist. The quality doesn't matter—that can always be handled in re-writes and edits.

I was a teaching assistant for a playwriting class during my MFA. We had a class of stressed out theatre students who wanted to hand in incomplete plays for their final assignment. Because the class' structure taught a different playwriting element every week, the students were supposed to be writing their one-act plays in tandem with every lesson. Do your final play's plot structure for the class where we talk about plot structure. Write your opening scene for the class where we talk about opening scenes. Write your first major piece of dialogue for the class where we talk about dialogue.

The problem with this format was that the students spent so much time working on and revising the first half of their plays for class assignments that they'd completely forgotten about the back half. Facing an extremely stressful semester stuffed with performances, exams and far too many essays, many of them were in tears because they felt they couldn't finish their plays to the same level of quality as the existing material. Some of them didn't want to write new material at all—they just wanted to keep poking at the first half because they'd received a discouraging note in the last class and they felt they needed to rewrite the entire beginning to fix the problem before moving on to new material.

This was something I empathized with, as I was facing my own version of it in my graduate program. This is not something that is often talked about in writing circles, at least from my own experiences. While university writing classes push that idea of "a finished project is better than an unfinished one," they rarely talk about what comes after:

The demand to constantly be perfecting and improving through a rigorous, ongoing editing progress.

Because no writing is perfect. There's always something to improve, something that could have been done better. Write it, and then write it again. Fiddle with it. This scene doesn't work—take it out, re-write it, put it someplace else. This scene is too long—edit it down, rip it apart, and put it back together piece by piece until you fix the pacing.

Writing is a tapestry that has been pulled apart and patched so many times that it becomes impossible to tell what changes were actually for the better and which ones were not.

No matter what you do, no matter how much you edit and re-write, someone, somewhere is *always* going to have a problem with your work. Something that they personally feel is shoddily written and could have been better if the author cut it out or did something different with it.

One of the hardest things about being what the theatre industry calls an "emerging playwright" is that every time your unproduced plays are workshopped somewhere new, there is an inevitable flood of comments from the people involved in the workshop about the changes that could improve the work.

If you did this instead of that, this part would feel so much stronger narratively.

This part didn't work for me, what if you did this...?

This dialogue doesn't make sense, why do they talk like this?

I don't understand this character. Why are they here? Do we need them?

Why does the 17th century noblewoman say fuck all the time? It's anachronistic, this isn't Game of Thrones!

I don't like this character.

I hate this plot line.

Why did so-and-so do that?

I think you should get rid of these four characters and only focus on these two here. Why is your cast so big?

*This part is weak. This part is weak. **This part is weak.***

*"It's so close, Anna, it's just not **quite** there. Act 2 needs some more work. Maybe a few more revisions...?"*

Your new work—which is quickly turning into something that isn't really "new" as the years go on—is constantly scrutinized by people who think their feedback is the most important feedback. Everyone has an opinion on how you could better your work.

So you go and you revise and you take that feedback into account as best you can. You push out a few more revisions, and then next time your play is workshopped, the feedback cycle starts all over again.

Because nothing is perfect. Nothing *can* be perfect.

There is always going to be something to fix.

And sometimes you have to say: “I am done editing this. I know there are problems, but I’ve done as much work on this as I can, to the best of my current ability.”



The first time I opened my graduate thesis post-defense, I spotted a typo. Too late now. The document is uploaded and published to the online library, I can’t get it back. I can’t make any more changes. It’s out of my hands. I’m just going to have live knowing that typo is living in the university servers forever more. (And also Act 2 will perpetually need more work).

There are always going to be mistakes. There are always going to be weak points in a creative work, things that could have been done better. And there are justified reasons for *why* those weak points exist:

Maybe the writer didn’t know how to fix them. Maybe they were bled dry of ideas and that was the best they had. Maybe they were rushing to meet a deadline and they had to take the first idea that came to them.

Writing isn’t piano. It isn’t classical music. With time and practice, I can fix the fact that I can’t do the ornaments in a Chopin waltz without messing up the rhythm in the left hand. Writing is relentlessly and beautifully subjective and someone, somewhere is always going to have a problem with it.

I recently saw a post cross my feed that talked about how you can’t go 100% with every project. Achieving 80%, or striving for “good enough,” is more than enough. I wholeheartedly agree. You can’t achieve perfect. Making peace with the fact that your writing is always going to have problems and weak points and things you could have done better is part of the process. Trapping yourself in a relentless cycle of feedback to try to meet everyone’s expectations is only going to result in 1) never moving on to new projects or 2) an endlessly unfinished work.

Wayfarer holds a unique position among everything I have ever written. By the sheer force of its nature as a sprawling, triplicating, interactive fiction game, I am forced to achieve no more than an 80% or “good enough”. The game is so large and contains so much content, that it would be physically and mentally impossible for me to even try to go for 100% with every written word.

Because it is extremely difficult to edit the game’s text after it is coded, I have to make hard and fast decisions about the game’s quality and content before I code. And once it is in the game, I can make minor adjustments, but I can’t rip out entire sections and re-write them ad nauseum.

There are parts I know could have been better written. Or more tightly edited. There are weird sentences and some sections are patchy or boring because I was speeding through a scene I didn’t like and wanted the content to be done. There are sections that probably don’t need to exist, but cutting it out now would mess up the code.

I can't afford an editor right now, so I do all my editing myself and I know that impacts the quality of the written text. I have a beta reader who go through everything before I code it, but he's a reader, not an editor. My playtesters catch dozens upon dozens of typos, missing words, spelling mistakes and other grammar issues should have been caught earlier, but due to the sheer amount of words, even a second or third or fourth pair of eyes on the text don't catch everything.

As we get closer to the completion of Chapter 1 and the true public launch, I get more worried about receiving unsolicited criticism about the game's content and writing. And I'm trying not to stress too much about it, because it's out of my hands. There are sections of Chapter 1 that exist in the current publicly accessible build that could have been better written. There are elements that people are not going to like. Because there are *always* things people will not like, regardless of how many re-writes I do.

And that needs to be fine. Wayfarer can't be perfect.

Perfection is not in its nature. And I'm trying not to let it be in mine.

[Progress Report 2021-05-03](#)

[May 3, 2021](#)

Hi friends,

Happy May! This month is going to be a busy one.

Game Updates

I am pushing to finish Chapter 1 by the end of the month (probably not all the coding, but hopefully all the writing). There are a lot of moving parts and sections and some are more branching than others, but I am hopeful that I can complete it.

The next section, which is the Route B version of visiting the Cove, is almost complete. It's currently sitting at around 9000 words. I have a couple bookend scenes to finish and also a tweaked version of the MC's shopping trip. Once it is edited and coded, I am planning on adding it to the alpha build alongside some bug fixes and other edits.

After that, I still need to finish the following sections:

- Route B version of Edgewater
- Visiting the Guild in Deadwood
- Putting all the clues together and the MC/player figuring out where the chalice is

- The MC going to the correct place and finding the chalice and the circumstances around that / deciding what to do with the chalice once found
- The MC failing to find the chalice
- Connect both instances of the above to the Count boss fight (there is one choice where you can avoid it entirely)
- Zenaida's Route B entrance / forcing the MC to accept the Velantis contract

For those who have access to the alpha build, I discovered a small bug (?) when flipping back and forth between the alpha build and the public build. Because the game name is the same in both files, your browser will identify the alpha build and the public build as the same game and they will share autosaves. If you happen to be flipping between both versions and are relying on browser saves, I recommend playing one version in one browser and the other in a different browser.

Patreon Updates

I am still working on a solution to the bug with Patreon and itch.io integration for the alpha build access. If you are a new Patron and can't get your access key, please message me and I will send you a manual one!

The Follower tier is currently unpublished while I figure out some behind-the-scenes stuff. This is just to ensure no one else joins at that tier level until I can make a decision on whether I am keeping it or not.

I have added a new benefit to the Apprentice tier and up. You can now vote on bonus content topics each month! Each month I will have a list of different topics I'm interested in writing, and the vote will determine which ones I cover.

The all-access bonus content piece for this month will be a Mel short story.

As of today, I am changing the weekly updates to a bi-weekly update. I will still post updates on Mondays (and bonus content on Thursdays), but the updates will be twice a month rather than once a week.

Thank you for your support! Have a great week! ♥

[Character Profile: Ren Varadon](#)

[May 5, 2021](#)

Spoilers for Ren's backstory, but no spoilers for the major points of his character arc. If you want to go into his character arc completely blind, I suggest skipping this post.

This is an edited and re-vamped version of his character profile originally posted to Wayfarer's World Anvil page. I've taken down the original post to make edits on it, so for now this is a Patreon exclusive.

Ren is native to the Undercity, Velantis' hidden underbelly. The Undercity is located in a series of chasms that scar the western region of the peninsula. Kept separate from the rest of the city, the Undercity has long since developed its own culture, dialect and way of life.

Growing up in Velantis' underbelly, Ren was one among many orphaned children who roamed the Undercity. By age ten he was the leader of the Black Foxes, a trio of street urchins who picked pockets and stole from nearby merchants. Ren's magical abilities, which allow him to teleport short distances, made it very easy for him to slip in and out of target's homes without being noticed.

The rest of the group was composed of his two best friends, Raven, a dwarven girl with a talent for manipulating emotions, and Ves, an abandoned Aeda. Together, the Black Foxes made a tidy profit that kept them fed, watered and sheltered.

Like many children of the Undercity, the Black Foxes were watched over by a mysterious human man known only as Uncle. Though Ren, Raven and Ves were self-sufficient, in many ways Uncle was responsible for keeping the children safe: protecting them when their angry marks turned on them and occasionally acting as an unintentional parental figure. However, it was not out of kindness or sentimentality that led to Uncle's goodwill—he was an operative of the Erebian League and was studying the children's potential.

When Ren was fifteen, Uncle approached the Black Foxes with an offer: join the Swiftmark chapter of the Erebian League and leave behind a life of poverty, or rot away in the Undercity forever.

Ren and Ves accepted. Raven did not.

Whisked away from the Undercity, Ren emerged onto the streets of Velantis and into true daylight for the first time in his life. He would spend the next six years apprenticed to Uncle, honing his skills as a thief and an assassin. He worked his way up the hierarchy, quickly rising through the ranks of the Swiftmarks. By the time he was made a fully-fledged member of the League, his services were sold to Velantian upper crust. The work was isolating, lonely and dangerous. The only solace he found was in Ves. As they had joined the League at the same time and had been through the same training and initiation, Ren and Ves felt a connection they hadn't shared as children. They became lovers, though their relationship was strained by their work.

While Ves had cut the Undercity out entirely from their life, Ren would occasionally return to visit Raven, checking in on her from a distance. However, with the League watching, their relationship could never be the same as it was when they were children and Raven grew tired of how detached and one-sided their friendship had become.

For years Ren's talents were used to place false information, spread lies and assassinate rivals. Uncle distanced himself from Ren as the years carried on, eventually shutting him out completely. When he confided his concerns in Ves, they dismissed them. Their loyalty was to the League and the Swiftmarks, first and foremost.

Pushed to the brink by Uncle's rejection and his strained relationship with Ves, tired of being use by the League and the aristocracy, and utterly disgusted by the bloodshed he had caused on other people's orders, Ren experienced a mental and emotional crisis where he questioned his entire life's purpose.

The only path forward he could reconcile with was to remove himself from the organization completely. But the League doesn't let its operatives go lightly.

After purposefully accepting and ruining a high stakes job, Ren was arrested by the city guard. Though it was within his abilities to escape, he allowed himself to be taken to the high-security prison off the Velantian coast.

[itch.io](https://idrellegames.itch.io/wayfarer-alpha-build)

<https://idrellegames.itch.io/wayfarer-alpha-build>

[Wayfarer Alpha Build 1.0.4. Cove Update](#)

[May 10, 2021](#)

Hi friends,

The alpha build has been updated.

What it Includes

- 20,000 words of cumulative new content
- Route B Cove investigation and shopping trip

Accessing the New Content

Route B's content can be accessed by going to Rat Alley or by going to the Docks and refusing Zenaida's contract.

You can choose to go to the Viridian Lady's villa OR the Cove in either order. Once the other two investigation areas are complete (Edgewater and Deadwood), you will eventually be able to play all four areas in whatever order you choose.

Due to ongoing developments with the alpha build and changes to background variables, you may encounter continuity issues if you don't start a new file. **This is going to be a regular thing for alpha build updates**, so you may want to wait until Chapter 1's alpha build is stable/complete to play its content.

Where to Play

You can access the alpha build through the link above. PLEASE SEE THE CURRENT ALPHA BUILD PINNED POST FOR THE PASSWORD.

Bugs and Errors

This content is very fresh and hasn't been thoroughly playtested. If you notice any bugs, feel free to [file a report here](#). (But please don't feel obligated to!)

Because some sections of Route B borrow the same passages/code as Route A, if you find yourself seeing duplicating descriptions for an area you already visited or you suddenly find yourself on Route A's content, please let me know. This is a major bug that I believe I have fixed, but I may have missed a piece of code here or there.

Bugs won't be updated very quickly as I have to compile files and create a new master file every time I update, but I hope to fix issues as I continue to build the chapter.

[Bonus Content Update](#)

[May 12, 2021](#)

Hi friends,

After a lot of deliberation, I have come to the decision to postpone all bonus content posts until Chapter 1 is complete.

I've been going back through my word tracker and progress reports and keeping up with a weekly bonus content schedule is really cutting into the game's development time. I'm still trying to make up for the two weeks I lost at the beginning of April, and bonus content posts usually take 1-2 days a week out of my writing schedule to do, which is pushing everything back.

As I want to be working on Chapters 2 and 3 starting in July, I need to launch Chapter 1 in June.

For now, all of May's bonus content posts (the Mel short story and the two other additional bonus content topics that were voted on) will be pushed back until Chapter 1 is released. I'll pick them back up after then, but I'll likely be cutting down the amount of bonus content posts to 1-2 per month.

If you have any questions, please feel free to message me or let me know in the comments.

Thank you for understanding!

[Progress Report 2021-05-17](#)

[May 17, 2021](#)

Hi friends,

It's been a very busy two weeks. Game development is progressing, albeit at a slower rate than I would like. There is ongoing construction behind my apartment building and they are doing controlled blasting in the area until July, which hasn't been exactly the best thing to have going on in the background while trying to write. I am still hopeful that I can get most of Chapter 1 written by the end of May and then look at a mid or late June launch for the completed Chapter.

Game Updates

In case you missed it:

The Cove investigation was added to the alpha build on May 10th. This includes about 20,000 new words of content and several different paths for how the MC can handle interrogating Lars Drakehand. You can also stop by the same shops you visit on Route A, though the MC's interactions will be different with the shop owners if they're low on funds.

I am currently working on the Edgewater investigation and have written about ½ of the content and will likely finish the other half in a few days (it is vastly less complicated than the sections that came before it). I'm not sure if I will code it and add it to the alpha build right away; I may wait until the Deadwood section is done as well and then upload them both together.

As I wrap up the Edgewater stuff, the next stages of Chapter 1 will go as follows:

- Write the Deadwood section
- Code Edgewater and Deadwood and add it to the alpha build
- Write the Failed Investigation sequence (if the MC doesn't get the right information or guesses incorrectly as to where they need to go to find the chalice)

- Write the Successful Investigation sequence (if the MC gets the right information and goes to find the chalice)
- Code the two sections above and add them to the alpha build
- Write the MC's Route B interaction with the Count (may borrow some of the fight sequence stuff from Route A, but I'm not sure; integrating the two is really difficult for continuity and because Route B's events play out differently, there may be a different version of the fight that can occur here, with fewer options)
- Write the Route B interaction with Zenaida (receiving the contract and leaving Rona via ship)
- Code the two sections above and add them to the alpha build
- Revise and polish the codex entries (fix continuity errors, timeline errors, update for lore changes, etc)

Patreon Updates

Thank you to everyone who voted on what content I should release for Wayfarer's May 17th anniversary. I decided to release the top two options, which were the Aeran short story from February and the March Creator Q & A. Those posts are now publicly available on Patreon.

As I mentioned in my post last week, bonus content is postponed until Chapter 1 is finished. While I do miss doing bonus content, I am optimistic about the amount of time this has freed up and I can fully concentrate on getting new content completed.

Thank you for your support! Have a great week! ♥

itch.io

<https://idrellegames.itch.io/wayfarer-alpha-build>

[Wayfarer 1.0.5. Edgewater & Deadwood Update](#)

[May 28, 2021](#)

Hi friends,

The alpha build has been updated.

What it Includes

- 33,000 words of cumulative new content

- Route B Edgewater and Deadwood investigations, plus the MC and Aeran putting all the clues together and deciding where the missing chalice is located
- Updated Wayfarer Order codex entry and a new codex entry on the Guild of Mages (more codex entries are forthcoming!)
- General bug and typo fixes
- Patched an issue with the Quick Character Creator where if the player chose to return to the beginning of the QCC, their stats were reset to 0, rather than 5
- Added an auto advance toggle for the chapter summary screens. If the toggle is on, the screen will fade out automatically to the next page. If it is off, the player can control when the page advances.

Accessing the New Content

Route B's content can be accessed by going to Rat Alley or by going to the Docks and refusing Zenaida's contract.

You can now choose to do any of the four investigation areas in **any order**. How many locations you can visit will depend on the number of action points you have. Deadwood can only be unlocked under specific circumstances.

At the end, the player character and Aeran will have an opportunity to put together all their information and decide where the chalice is. Whether they successfully choose the right location or not depends on what information they gathered and the player's own deductive reasoning.

Due to ongoing developments with the alpha build and changes to background variables, you may encounter continuity issues if you don't start a new file. **This is going to be a regular thing for alpha build updates**, so you may want to wait until Chapter 1's alpha build is stable/complete to play its content.

For this update, no major background variables have been added or changed. It is stable to play from the first Exploration screen (the first time you see the map).

Because the code for the interactive map is extremely complicated, the maps in Edgewater and Deadwood are not interactive and have links to click on instead. This will eventually be updated.

Where to Play

You can access the alpha build through the link above. PLEASE SEE THE CURRENT ALPHA BUILD PINNED POST FOR THE PASSWORD.

Bugs and Errors

This content is very fresh and hasn't been thoroughly playtested. The regular bug report form is currently down, but if you notice any bugs and would like to report them, feel free to drop them in the bug report channel on the Discord server. (But please don't feel obligated to!)

Bugs won't be updated very quickly as I have to compile files and create a new master file every time I update, but I hope to fix issues as I continue to build the chapter.

[Progress Report 2021.05.31](#)

[May 31, 2021](#)

Hi friends,

Happy end-of-May! I hope everyone has had a good month.

May has been quite successful for me, all things considered. While I did want to be closer to the end of Chapter 1, I did complete and code all of the investigation sequences and the lead up to the MC's final decision.

As of right now, the alpha build contains (in addition to pre-existing material):

- The Viridian Lady sequence
- Chapter 1 Route B Cove investigation (which is different content from the Cove on Route A)
- Chapter 1 Route B Edgewater investigation (which is different content from Edgewater on Route A)
- Visiting the Guild in Deadwood
- A scene where the MC puts all their information together and decides where the chalice is
- A couple new codex entries

This is about 109,000 words of new content since the month of February, which I'd say isn't too shabby! The average route is, of course, quite a bit shorter than this. Unfortunately, I can't generate an average word count for the Chapter, but the vast majority of the Chapter's bulk comes from differences in variations as each location splits at least twice into multiple branches.

I am now writing the Route B endgame, which is quite a relief after working on the bulk of the chapter for so long. I have all of the scenes outlined and planned, and have finished the first little bit of the scene where the MC finds the chalice.

June is going to be just as busy as May. I am really hoping to have a full Chapter 1 launch by the end of the month, which means I have my work cut out for me. I am hopeful that I can pull this off, but I still have around 30k of writing and coding to do. Some of it will be editing previous content to adjust for new continuity and taking parts that already exist and changing a few things about them, but there's still a lot

of brand new material that needs to be created. Because of this, **bonus content** will continue to be on pause.

I am also going to be opening up playtester applications tomorrow. Because of the amount of variations in Route B, I've been feeling the need to expand the playtester team for a while and make sure all of the differences are covered.

Because I am unable to generate an average words per playthrough, I've decided that average playtime is more helpful to new players than word count. When Chapter 1 is complete I am going to be asking playtesters to time their playthroughs and get a general sense of how long it takes them to complete the chapter. I will be opening this to patrons as well! An average playtime will be derived from there.

I was hoping to be working on Chapter 2 and 3 during the summer. I have completed part of my in-depth Chapter 2 outline, but I am keeping it on the backburner while I wrap up Chapter 1. Hopefully I'll be ready to dive into it in July! Some exciting plans for Chapter 2:

- The MC and Aeran's arrival in Velantis doesn't go according to plan and Zenaida is mad about it
- Political Intrigue x 1000
- Zenaida's father is having a party and she and her mother aren't happy about it
- Meet Mel, except he's masquerading as someone else and he's a little annoyed (and intrigued) that the MC can see right through his disguise
- A major conversation with Aeran about the Spire
- Name your sword and choose its history (Wayfarer weapons all have a legacy)
- Unlock Aeran's romance flag (or not...)
- "Fun" options for if Aeran's at low approval

This is a tentative plan for June and the beginning of summer development:

- **June 1** – Open playtester applications through Discord
- **June 12** – Closed playtester applications and contact chosen applicants
- **June 15** – Chapter 1 complete (fingers crossed)
- **June 15 – June 28** – Playtesting and lead-up to public launch. Hopefully I can get out one bonus content piece during this time (it will be one of the topics voted on last month and not the Mel short story). However, I am going to be expanding to Twitter/IG and other social media platforms during this time, so I have a lot of content to produce for those in the lead-up and I'm not sure if I'll be able to make a bonus content post during this time.
- **June 29** – Tentative Launch Date
- **July 1** – Start work on Chapter 2
- **July 12-15**– Add the first section of Chapter 2 to the alpha build

Patreon Updates

I will be updating the Patreon tiers sometime in the next few days. When I started my Patreon, I wasn't really sure how much time it would take me to do cover certain benefits. I've since learned that 4 bonus content pieces per month is far, far too much content for me to generate without game development being affected.

Going forwards, there will only be **1 bonus content** piece per month and this bonus content will be for the Apprentice tier and above. Because of the amount of time and work they take, **writing commissions** will become a benefit for the Grandmaster tier and above.

I will also be adjusting some of the other benefits to make time management and my workload easier for me. I will release a post going over all the changes, but if you have any questions, please don't hesitate to reach out!

As an aside, I've changed the **weekly update** tag to **progress report** because my updates are now occurring once every two weeks.

Thank you for your support! Have a great week! ♥

[Progress Report 2021.06.14](#)

[Jun 14, 2021](#)

Progress Report June 14, 2021

Hi friends,

Happy mid-June! It's been a crazy busy month for me as I try to wrap up the end of Chapter 1 Route B. A lot of work has happened, but there's still so much to get done before the end of the month.

Two weeks ago I was pretty hopeful that I would be able to have the route finished by now, but that is not the case. Some sections—especially the section where the MC and Aeran find the chalice and then need to decide what to do with it—took a lot longer to write than I had expected. Funny how you can have something on your outline that you think won't take too long, but in practice it turns into a multi-day project.

I did briefly think about making it a little less complicated, but I really like how that section has turned out and I didn't want to compromise on the MC's options and choices, and the resulting consequences.

Game Updates

The current status of the game is as follows:

New content (drafted, still to be edited and added to the alpha build)

- Location where you find the chalice – 45,574 words (complete)
- Red herring location – 9796 words (still to be finished)

Content still to be drafted

- Section where the MC elects to go back to the Count empty-handed
- Confrontation with the Count (will borrow text from the Chapter 1 Route A boss fight)
- Recruited by Zenaida (will borrow some text from the Route A Zenaida encounter)
- Leaving Rona (will also borrow some text from Route A)

The game is currently standing at approximately 345k words of total content. Some of this is repeated text that has been edited for continuity and put into different passages because of behind-the-scenes variable changes, but it is pretty content dense for replays.

To kind of get an idea of total content vs. content you see on one playthrough, I did a few tests last week and found that the average length of the existing Chapter 1 Route B is anywhere between 21,000 words and 35,000 words, depending on where you go, what you do and what you say. There is a lot of variation packed into this chapter and your playthroughs can change drastically depending on how your skill checks go and what choices you make.

Most chapters are not going to be this content dense (Chapter 1 is probably going to remain the most complex chapter in the entire game, simply because it got split into Route A and Route B, it wouldn't be nearly as long if Route A didn't exist). For comparison, Chapter 2 is probably going to be around 30-40k total.

Chapter 1 is kind of like a microcosm for the entire game. Choices you made early have consequences that come back at unexpected times, things you do or find in one place can affect scenarios in other locations. The type of events that play out in Chapter 1 play out in the full game on a larger scale and at a slower pace.

Other Updates

This past weekend I closed applications for playtesters. I am really excited about having new people on the team and hopefully with a large playtester team, we will be able to find all of the mistakes and errors I didn't catch when I was editing.

Changes to the Patreon benefits mentioned in the last progress report are still TBA, as I haven't had time to really sit down and make some decisions. I feel a little guilty for not spending time on this. I'm thinking of finding some old material to share as surprise bonus content (so it wouldn't be one of the topics that was voted for in May since I don't have time to write that content), but I'm not sure at this point.

New Tentative Schedule for June

- June 15 – Finish red herring section
- June 16-18 – Draft section where the MC elects to return to the Count empty-handed
- June 19-21 – Editing and coding
- June 22 – Update alpha build with new content & get playtesters searching for bugs/errors
- June 23 – 30 – Draft the end of the game.

I think it's fairly safe to say that a full chapter launch unfortunately won't happen in June. There's still too many sections to fill in and finish, and I have some back-end coding to fix and improve (this will break some of your game mechanics for existing saves, I'm sorry!). I don't want to set a tentative launch date as I need to see how this week actually goes and how much work I get done.

I will also be taking some time off, as my birthday is on June 24 and I need a bit of break. Writing and editing over 50k in two weeks is a bit much. 😊

Thank you for your support! Have a great week! ♥

itch.io

<https://idrellegames.itch.io/wayfarer-alpha-build>

[Wayfarer 1.0.7. Flotsam Grove/Marshwall Update](#)

[Jun 18, 2021](#)

Hi friends,

The alpha build has been updated! We are now on version 1.0.7. There is still one more update to go before Chapter 1 is complete, but we are nearing the finale!

What It Includes

- 64,000 words of new content (which brings the total game's word count to a whopping 364,000)
- Three endgame branches, including different scenarios for your MC and Aeran depending on whether they go to Flotsam Grove, Marshwall or return directly to the Count
- Find the chalice and decide what to do with it (or don't)
- Discover a creepy house (or don't)
- Make some very difficult decisions

- Added a codex entry on the Marcian Conspiracy (more codex entries are WIP)
- General bug and typo fixes
- Patched an issue with fonts not rendering correctly on Firefox. The Google Font import is a little different, so you'll find that the italics and bolds on some of the fonts are slightly different than they were before
- Fixed some errors with consumable items
- Fixed some background variable issues
- Added a tutorial on the Poison status effect and added it to the StoryInit variables
- Changed all external links so they open in a new tab instead of in the same tab as the game. Hopefully this should fix the issue with the links not being able to load properly when leaving from an itch.io game. May still be an issue on mobile.
- Browser save slots have been decreased to 5. This is to help with issues with the local storage and the game exceeding your browser's cache size and not being able to continue. You may need to clear your browser history for the correct number of save slots to show up (or delete the excess saves if you have more than 5!)

You will need to start a new file in order to properly play this update.

Ongoing Issues to Be Fixed

- Some maps are not interactive
- Some maps are pixelated
- There is a special effects glitch in one moment when the MC briefly blacks out, but the passage should proceed as normal, it might just look funky

Where to Play

You can access the alpha build through the link above. PLEASE SEE THE CURRENT ALPHA BUILD PINNED POST FOR THE PASSWORD.

Bugs and Errors

As always for alpha build updates, this content is very fresh and hasn't been thoroughly playtested. The regular bug report form is currently down, but if you notice any bugs and would like to report them, feel free to drop them in the bug report channel on the Discord server. (But please don't feel obligated to!)

Bugs won't be updated very quickly as I have to compile files and create a new master file every time I update, but I hope to fix issues as I continue to build the chapter.

Thank you! We're so close to the end now! 💜

[Upcoming Changes to Patron Tiers & Benefits](#)

[Jun 25, 2021](#)

Hi friends,

As I have mentioned in my last couple progress reports, I am making changes to my Patreon's tiers and benefits. When I launched my Patreon in February, I wasn't quite sure how things would line up in terms of Patreon work vs game development, and the original layout I had was quite ambitious. I know now that I don't have the time to be able to manage weekly updates and four bonus content posts a month, among other things.

To help make things more manageable for me, I will be re-arranging benefits and adding an additional tier. **These changes will go into effect on June 30, 2021.**

I will no longer be doing any legacy benefits (i.e. benefits that can be accessed after pledging for a certain amount of time) as they are far too difficult to keep track of in the long term. Because of this, the Recruit tier will no longer have in-game credits as a legacy benefit. However, if you are part of the Recruit tier and you pledged this month, you will still get your in-game credit if you pledge again next month.

The "create a minor character for the game" benefit has been bumped up one tier. If you're part of the current Wayfarer tier, you will still be able to get this benefit after the changes go into effect. If you haven't heard from me about the process of making your character, please check your messages!

Writing commissions are moving to a new \$75 CAD tier. If you're part of the current Master or Grandmaster tiers and chose to postpone your writing commission, I will still be completing that benefit for you when you decide you'd like to have it done.

If you have any questions or concerns about the changes, please don't hesitate to reach out!

Here is a full list of the new tier rewards and benefits (all pledges are listed in CAD, so they will show up differently on my public page depending on what currency you've set your Patreon to):

Recruit (\$5 CAD)

- Alpha Build access
- Creator Q & As
- Access to the private Patron channels in Wayfarer's Discord server
- Biweekly progress reports on the game's development

Apprentice (\$10 CAD)

- Alpha Build access
- Creator Q & As
- Access to the private Patron channels in Wayfarer's Discord server
- Biweekly progress reports on the game's development
- One bonus content post per month
- Your name in the game credits

Wayfarer (\$15 CAD)

- Alpha Build access
- Creator Q & As
- Access to the private Patron channels in Wayfarer's Discord server
- Biweekly progress reports on the game's development
- One bonus content post per month
- Your name in the game credits
- Patron-only polls
- Vote on bonus content topics
- Game walkthroughs

Master (\$25 CAD)

- Alpha Build access
- Creator Q & As
- Access to the private Patron channels in Wayfarer's Discord server
- Biweekly progress reports on the game's development
- One bonus content post per month
- Your name in the game credits
- Patron-only polls
- Vote on bonus content topics
- Game walkthroughs
- Create a minor character for the game

Grandmaster (\$50 CAD)

- Alpha Build access
- Creator Q & As
- Access to the private Patron channels in Wayfarer's Discord server
- Biweekly progress reports on the game's development
- One bonus content post per month

- Your name in the game credits
- Patron-only polls
- Vote on bonus content topics
- Game walkthroughs
- Create a minor character for the game
- A personalized thank you message (mailed and/or digital)

Unnamed Tier (\$75 CAD)

- Alpha Build access
- Creator Q & As
- Access to the private Patron channels in Wayfarer's Discord server
- Biweekly progress reports on the game's development
- One bonus content post per month
- Your name in the game credits
- Patron-only polls
- Vote on bonus content topics
- Game walkthroughs
- Create a minor character for the game
- A personalized thank you message (mailed and/or digital)
- A one-time writing commission set in the Wayfarer world

Aeran Kellis Fan Club (\$100 CAD)

- Alpha Build access
- Creator Q & As
- Access to the private Patron channels in Wayfarer's Discord server
- Biweekly progress reports on the game's development
- One bonus content post per month
- Your name in the game credits
- Patron-only polls
- Vote on bonus content topics
- Game walkthroughs
- Create a minor character for the game
- A personalized thank you message (mailed and/or digital)
- A one-time writing commission set in the Wayfarer world
- Monthly personalized, one-on-one writing consultation

[Jun 28, 2021](#)

Hi friends,

Happy end of the month! June didn't *quite* go according to plan, but I still got a lot of work done. Even though I didn't meet my planned deadlines, I am working through the end of the game as fast as I can, so I am trying to give myself permission to take a little more time to finish the chapter. 80k in a month is a lot. 😊

I am trying to squeeze out a bit more in the last couple of days, but my area is in the middle of a severe heatwave and I haven't been able to work. Our temperatures (which are usually 28C tops) have been up to 41C. My apartment is not equipped to handle this level of heat. I'm doing all right (we thankfully were able to borrow a portable AC unit from my in-laws), but needless to say I am not getting any writing done until the heat breaks.

Game Updates

The playtester team is combing through the Alpha Build 1.0.7. for bugs and typos. They've been exploring the different paths and routes in different combinations and have found and reported so many errors. I updated the first 1.0.7. patch on June 20th. I'm not currently not planning on patching the build again until the last round of content is written and coded.

I am very grateful to the playtester team, and I am very confident that with their help, we'll be able to have a stable, mostly bug-and-typo-free Chapter 1 launch in July.

Since the content update on June 18th, I've written about 20k of new content for the confrontation at the Count's villa. The section has become a little more complicated than I expected. The energy is quite different than the confrontation on Route A, and I ended up needing to add a third branch to the conflict, where originally there was only two. This is pushing things back a little further. I'm about halfway through the first and third branches, with parts of the second branch written. I'd estimate this probably about 1/3 of the total Count confrontation material.

Some of it is eventually going to borrow from Route A, but right now I'm focusing on filling the gaps and making sure player choice is accounted for.

The New Tentative Plan

I was hoping to finish this remaining section by July 3, but with the heatwave impacting things, that will not be possible. We'll have to see where things land (it's supposed to break in a couple of days). This is a tentative plan, though I am hoping some sections won't take as long as planned.

- June 28/29 - OFF 😞
- June 30 – Continue Count Confrontation Branch 3
- July 1 – Finish Count Confrontation Branch 3
- July 2 – OFF (friend things)
- July 3 – Continue Count Confrontation Branch 1
- July 4 – Finish Count Confrontation Branch 1
- July 5, 6 & 7 – Write Count Confrontation Branch 2
- July 8 – Finish Count Confrontation Branch 2
- July 9 – Zenaida scenes
- July 10 – Finish Zenaida scenes + chapter
- July 11, 12, 13 – Edit / Code
- July 14 – Update alpha build

Patreon Updates

As mentioned in my post on June 25, I will be launching the changes to tiers and benefits on June 30. If you're curious about what changes are being made, a full outline is available in that post. If you have any questions or concerns about the changes, please don't hesitate to reach out!

I am hoping that with Chapter 1 coming to an end next month, I will be able to get back to monthly bonus content posts in July.

As always, thank you so much for your support! If you're in the PNW, I hope you are able to stay cool and make it through the heatwave. ♥

[Game Walkthrough: Prologue](#)

[Jun 30, 2021](#)

The Prologue is unique compared to the rest of the game's chapters. Its choices act as a way for the player to set their starting stats while remaining integrated in the narrative. A total of 9 skill points are assigned during the Prologue. Skill points are affected by the player's origin choices, two action choices, one dialogue choices, and the identity of their Wayfarer master.

Players can choose to skip the Prologue and set their skill points manually by clicking “Quick Character Creator” at the start of the game.

You can enable the Action Key in Settings to see what skill levels each choice will boost.

Ancestry Choices

Ancestry does not affect skill levels, but each ancestry comes with its own Perk. Perks provide additional action choices during gameplay. Ancestry also affects flavour text.

**Human

**Lost in the Crowd. Players will have the option to disappear in crowded areas and successfully hide from anyone who may be tracking them. *This ability will not come into play until the player character reaches Velantis.*

**Dwarven

**Poison Immunity. Poison is a status effect that increases skill check difficulty. Dwarven player characters cannot be poisoned.

**Elven

**Nightvision. Elven player characters can see in the dark. They can automatically pass environmental skill checks that occur at night or in dark places.

**Half-Melusine

**Aquatic Affinity. Half-Melusine player characters can swim underwater for extended periods of time. They can successfully pass environmental skill checks that occur under water.

**Half-Aeda

**Superhearing. Half-Aeda player characters will have additional action choices that relate to overhearing conversations and picking out information that may otherwise be unavailable.

Base Skill Level

All players begin with a skill level of 5 across the board. Their choices will increase their skill level from there.

Origin Choices

Origin choice affects skill level. It is maintained throughout the game and affects flavour text and some dialogue/action choices.

Child of the Desert: +1 Strength and +1 Agility

Child of the Wilds: +1 Strength and +1 Perception

Child of the Fields: +1 Strength and +1 Persuasion

Child of the Streets: +1 Agility and +1 Perception

Child of the Seas: +1 Agility and +1 Persuasion

Child of the City: +1 Perception and +1 Persuasion

First Action Choice

This choice occurs after the fannarl first attacks.

1. Help Cenric attack the monster.

Results in +1 to Strength.

2. Use yourself to distract the monster.

Results in +1 to Agility.

3. Use the environment to distract the monster.

Results in +1 to Perception.

4. Convince Marcella and Berand to help.

Results in +1 to Persuasion.

Second Action Choice

This choice occurs after the fannarl's first attack and Cenric has brought the player character and Aeran to the lodge. Depending on what the player character does, the fight will move into a different area.

1. Climb the ladder into the attic.

Results in +1 to Agility.

2. Ignore Cenric's advice and leave the lodge.

Results in +1 to Persuasion.

3. Follow Cenric's advice and barricade the door.

Results in +1 to Perception.

4. Look around for an alternative.

Results in +1 to Perception.

Your first and second action choices are flagged by the game and will be referenced later in the Prologue.

After the Fight

After Cenric, Varyn and Sero kill the fannarl, the group is approached by Sabien Quirinus. Quirinus will speak to the player character. As this is the player character's first impression on the Wayfarer masters outside of Cenric, their answers will net silent approval with Cenric, Varyn and Sero.

Quirinus' First Question

"Tell me, [Player Name], were you scared when the fannarl attacked?"

1. "No." (+1 Sero approval)
2. [LIE] "No." (+1 Varyn approval)
3. "Yes." (+1 Cenric approval)
4. "Does it matter?" (+Sero approval & +1 Cenric approval)

Quirinus' Second Question

"I see," Quirinus says. His expression is unreadable. "Then tell me, [Player Name], did you enjoy fighting this creature?"

1. "No." (+1 Cenric approval)
2. [LIE] "No." (+1 Varyn approval)
3. "Yes." (+1 Sero approval)
4. "I only wanted to make sure we survived." (+1 Sero approval & +1 Varyn approval)

Quirinus' Third Question

Quirinus nods deeply. "Then I must know, [Player Name] – is this a path you would have chosen for yourself, had you been given the choice?"

1. "No." (+1 Varyn approval)
2. [LIE] "No." (+1 Sero approval)
3. "Yes." (+1 Cenric approval)
4. "Why bother thinking about it? I'm here now." (+1 Cenric approval & +1 Varyn approval)

Quirinus' Fourth Question

This is the last question. The player character's answer will raise the relevant skill by +1.

"Very well," he says. "Whether by your choice or not, you are to be a warrior. It's a dangerous path, one you should not tread lightly. What makes you think you can walk this path?"

1. "I'm strong." (+1 to Strength)
2. "I'm fast." (+1 to Agility)
3. "I'm observant." (+1 to Perception)
4. "I'm smart." (+1 to Persuasion)
5. "I don't know, but it doesn't matter. I know I can." (+1 Random Skill)

Choosing Who to Ride/Walk With

This choice will add +1 approval from the chosen Wayfarer master. This is the tie-breaker choice if the previous choices led to a tie.

1. Ride with Varyn (+ 1 Varyn approval)
2. Ride with Cenric. (+1 Cenric approval)
3. Walk with Sero. (+1 Sero approval)

Wayfarer Master

As the player character approaches the Spire, one of the Wayfarer master's will choose to mentor them. Your Wayfarer master depends on who has the highest approval. Each Wayfarer master has 4 skill points and will boost a different set of skills.

Rindan Cenric: +2 Strength and +2 Agility

Brissa Varyn: +2 Perception and +2 Persuasion

Amali Sero: +1 to All Skills

The End of the Prologue

At the end of the Prologue, your Journal, Inventory, Map catalogue and Codex will unlock. You can also choose two tattoos and one scar for your player character. These will later be referenced in flavour text.

[Progress Report 2021.07.12](#)

[Jul 12, 2021](#)

Hi friends,

Another month half-way gone! I'm trying not to think about how quickly time is passing as I keep my head down and continue work on the game. I have completed another big chunk of the Route B endgame, but despite my best efforts, I definitely did not write according to the plan. 😓 Sometimes you just need to jump to the scene you want to write the most instead of sticking to the outline.

I'm happy with how things are going (there are some scenes and game mechanics that I am extremely excited about), but the pace is a lot slower than I would like. Some sections required more attention to detail than I had originally planned and I chose to extend things a bit rather than cutting the section. This decision has added a lot of content to Branch 2 of Route B's boss fight, but overall I am very pleased with the new content with the direction I went, even though it has extended Chp 1's development time by quite a bit.

Game Updates

As of today, I have finished Branch 2 and Branch 3 of the boss fight at the Count's villa. They are 42k words and 14k words respectively (Branch 2 has a lot of variations in dialogue and choices, Branch 3 is much more linear for narrative reasons).

Branch 2 ended up being quite content dense. This branch originally wasn't even in the chapter's outline, but when I reached the Count's villa scenes, I realized that Route B has a very different arc and build to it than Route A. On Route A, the MC is already on their way out of Rona and the Count is a peripheral villain, someone they have to deal with due to extenuating circumstances.

On Route B, his character is built up a *lot* more. There's a sense of dread hanging over the MC and all of their actions, as they know that they will eventually end up back up at his villa and they will have to confront him. Because the MC pursues the chalice investigation on Route B, the conversation with the Count takes a very different tone and gets pushed in a different direction. Of course, outcomes are dependent on whether you find the chalice or not (or whether you choose to give it to him or not).

Originally I had planned to take most of the fight content from Route A and adapt it for Route B, but that doesn't quite work in this content. Branch 2 is an entirely new way of dealing with the Count and features a new game mechanic that I am really excited about (going to keep it under wraps for now, but just as a hint – if you feel like you're running out of time to do something, you may want to finish what you're doing in as a few actions as possible 🙄).

Branch 3 is also unique content and only occurs if the MC successfully finds the chalice and hands it over to the Count. It is shorter content than Branch 2, but it is a bit of a doozy.

I am working on Branch 1, which has a number of "link" scenes and pieces of dialogue that need to be written to account for different continuities. This involves a lot of copy/pasting existing material and then re-working it and editing it so it fits with the pace and flow of each continuity. The fight on Branch 1 will re-use one of the fight branches from Route A, so again that will be a lot of copy/pasting existing material and then re-working it for a new context. It's not quite as time consuming as writing fresh material, but it still does take time and attention to detail so nothing gets missed.

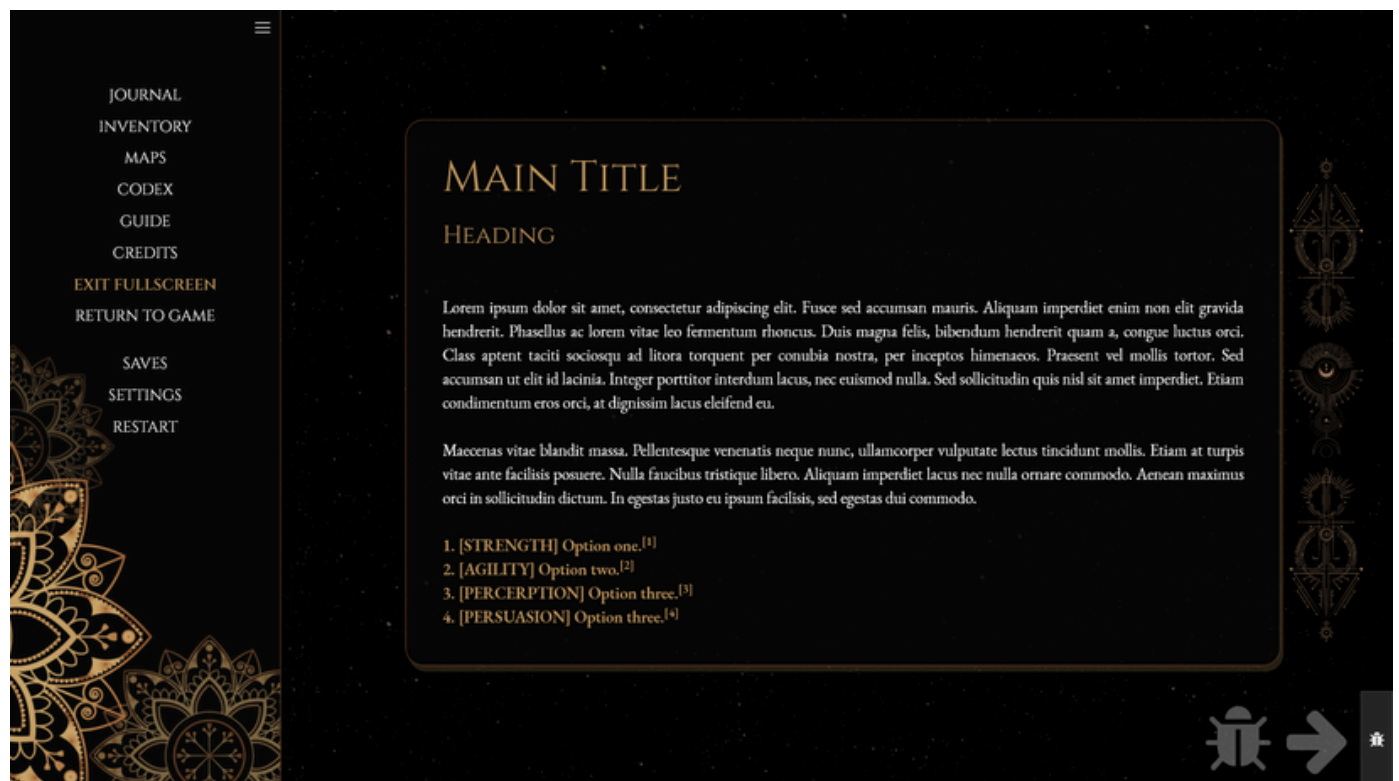
Once that is done, I have 4 scenes with Zenaida to write. Because the player can either have met her and refused her contract, or have never met her in the first place, these 4 scenes are really 2 scenes with 2 different versions. (Never have I written a more confusing sentence). I'm hoping these last scenes won't take me too long to do since it's more dialogue heavy than action/skill check heavy.

I am really, really hoping that I can finish drafting all new content by July 19, code the new content, update the game with a patch for all the current errors, and then spend the rest of July playtesting and polishing. I seem to jinx myself every time I aim for a new launch date, so I'm just not going to say one this time. 😅

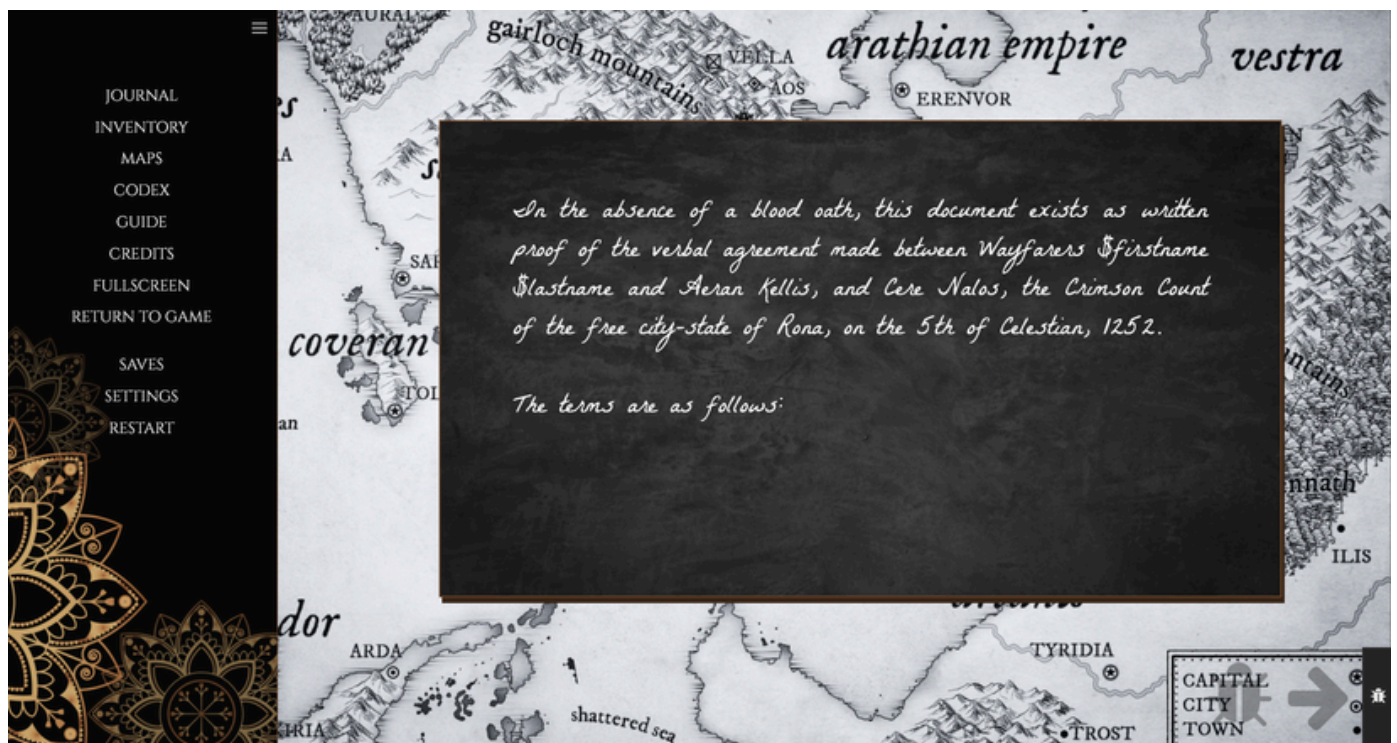
Some Other Things I am Working On

I am exploring dark mode designs. I haven't spent too much time on this and since my CSS stylesheet is already ridiculously long, it's pretty labour-intensive to go through and adjust the colours to a new

design. I also have to re-do all of the assets so they look good with black/dark backgrounds. I figure that if I'm going to make an official dark mode, then it needs to look good as a dark mode, and not just a replication of what dark mode browser extensions do to the game.



I'm a bit of a loss as to what to do for certain areas of the game, namely the codex and letter pages because they have the map background and a parchment texture. I haven't landed on anything that works with a dark passage background/white text combo yet, but I have a few ideas I haven't tried yet.



I am working on adding a fullscreen option for the menu. You can enable fullscreen in your browser with F11 (sorry Mac users, I don't know what the equivalent is), but I feel that a lot of people don't know that and it would be nice to have the option visibly there for those who want it. I personally think the game looks best in fullscreen.

I've also very briefly experimented with adding the ability to select your options with your keyboard. The keylink macro doesn't work the way I want it to and I'm not skilled enough to edit the code to do what I want it to do, so I'll probably drop this idea.

I am also working on adding a Return to Game button to the menu. It's always bothered me that any of the Journal/Codex pages (any of the auxiliary pages that aren't the actual game text) had to have separate Return to Game links at the bottom of the page. I did this originally because when I put a return link in the menu, the inventory duplicated on passages where it added new items. And it could duplicate infinitely if you jumped from the game to the Journal and back again ad nauseum. But I think I figured out a way to add it to the menu, I just need to test it thoroughly to make sure it doesn't do anything wonky.

This Week's Plan

- July 12 – Branch 1
- July 13 – Branch 1
- July 14 – Branch 1
- July 15 – Branch 1
- July 16 – Zenaida scene 1 (versions 1 & 2)
- July 17 – Zenaida scene 1 (versions 1 & 2)
- July 18 – Zenaida scene 2 (versions 1 & 2)

- July 19 – Zenaida scene 2 (versions 1 & 2)

(Don't worry, there will be a break in there 😊)

Patreon Updates

I was hoping to do a bonus content piece this month, but I'm thinking that probably won't happen while I'm still grappling with the end of the chapter. 😊 Apologies for the continued hiatus on this benefit!

That's all for this update, thank you for your continued support! ♥

[Progress Report 2021-07-20](#)

[Jul 20, 2021](#)

Hi friends,

I just wanted to do a quick progress report outside of my regular schedule. There are a lot of things happening right now in terms of getting this chapter finished.

On the writing side, I have completed the last of the combat scenes and have moved on to the last scene with Zenaida and the MC leaving Rona. There are technically 4 versions of this scene (depending on your previous choices). I am hoping to get these done this week, though I am slowing down quite a bit since I'm pretty exhausted at this point. My new goal is to get the content finished by Saturday, and then finish editing, code it, and add it to the alpha build.

In addition to finishing the content, I have a couple pages worth of edits and fixes to make, on top of all the bugs and typos the playtesting team has caught. Some of these are quick fixes, others will take a little more attention, but I do want the game to be as polished as possible before its public launch.

I am also going to be doing another UI overhaul. I had originally only planned to add dark mode, but I found a new UI template yesterday and played around with it... and I *really* like the results. To the point where I think I want to finish this overhaul before the public build updates.

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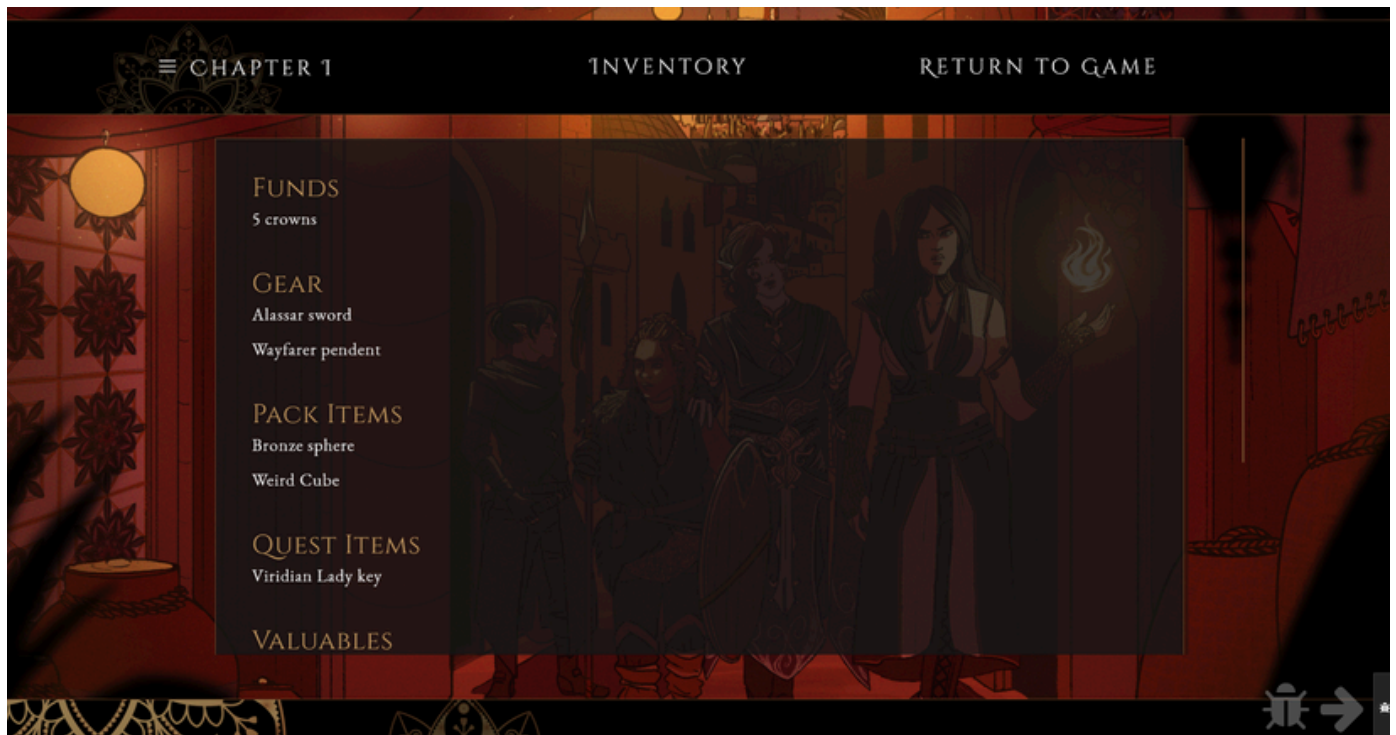
Erat imperdiet sed euismod nisi. Elementum sagittis vitae et leo duis ut diam quam. Luctus accumsan tortor posuere ac ut



MAKE YOUR CHOICE

- > 1. STRENGTH.
- > 2. AGILITY.
- > 3. PERCEPTION.
- > 4. PERSUASION.





The template is for SugarCube only and is created by [cerberus](#).

Since most of my assets are already created, it's mostly just tweaking things to my liking and cleaning up a lot of CSS. I am designing it as a dark mode first and then I will be flipping it around for a light mode that keeps the original UI's colours intact. Thankfully, the CSS is a lot cleaner this time, so it's not going to be as time consuming as creating a whole other mode would be for the old UI.

I've got a pretty decent start on it already, but I am putting it aside for now to finish writing Chapter 1. My plan right now is to update the alpha build, and then add any UI changes while the last round of playtesting and bug fixing happens. While a new UI does add a lot of work to the end of July, there are a few reasons I want to go ahead with it:

- I've never been happy with the base SugarCube UI; while I've made a lot of changes to it, it has a particular look that bothers me that I've never been able to change
- I've always wanted the UI bar to be collapsible from either the top or the bottom
- A cleaner look overall
- With a change this large, it's better to do it during Chapter 1 than to wait until later in game development

Because of bug fixes and the impending UI change, you are not going to be able to keep your alpha build saves after all these changes are done. (I think there was one update last month where I prematurely said the alpha build was stable... whoops 😊). If you are playing new content right now, please just keep that in mind! I am sorry for the inconvenience. 💕

[Progress Report 2021.07.31](#)

[Jul 31, 2021](#)

Hi friends,

Just a short update today, since it's been a pretty chaotic week. I am still working on finishing the last scene of Chapter 1 Route B. Because of all the various ways the chapter can end, there's an important conversation between Aeran and the MC that needed particular attention to detail to track all of the continuity, which was very time consuming. The entire conversation is around 40,000 words to account for all the variations, but in reality the player is only going to see maybe about 5,000 of that—which is kind of indicative of how branching dialogue paths and branching continuity in interactive fiction can get very complicated, very quickly!

The good news is that I have finished the toughest part of the conversation and things are a little more straightforward. I am getting closer to finishing and I am hoping to be done in a couple of days. I did receive my second Covid vaccine yesterday and the side effects are hitting me pretty hard today. I am trying not to be too hard on myself for not meeting any of my deadlines (as my partner says, two months from now it's not going to matter that I took more time than I thought since the chapter will be done!).

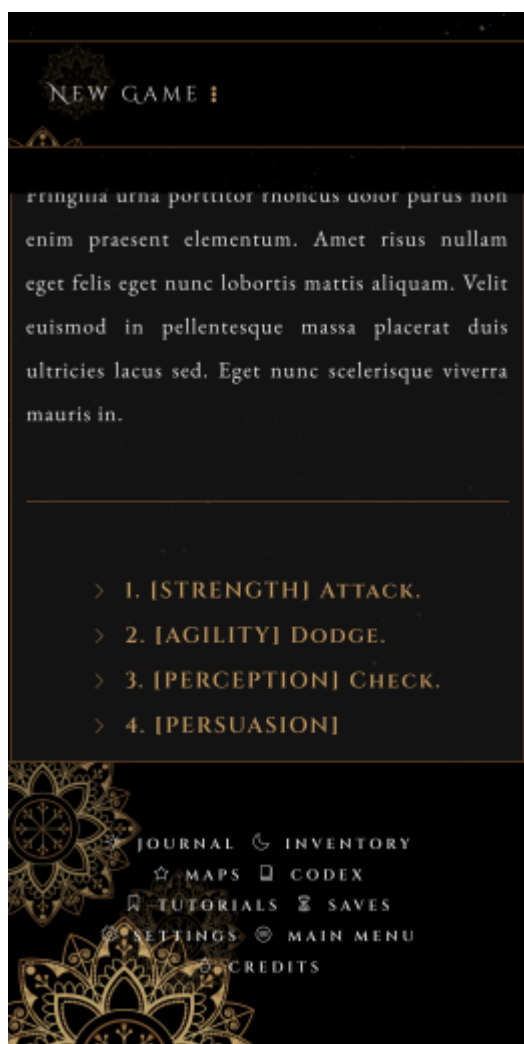
As I mentioned in my last update, I am redoing the game's UI. I have been poking at it a little more (and broke my stylesheet so badly I couldn't figure out what I did wrong, and I ended up having to scrap the entire thing and start over). But I am happy to say that mobile functionality for both portrait and landscape mode is going to be possible with this update! Portrait mode won't work on Chrome due to the way itch.io opens browser games on Chrome, but it will work in Firefox.

Mobile will look something along the lines of this for the game's main stylesheet:

NEW GAME !

ringua urna portitor rhoneus doior purus non
enim praesent elementum. Amet risus nullam
eget felis eget nunc lobortis mattis aliquam. Velit
euismod in pellentesque massa placerat dui
ultrices lacus sed. Eget nunc scelerisque viverra
mauris in.

- > 1. [STRENGTH] ATTACK.
- > 2. [AGILITY] DODGE.
- > 3. [PERCEPTION] CHECK.
- > 4. [PERSUASION]
DEBATE.
- > LINK TEXT



I am designing the dark mode version first, but there will be a light mode (black text on white) option too since I want to preserve the original colour palette of the game.

The plan for the next couple of weeks is to finish drafting (hopefully by the end of the day on Monday; I really don't have all that much left, the final scene is maybe around 70% complete). Once that's done, I need to finish my edits (I have been editing as I go, but there are areas that need clean up and I'm sure I'm going to miss lots of typos). And then once that is complete,, I need to go through all of the bug reports and fix the typos, continuity errors and other issues. Aside from the bug reports from the playtester team, I also have about 4 pages of notes of various things I need to fix (lore changes, continuity changes, sections where I changed my mind about something, areas where the player may be missing an important codex entry if they went down a certain path, etc).

The alpha build will be updated with new content before I tackle the UI. I want at least two weeks for playtesting and to fix all the bugs and errors before launch, so it's a good time to handle the visual design elements of the game.

If you're planning on playing the complete chapter when the alpha build updates, **your saves will not transfer to the next chapter properly** (meaning that there could be continuity errors on your save, locking you out of future dialogue/action options even though you did the required story content). There are a lot of background variables at play and I will need to adjust some of them for the new UI. So if you

want to see the new content, I recommend playing with a throw-away character because you will eventually have to start over from the beginning.

Thank you all so much for your support through these last few months! It's been quite a challenge getting this chapter finished, but I am really pleased with how the game is shaping up, despite greatly underestimating how much time I actually needed to complete it. Chapter 1 is a game unto itself and acts as much as tutorial for the player as it did for me. I've learned a lot from crafting it the way I did, and I have a much better idea of how to handle things as the game progresses (this is without a doubt the largest chapter in the game and it's going to stay that way 😊).

Thank you, thank you, thank you! ❤️❤️❤️

EDIT, AUGUST 2, 2021: As of yesterday, I have officially finished drafting and moved onto the editing and coding process! Woo! 🥳

Because of this, I feel confident returning to monthly bonus content. If you're in a tier who has the benefit of voting on bonus content topics, August's bonus content vote has been posted today. ✌️

[Progress Report 2021.08.10](#)

[Aug 10, 2021](#)

Hi friends,

Happy August! The start of the month has been pure chaos, I've barely registered that we're onto the second week.

The new content for the alpha build is really starting to come along now. I've finished (most of) the edits and coded about 2/3s of the material. The fight branches are all complete and I'm just finishing up the (multiple) variations of the end sequence. After that, I have some polishing to do on the main file—mostly double-checking that all the variables are labeled the right thing and trigger in the correct spots, that faction approval for the Order of Lethalis is consistent across Route A and B on certain dialogue choices, etc.

I will also be tackling the interactive maps before I update the alpha build since there is quite a large margin of error in the code for those and I want to make sure the maps are thoroughly playtested. I will be replacing the current map system with one static map. It will still light up different areas when you hover over it with your cursor, but the selectable areas won't be pre-defined.

So this:

SELECT A DESTINATION



Will be replaced with something like this:

SELECT A DESTINATION



The reason for this change is because at the moment the game files have multiple versions of the map for each combination of locations. On the original, the blue areas are part of the map's image file itself and the gold/brown area is an interactive area created using an HTML image map and the maphilight macro (this is the main reason the interactive map doesn't work on mobile/small viewports--the polygons are connected to specific spots and if the image is resized, the polygon doesn't resize with it; there's probably a more elegant way to create something like this, but I don't really know how).

This means that every time the player visits a location and then returns to the Exploration screen, there needs to be a different map image file that removes the blue areas if the player has already been to those locations. I ended up having around 13-14 different maps in the game files and it was inflating the game's file size as well as making the code much more difficult.

A single static map is a lot easier to handle because then I only need to worry about the code for triggering the interactive areas and not multiple maps on top of that.

In addition to changing the Rona map, I am also updating the world map so that it matches it in style (the new one will be in colour). I had originally planned for every map to be unique, but I like the idea of

having one consistent style across all maps now.

Once the alpha build updates, I will be taking some time off and then working on updating the UI with a new look (which includes mobile compatibility, new image assets for the character creator, and a light/dark mode). When the new design is done, it will be added to the alpha build and then that will hopefully be the last update before the public launch of Chapter 1!

If everything goes according to plan, August should look something like this:

- **August 13 / 14** - Update alpha build with final Chapter 1 content
- **August 15 – 18** – Time off
- **August 19 – 26** – Patch bugs, fix typos, work on the new UI
- **August 26** – Update the alpha build with the new UI
- **August 27- 30** – Final checks
- **August 31**– Chapter 1 Public Launch (which is also the public launch of the game itself)

Patreon Updates

I think I may have mentioned this in another update, but since the drafting process for Chapter 1 is complete, I am returning to monthly bonus content posts. The bonus content vote is available until August 17, so if you're part of a tier that has voting as a benefit, please check out the poll! The bonus content piece will be up sometime in late August.

I am also planning the second Creator Q&A for September, so I will likely be opening up a Google docs form where you can submit questions sometime mid-to-late August. The form will stay open into September.

Important Note Regarding Alpha Build Access

For the past few months, Wayfarer's alpha build on itch.io has been integrated with my Patreon. I originally added integration because I was hoping that it would help me manage alpha build access and streamline the process. However, I've found that integration was maybe a step beyond where I currently am with the project.

Patreon isn't always the smoothest with third-party integration (RIP Patreon Discord bot) and there have been a lot of recurring problems on my end, primarily with issues relating to currency and currency conversation (my Patreon is in CAD, itch.io is only available in USD, and Patrons can have currencies from all over the world).

So, for the sake of making things easier for me, I am removing itch.io's Patreon integration for Wayfarer's alpha build on **August 16, 2021**.

A few things:

- If you want to add the alpha build to your itch.io game library, please make sure you generate an access key via the link in the alpha build post **by August 16**. You will not be able to do so after I remove integration.
- If you run into issues (such as itch.io rejecting your request due to your pledge being too low—this is a currency conversion problem), please message me and I will generate a manual key for you. **I will not be generating manual keys after August 16.**

After I remove integration, the alpha build will only be accessible via the link and password on Patreon, with the password changing at the start of every month.

I hope this change is understandable. If you have any questions regarding this change, please don't hesitate to message me. ❤️

Thank you so much for your support! Chapter 1 is nearly there! 🥳

[Wayfarer \(Alpha Build\) by Idrelle Games](#)

[A browser game made in HTML5](#)

<https://idrellegames.itch.io/wayfarer-alpha-build>

[Wayfarer Alpha Version 1.0.8. - Chapter 1 Complete](#)

[Aug 14, 2021](#)

Hi friends,

The alpha build has been updated and Chapter 1 is now complete! Wooo! 🥳

Due to changes in variables, you MUST START A NEW FILE. Proceeding with a previous save will result in continuity errors for Route B. Also, MCs with they/them pronouns will not use the correct grammar.

Please note that Version 1.0.8. is not a stable build and variables may change again in playtesting. There will be one more update to the alpha build before the public launch later this month.

What It Includes

- The finale of Chapter 1 Route B
- The Chapter is now complete, bringing the game's word total to over 500k words of content (including codex entries)

- Deck it out with the Count and see if you survive or fail
- Three main boss fight branches with drastically different results and consequences
- Variations upon variations upon variations as your choices come back to haunt you
- Hidden action counters! Be careful – if you take too long to act, it could have dire consequences
- Hidden approval counters
- Aeran Greatly Disapproves
- A (possible) confession of (something very serious)
- 9 ways for one character to die
- 8 ways for another character to die

General Fixes

- Fixed multiple typos throughout the game
- Various bug fixes (namely to do with missing brackets and continuity errors)
- Patched continuity errors in the fight with the Count on Route A
- Added a number of flags used for dialogue continuity in the confrontation with the Count.
- Re-coded the fight branch flags in Route A's boss fight. The Count and Rhodarth now have different flags depending on what happens to them **(this change will break the continuity of your Route A saves)**

Content Additions

- Revamped and re-wrote most codex entries, and added text to unlocked codex entries that previously had placeholder text in them.
- New entries include ones for Farandor, Calantha, Magianis, the Annexation of Velantis & Rhodarth Nairan
- Made adjustments to custom pronouns. The player can now select whether their custom pronouns are singular or plural (the default is singular).
- Extended ALL timed choice timers to 20 seconds. The player has much more time to make a selection now.
- Added the option to confirm your destination before you proceed to one of the final locations (before you selected which one you wanted the game locked you into it).
- Revamped the Guide and turned it into a Tutorials page. The game now comes with tutorials on every game mechanic and element, which describe what they are, how they work and what they effect. ALL tutorials are available from the beginning; you do not need to unlock them as you go.
- Revamped and re-coded the Story Log for accuracy. The player will now view a completed Chapter's story log after finishing a chapter and before they proceed to the Level Up screen.
- Added **Conditional story requirements have not been met** text on unavailable options so the player can see that there are options they cannot access

UI Changes & Additions

- New version of the Rona map
- New version of the Map catalogue
- New version of the Ancestry and Origin selection pages (they now include cards that you interact with to select, much like the companion and faction profiles in the Journal)
- New version of the decorations on the dialogue box headers
- Additions to the MC's profile in the Journal. They will now have three icons at the top that relate to their Ancestry, their Origin and their Wayfarer mentor.
- Re-coded the interactive map to make it easier for me. The areas you can visit are no longer pre-defined; you will have to hover over the map to see which locations you can visit and click on the areas that light up. If you would rather have a list of locations, **turn the Interactive Map off and reload your autosave.**
- Re-coded the scars and tattoos layout to make it easier to read. Each scar and tattoo comes with an indicator that tells the player which Chapter they received it in.

How to Access

You can access the alpha build through the link above. The current password is:

TAa5Hxz9muaM24tmchUX.

DO NOT SHARE THIS PASSWORD.

Playtime Response Form

I am attempting to calculate an average playtime for Wayfarer's Prologue and Chapter 1. If you'd like to help out, please time your playthroughs (Prologue & Chapter 1 separate) and [submit your playtime to this form here](#). Rough estimates (i.e. 2 hours, 3 hours) are ok as well!

Bugs and Errors

As always for alpha build updates, this content is very fresh and hasn't been thoroughly playtested yet. Playtesting will be ongoing for the rest of August. If you notice any bugs or typos and would like to report them, feel free to drop them in the bug report channel on the Discord server.

There will be one more update to the alpha build before Chapter 1 is released to the public. The next update will be a UI re-design, which I will be working on while playtesting is ongoing.

It's been a long road to get here, thank you all so much for your support! 🥳❤️

PATCH NOTES

AUG 14/15, 2021:

- Fixed a major bug that stopped certain branches with the Count from triggering
- Fixed typos and broken links

AUG 16, 2021:

- Fix a major recurring bug that flagged Rhodarth as dead when he didn't die
- Clamped Aeran's approval so it doesn't go below 5 and doesn't rise above 90
- Added Playtester names to Playtester credits
- Added all major image files to the preload so they load faster when you first encounter them in game. This may add a few seconds to the game's load time at the start.

AUG 20, 2021:

- Fixed some errors relating to the Story Log and spacing
- Fixed a bug in one route of the Kane fight where the MC always ended up injured, regardless of whether they were actually injured or not
- Fixed typos, spacing errors, general continuity errors

[Progress Report 2021.08.27](#)

[Aug 27, 2021](#)

Hi friends,

Sorry for the radio silence this month! The UI update has taken a lot longer than I originally anticipated. The design work is completely finished (aside from a few minor tweaks here and there that I fix as I go), but the process of actually implementing it is quite time consuming and tedious. Basically, I have to edit every existing passage and edit the HTML individually to get one of the effects in the new design. There are almost 2800 passages across 4 story files (plus the separate Codex file), so I've got my work cut out for me. I've finished editing the New Game pages and the Prologue, but I've still got the bulk of the game to edit.

The new UI design includes a bunch of features that weren't a part of the original. Some of the new parts of the UI include:

- Dark mode / light mode toggle, with the light mode version preserving the original colour scheme of the first UI. Dark mode also switches out all images/icons so it matches the colour scheme, but you need to reload the page or visit a new one for the images to change.
- An opacity toggle that makes transparent passages opaque and easier to read.
- Improved letter script toggle for the codex letters (it now changes the script automatically when you toggle it, rather than waiting for you to reload the page)
- 3 serif fonts and 3 sans-serif fonts

- Completely new design for the Exploration page that is (hopefully!) more streamlined
- Tweaks to the Journal, Codex and Tutorials page layout
- Image popovers for codex entries (if there's an image, you can now click on it and a larger version will properly resize for your viewport)
- Map inserts for all location codex entries (Artanis, Arsenia, the Coveran Republic, Vestra, Farandor, and Calantha now all have maps as part of their entries that provide a zoomed-in view of their territories)

Most importantly, the new UI is fully mobile compatible. It is optimized for portrait mode over landscape, but landscape does resize well enough (there's a slight issue with double scrollbars, but it doesn't make the game unplayable, you might just accidentally scroll past the passage box and need to scroll back up).

Games hosted on itch.io do not open in portrait mode on Chromium-based browsers. I'm not sure why this is, but something between itch and Chrome forces all browser games to open in landscape. This cannot be overridden. If you want to play in portrait mode, you will need to use a non-Chromium browser like Firefox.

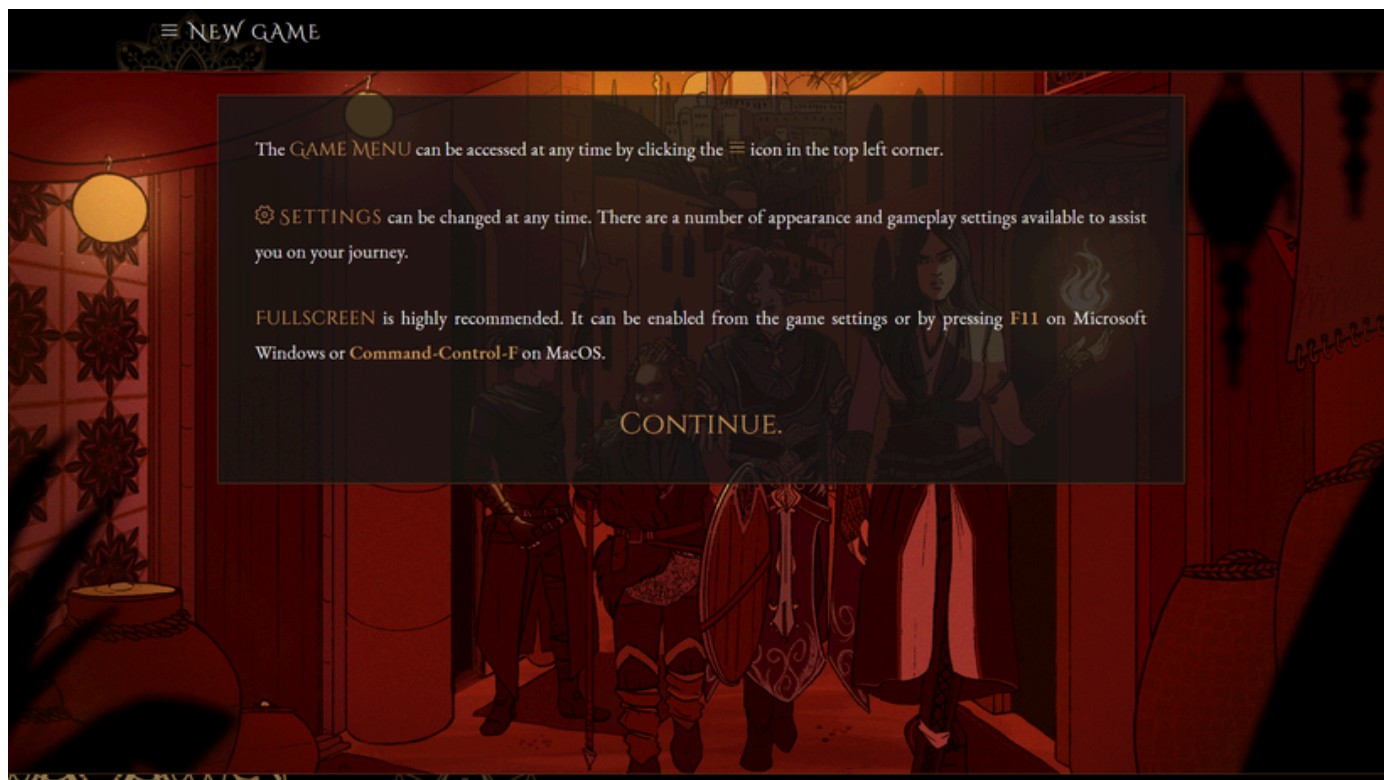
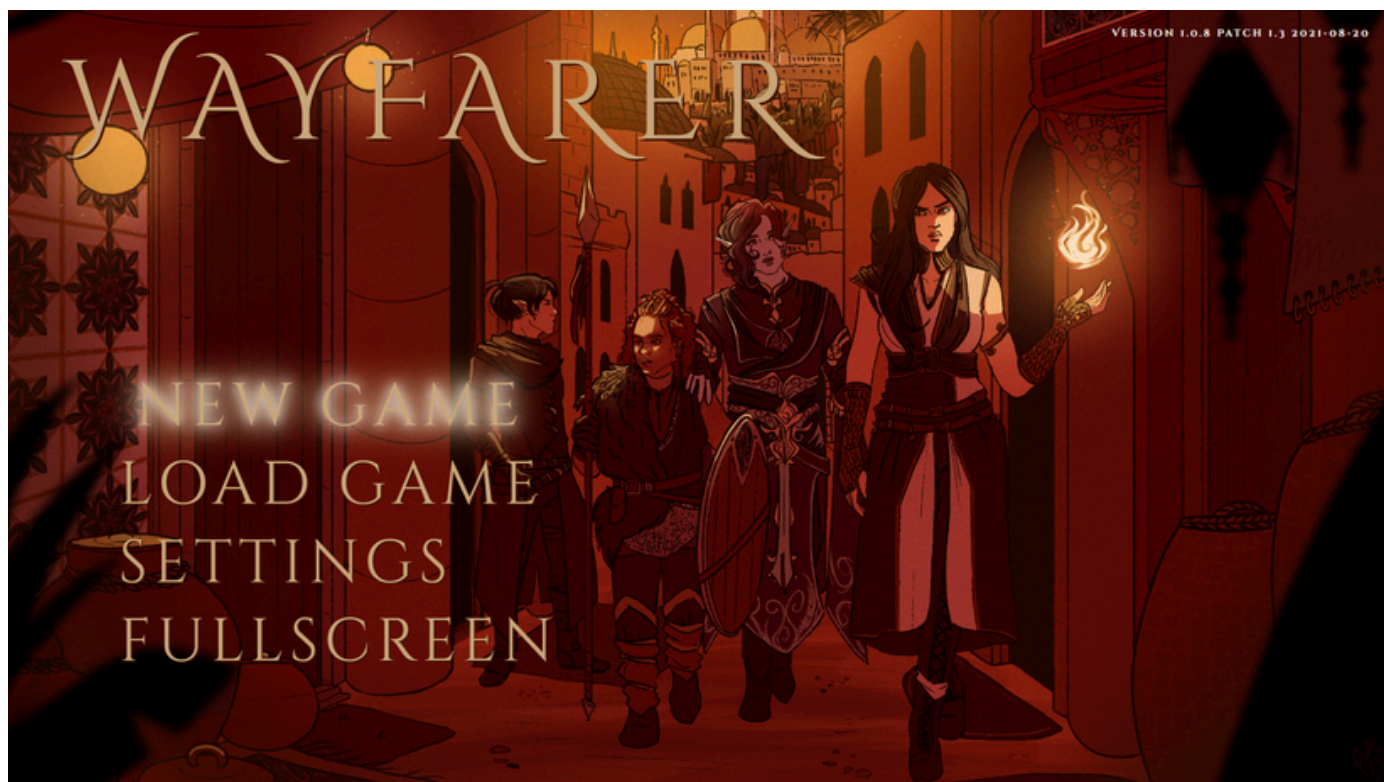
A new feature I'm playing with is the ability to change your character's surname to your mentor's surname. This change will occur between the Prologue and Chapter 1 and it entirely optional. This feature exists for roleplaying and story purposes; you do not need to select it proceed to Chapter 1.

There are two things to keep in mind with this feature:

- If you change your surname, you will be locked out of story events and flavour text related to your origin's family. If you adopt your mentor's surname, you will unlock unique story events and flavour text related to your mentor.
- The game tracks the surname change and it will remember what your original one was. At certain points in flashbacks or during interactions with specific characters, your character may be referred to by their original surname.

I'm hoping to have the UI completely transferred by Monday, but it is a lot of work and it needs all of my focus. I've been saving the Chapter 1 public launch announcement until this process is done because I want to have a week to focus on promotional posts and such and I can't do that while I'm working on the UI.

In the mean time, here are some progress screenshots of the new UI! 💕



CHOOSE YOUR GENDER

Select a gender from the options below. Once your Journal is unlocked, you can change your gender at any time.

MALE

Your character will be referred to as a **man** in the present and a **boy** in childhood flashbacks.

SELECT

FEMALE

Your character will be referred to as a **woman** in the present and a **girl** in childhood flashbacks.

SELECT

NONBINARY

Your character will be referred to as a **person** in the present and a **child** in childhood flashbacks.

SELECT

CHOOSE YOUR PRONOUNS

Select a preset or create a custom pronoun set using the inputs below. Once your Journal is unlocked, you can change your pronouns at any time.

PRESETS

HE/HIM

SELECT

SHE/HER

SELECT

THEY/THEM

SELECT

CUSTOM PRONOUNS

CHOOSE YOUR ANCESTRY

There are five major humanoid species who inhabit the world. Each Ancestry has its own qualities and attributes that will affect the course of your journey. Some unlock unique appearance options.

Click on a card to view an Ancestry's description. You will be asked to confirm your Ancestry before you proceed.



TATTOOS & SCARS

TATTOO I • TATTOO II • SCARS

In the years since your recruitment, you have led what some may call an eventful life. You may have attained some tattoos and scars throughout your adventures...

SELECT YOUR FIRST TATTOO

- None
- A thunderbird across your back, reminiscent of the Osian desert
- A raven on your right shoulder, reminiscent of the Forest of Brennath
- A sun on your inner left wrist, reminiscent of the fields of Arsenia
- A manticore on your right thigh, reminiscent of Nesactium
- A sea dragon wrapping your left arm, reminiscent of the ocean

CHARACTER HISTORY

After joining the Wayfarer Order, did you change your name? You can change your given name, your surname, or both.

Your **original given name and surname** are recorded in the game's history. There are some instances in flashbacks where you may be addressed by your original name for continuity. If you do not want this as part of your roleplay experience, **do not** change your name.

Changing your **surname** will lock you out of certain story events tied to your origin. However, by choosing to adopt **Varyn's surname**, you may unlock unique story events related to your Wayfarer master.

DO YOU WANT TO CHANGE YOUR NAME?

YES – PROCEED TO NAME CHANGE

Quirinus stares at you, eyebrows raised, mildly surprised that you have spoken. He drops his hand and smiles, quickly composing himself. "Is it not? Then how, may I ask, did the Wayfarers find you? And when presented the offer to join their grand Order, did you feel you had a choice?"

His words feel like sharp pinpricks all over your body. Your gut twists. Your journey has been so long, it feels like years have passed since you left home. Somehow you know, even if the circumstances of your departure had been different, you would have ended up here nonetheless.

-
- > 1. "Doesn't matter."
 - > 2. "I don't know."
 - > 3. Stay silent.

Quirinus stares at you, eyebrows raised, mildly surprised that you have spoken. He drops his hand and smiles, quickly composing himself. "Is it not? Then how, may I ask, did the Wayfarers find you? And when presented the offer to join their grand Order, did you feel you had a choice?"

His words feel like sharp pinpricks all over your body. Your gut twists. Your journey has been so long, it feels like years have passed since you left home. Somehow you know, even if the circumstances of your departure had been different, you would have ended up here nonetheless.

-
- > 1. "Doesn't matter."
 - > 2. "I don't know."
 - > 3. Stay silent.



≡ CHAPTER I
CODEx
← □

SATHIR

Excerpt from An Encyclopedia of the World by Devrian Thornbird

Sathir is a nation in western Rhesainia. It is bordered by the Arathian Empire to the east, by the Coveran Republic to the south-west, and Arsenia to the south-east. It is separated from its eastern neighbours by the Gairloch Mountains.

Most of the country's population live near the banks of the Vara and Koric rivers, where the only arable land is found. Sarin, the capital, rests in the delta of the Vara river. Large regions of the Osian desert, which covers most of the country's territory, are sparsely inhabited.

CAPITAL
CITY
TOWN

ARTANIS



Excerpt from An Encyclopedia of the World by Devrian Thornbird

Artanis, or the Artanisian Protectorate, formerly the Kingdom of Artanis, is a nation in south-eastern Rhesainia located between the Greywind Mountains and the Frostmark Mountains. It is bordered by the Kingdom of Vestra to the north.

The country's capital, Tyridia, is located on the Vost River. Other notable cities include Trost, Trian and Ilis. The Forest of Brennath spans much of the country's territory to the north.

Artanis was an independent kingdom until 1239, when it was annexed by the Arathian Empire.

JOURNAL



CHARACTER • STATUS • ABILITIES •
FACTIONS • COMPANIONS • WAYFARER
TENETS • STORY LOG

STATUS



ACTION POINTS

Your **Action Point** maximum is 4.

You have 4 / 4 Action Points.

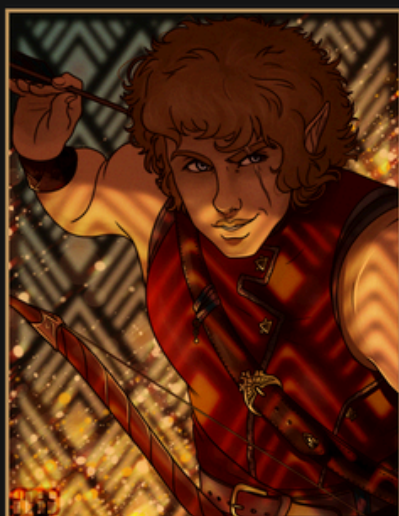


≡ CHAPTER I

CODEX



AERAN KELLIS



I'm sure I don't need to go through the events of how we met. Looking back, I think he was just as scared as I was. Two kids travelling up a mountain in a cart, knowing we were headed towards something but not knowing *what*. I still remember looking at the night sky and seeing the southern lights for the first time.

seeing the southern nights for the first time.

Aeran is an elf from Tyridia, Artanis. He grew up in close proximity to the Wayfarer Order as they would often stop and



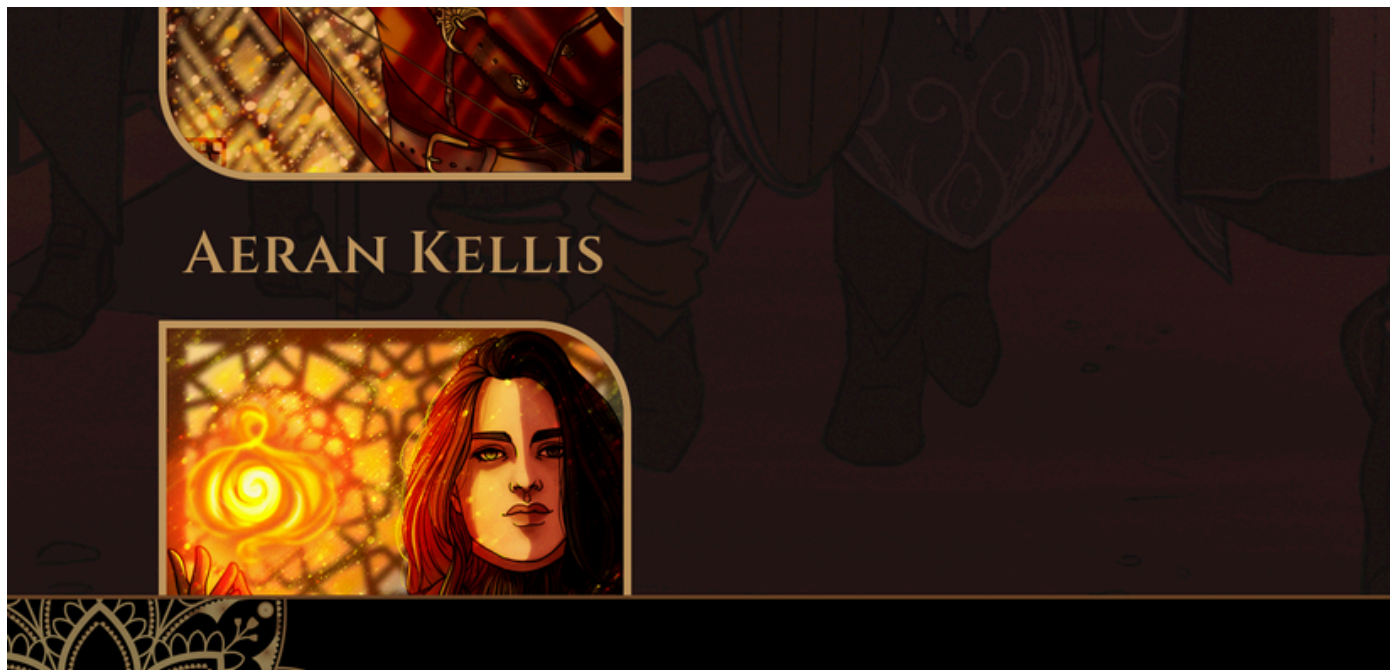
≡ CHAPTER I JOURNAL

CHARACTER • STATUS • ABILITIES •
FACTIONS • COMPANIONS •
WAYFARER TENETS • STORY LOG

COMPANIONS

Click on a card to view a companion's
status and your relationship with them.





[Wayfarer \(Alpha Build\) by Idrelle Games](https://idrellegames.itch.io/wayfarer-alpha-build)

[A browser game made in HTML5](#)

<https://idrellegames.itch.io/wayfarer-alpha-build>

[Wayfarer Alpha Build Version 1.0.9.](#)

[Sep 1, 2021](#)

Hi friends,

This is the **final** version of the alpha build before the game's public launch! This update includes:

A Full UI Redesign

New assets, new visuals, new look for every page! You will need to start a new save file as I updated the Inventory as part of the redesign and your inventory will break if you use an old file.

As part of the UI redesign, there is now:

- Full mobile compatibility. Portrait mode is better than landscape, however you will need to open the game in a non-Chromium browser (such as Firefox) to play the game in portrait mode.
- Dark mode / light mode toggle.
- Passage opacity toggle (this will prevent the backgrounds from being visible behind the passage text).
- One additional sans-serif font type

New Gameplay Feature

Unfortunately, I couldn't get the option to change your gender/pronouns at any time from the Journal to work (it would break gender-locked romances later down the line and was causing bugs in other areas). That feature is now scrapped.

You can now choose to adopt your mentor's surname between the Prologue and Chapter 1. This will replace your original surname, but the game will still record what the original was. By changing your character's surname, you will be locked out of certain story moments that specific to your Origin (basically mentions of your character's birth family, etc), but you will unlock new ones relating to your Wayfarer mentor.

Other Notes

Alpha Build 1.0.9. is the last version of the build before Chapter 1 launches publicly. I am going to spend the next week chasing down any last bugs and errors (hopefully there isn't anything major); this is definitely the home stretch now!

I am **tentatively** going to say that 1.0.9.'s save files should be good to use for Chapter 2 and you hopefully shouldn't have to restart again after this point, but I do want to give it a few days of bug testing before I make that official.

With the completion of the UI redesign, I feel it safe to announce a date for the public launch. **Chapter 1 will launch to the public on Thursday, September 9, 2021.** Once the launch is over, I will hopefully be getting some brief Chapter 2 material up on the alpha build, but I need to see where things lie before I dive back into writing and coding new story content (and also take some time off 😊).

New Password/Access

The alpha build can be accessed from the link above.

September's password is: 8EftkMy4ek2vKxZn. Do not share this password!

Patches

September 3, Patch 1.1

- Fixed some minor formatting issues on mobile that relate to margins/padding
- Fixed a bug that stopped codex entries from scrolling on mobile
- Fixed some unclosed HTML tags
- General continuity fixes (minor) and typos

September 5, Patch 1.2

- Portrait mode on mobile will now open correctly in Chromium browsers (yay!)
- Added more pronoun options to the presets

- Added an extra small font size option
- Removed the X button in the top corner of the dialog boxes. Dialogs can still be dismissed by clicking outside the box, or by clicking the dismiss/close/cancel buttons at the bottom
- Interactive map will now no longer display on mobile at all. The settings option is still there, but it will be nonfunctional on mobile.
- Fixed more continuity errors and tidied up unclosed HTML tags that were causing display errors
- Added a Save prompt screen at the end of each chapter

September 7, Patch 1.3

- General bug fixes, typo fixes, and polishing
- Fixed a display problem in the Journal where some Chapter 1 scars didn't show up
- Changed the default font size to say Default rather than small (because it's actually smaller than the extra small font-size on mobile, but not on PC _(ツ)_/)

September 9, Patch 1.4

- Upgraded the alpha build to version 1.1.1
- Added more given name, surname and nickname suggestions (along with a View Suggestions tab)
- As of this patch, the alpha build and the public build contain the same content

September 16, Version 1.1.1 Patch 1.1

- General bug fixes on both the public and alpha builds



[Progress Report 2021.09.08](#)

[Sep 8, 2021](#)

Hi friends,

The public build launches tomorrow! 🎉 It's been a long road to get to this point and, if I'm being honest, it feels a little surreal.

Alpha Build 1.0.9. has been patched three times since it released on September 1. This is mostly fixing minor bugs and unclosed HTML tags. I will be updating the alpha build with one more patch tomorrow

before the public build goes live. After that patch, your Chapter 1 saves will be safe and stable—you shouldn't have to restart the game from the beginning moving forwards.

Important Notes for the Alpha & Public Builds

The alpha and public builds of the game share the same internal name and IFID. This means that they share meta data, which will affect your saves. If you're jumping between the alpha and public builds, your saves for both versions will be available at the same time and your autosaves will be overridden by whatever version of the game you have open in your browser.

As I continue to add to the alpha build, this means that if you used a save from the alpha build on the public build, you will eventually encounter error messages when the public build can't find the passages that exist only on the alpha.

To avoid confusion, it is probably best to only play one version of the game or to use downloaded save files rather than browser-saves.

September Creator Q & A

This month, I am doing a new Creator Q&A! If you'd like to participate by submitting questions (they can be about anything—game-related, story, characters, coding, writing—whatever!), you can submit them [to this post here](#) or [through the form here](#). I will answer them in a podcast-style Q&A and release it at the end of the month.

Next Steps for the Alpha Build

I need to take some time off (and work on the much-belated bonus content 😊), so I don't anticipate any new updates for the alpha this month. I am hoping to start work on Chapter 2 sometime in September. Similar to Chapter 1, Chapter 2 will be updated in stages as I complete each major section.

Chapter 2 is much shorter and much more linear than Chapter 1, so its development pace is going to be very different than the previous chapter. Plus, I'm no longer fiddling with design choices and I know all of my coding tricks, so progress now will be centered on writing new content and adding it to the build.

Thank you all so much for your support! It means so much to have all of you here; I wouldn't be able to make this game without you. 💕

[Character Agency & Creating Active Characters](#)

[Sep 13, 2021](#)

When we talk about characters, the idea of a story being “character-driven” is often raised. Character-driven stories are intended to be the antithesis of plot-driven stories. The story is about the characters, their lives, and their relationships, rather than the characters being tossed around willy-nilly by a series of pre-determined events.

I’ve never been one for the character-driven vs plot-driven argument. Character and plot are equally important and are essentially two sides of the same coin. Just as plot creates scenarios and situations for the characters to react to, those characters’ choices are what fuel the events of the plot. These two storytelling elements are so closely linked that they are fundamentally intertwined.

Rather than focusing on the question of “character-driven” and “plot-driven”, I think it’s more useful to ask yourself *who* your main characters are, *what* they are striving for, and *how* they go about achieving their goals.

Organic characterization can only happen when your characters have agency. For characters to develop over the course of a story—to grow and learn as people do in real life—they need to be an active participant. While there will be occasions when character growth comes from a character’s reaction to an outside event they have no control over, consider first how the character affects their environment, not the other way around.

When a character lacks agency in their own narrative, they run the risk of falling flat. A narrative is made up of a series of cause and effect; if a character never participates in the *cause* and only in the *effect*, then the plot is happening *to* them. There is much less room for dynamic growth when all a character does is react to the events of a story. While this works for secondary and tertiary characters (because the story isn’t about them), this can lead to an unsatisfying protagonist.

A protagonist who does not have agency in their own story can make audiences wonder *why* they are the main character. If all your protagonist does is react to the world around them, rather than actively participate, why is their point of view important? Why are they the right character to tell this story?

When crafting a protagonist and main characters, there are three things I like to consider:

- Character desire
- Action vs reaction
- Breaking the status quo

Character Desire

The first element I consider when developing an active character is the character’s **desire**.

- What do they want most in the world?
- What are they willing to do to get what they want?
- How does this desire push them forward?
- What kind of decisions (good and bad) will they make in pursuit of this desire?

- What are they willing to sacrifice in the name of getting their desire? Or are do they have a boundary they will not pass and will they force themselves to give up on it?

Character desire can be anything. It can be simple (“I want cookies from the cookie jar”) or complex (“I want to be free from the societal pressures enforced on me because of my identity”). Regardless, you want to make your character’s desire as high stakes as possible for the scope of your story.

This doesn’t mean you need to escalate it to make a desire high stakes. When I was TA in graduate school, some of my playwriting students assumed that to make a desire high stakes, they had to escalate it to the point where it became a life and death situation. This does not automatically make a desire high stakes.

When it comes to desire, high stakes only refers to the importance and value the character places on it. High stakes means something completely different depending on the genre and scope of your story. “I want cookies from the cookie jar” could be just as high stakes in a slice-of-life family drama as “I want to redeem my father and defeat the Empire” is in Star Wars.

Character desire is important for an active character because it gives them a goal to work towards throughout the course of the story. It becomes a central point in their characterization, one in which everything else is relative. How they interact with other characters will depend on whether those characters are helping or hindering them in achieving their goal. A character’s development over the course of the story will depend on how successful they are at getting what they want and what they had to risk along the way. And sometimes, some characters don’t achieve their goal at all. How and why they failed (and whether they are willing to try again) can be used to instigate growth.

Building Blocks & Shifting Desires

In long-form fiction, sometimes it’s not feasible for your main characters to maintain the same desire or goal throughout the course of the entire story. The scope of a seven book series is going to be very different from the scale of a single novel, just as the scope of a TV show is different from the scope of a two hour movie.

Sometimes, you need to reconfigure your character’s singular goal into a series of goals. It becomes less about what they desire most *at all times* and what they desire most *in the moment*. Breaking it down into smaller blocks can allow you to shift your character’s goals over the long term as they complete or fail them.

This is much more flexible in the long-term. For example, in *Avatar: the Last Airbender*, Zuko goes through an immense amount of character development. You can break his journey down into major story beats that revolve around what he desires most at each moment—and how successful he is at getting it.

- In Book 1, he wants to regain his family’s respect by capturing the Avatar.
- In Book 2, he wants to find a purpose outside his family, which is in direct conflict with his Book 1 desire (which leads to a crisis point in the Book 2 conclusion).

- In Book 3, he finally has achieved his original goal, but it's an empty victory. The turning point happens when he abandons his original Book 1 desire completely and focuses on stopping/defeating his father and sister.

Regardless of the scale of your story, an active character is one who always has something they are striving for.

Action vs. Reaction

The second element I consider when writing active characters is **action vs reaction**. This concerns the character's involvement in the story. If plot is a sequence of cause and effect, then how do the character's choices and actions affect that cause and effect? Are they responsible for some element of the plot, or are they simply a vehicle by which the audience can experience the plot?

Making your characters responsible for their own actions is a good way to ensure they are active participants in their own story because it means they are affecting the plot just as much as the plot is affecting them. Allow your characters to fail. Allow them to make poor decisions that come back to bite them. Failure is a part of being human, and through failure, we learn and we grow.

I think it's important to keep in mind that failure is not the same thing as suffering. Failure is a direct consequence of a character's previous actions. Suffering can be involved, of course, but it's a symptom of their failure. There's a difference between a character who makes a mistake, fails, and then grows from that experience and a character who suffers only due to outside forces. One is active, which gives your character agency; the other is passive, which strips the character of control and places them in a position where things happen *to* them.

However, there are times when you will want your characters to react rather than act. Sometimes you need an outside element to kickstart a story beat, or to impact the plot in an unforeseen way. But if all your characters do is react to story events, it can strip them of character growth. If they aren't involved, if they aren't actively doing *something*, how can they grow? Why would they change?

Breaking the Status Quo

The last element I consider when making active characters is the **status quo** and (specifically) breaking it. This is less about the character's overarching character arc and more about individual, specific scene structure. Since this tutorial isn't about scene structure itself, I won't be going into this extremely in-depth, but here is a brief introduction.

The **status quo** refers to the existing emotional, mental, and/or physical state of the characters when the scene begins. The status quo can be a belief the main character has that will proceed to be challenged throughout the scene; it can be how they are feeling in relation to the other characters. It is essentially a way of referring to the state of the world from the POV character's perspective.

No matter what happens in the scene, **the status quo should be broken** by the end of the scene. There should be some fundamental shift that makes it impossible for the characters to go back to the way they were before. This can be a small, low stakes shift or a large, high stakes shift. Sometimes the

characters can learn a new piece of information; sometimes a character can have a change in perspective or feelings.

Regardless, there should always be some kind of change. If things aren't changing, then it's usually a sign that you don't actually need the scene and it can be cut and re-purposed elsewhere. Agency and action needs change, and breaking the status quo is an organic way to invoke that change.

Interactive Fiction and Giving the Player Character Agency

Interactive fiction holds a unique place for character growth for a handful of reasons. Because interactive novels are prose text, there are many commonalities between them and traditional novels. But interactive novels are *also* games, which means the reader/player is an active participant in the unfolding of the story. They choose where the story goes; their choices affect the content they see and how their character progresses.

When you're designing a player character for an IF game, I think it's easy to fall into the trap that interactivity equals agency and action. In traditional video games, the player character almost always feels like they're growing and developing because you, the player, are actively learning the game mechanics, improving your skills, and generally getting better at playing the game as you progress.

The protagonist's character growth in traditional RPGs can be a tricky thing that changes depending on whether it has a pre-established character (i.e. *Witcher 3's* Geralt or *Horizon: Zero Dawn's* Aloy) or a custom one the player creates (*Dragon Age*, *Elder Scrolls*, etc). It's easy for pre-established characters to have a character arc over the course of the game's story. However, when you're working with a custom character the player creates, it's much more challenging to write an in-depth character arc because so many elements of the player character are unknown. I find that most of the time in custom character games, the player character's development is left to the imaginations of the player. They can fine-tune things in their heads as they play, and fill in the gaps themselves to suit the character they made.

But interactive fiction is a middle ground between traditional games and traditional novels. Because interactive fiction is based in text and prose, authors have more control over the narrative than in a traditional video game. And because interactive fiction is read rather than physically played, the player character's development sits in a different place than it does in a traditional video game.

This brings us back to interactivity, agency and action. In interactive fiction, just because a player can select different options and choices does not necessarily mean that the player character is an active character.

If the choices do not directly impact the direction of the narrative and there are no consequences for the player character's actions, the player character does not have agency. When this happens, other characters in the game are the ones whose actions push the plot; the player character just happens to be there to witness it. This creates an experience where the player is more of a passive bystander, absorbing events as they happen around them, rather than actively engaging in the direction of the game.

I think it's important for player characters in IF to maintain some level of agency. IF is a medium built on player choice—that is where the gameplay lies. Without agency and the ability for the player to directly impact the plot, choice can end up feeling hollow. While it's nice to be able to select the colour of your hair or your favourite caffeinated drink, interactive fiction thrives when the player can see how their choices affect the story, the characters, and the world around them.

[Progress Report 2021.09.16](#)

[Sep 16, 2021](#)

Hi friends,

The game's been out for a week! It's been a pretty wild time, and I'm overwhelmed by the response it's gotten. The game has stayed in the top 10 for all of its major tags and has been averaging around 1000 browser plays per day, which is incredible. Gob-smacked doesn't even reach what I'm feeling right now.



I wanted to say a big welcome to all the new Patrons! Thank you so much for supporting the game, I'm so happy to see you here! 💕

September Creator Q & A

In case you missed it, this month I am planning on doing a Q&A. However, I need questions in order to do one! If you'd like to participate, please submit your questions to either [the comments of this post here](#) or to [the form here](#).

I was originally going to close submissions on September 20, but I'll extend it to Saturday, September 25.

Game Patch

I released a patch today for both the public and alpha builds that fix some minor bugs, HTML errors, and general typos and spelling/grammar mistakes.

Also, if you'd like to help the game's analytics, leaving a **rating** on the [public build](#) helps me out a lot with itch.io's algorithm (do I sound like a YouTube... 😊). 💕

Alpha Updates

I have started writing Chapter 2! 🥳 I finished my in-depth outline a few days ago and work has commenced. Chapter 2 is much more linear than Chapter 1, so developing its material is going to be a much shorter process than before.

Chapter 2 only has 4 scenes. While there is choice and variation, there is no investigation/exploration sections, so it won't fan out the same way that Chapter 1 does.

Scene 3 includes a party scene where the MC will have a chance to meet Melchior (a companion character), Phaedra (a potential romance interest), both of Zenaida's parents, and various Guild of Mages members. 🙄

My hope is to finish writing and coding all of Chapter 2 by mid-November.

This is the tentative plan:

- **September 16 – 26:** Write Scene 1
- **September 27 – October 10:** Write Scene 2
- **Sometime around October 10:** Code Scenes 1 & 2 and update the alpha build with Chapter 2 content
- **October 11 – 25:** Write Scene 3
- **October 25 – November 9:** Write Scene 4
- **November 10 – 16:** Code and update the alpha build

After Chapter 2, the game splits down three routes, meaning that there will be three versions of Chapter 3. I would like to get the alpha to a place where it is at least one chapter ahead of the public build. If all goes according to plan, I will be working on the three Chapter 3s throughout November, December and January, and then releasing Chapter 2 publicly sometime in early January (around New Year).

The three versions of Chapter 3 may not be quite fully finished by then, but I don't want to leave the public build inactive for too long while it's still in its infancy.

Thank you all so much for your support! 💖

[Episode 1 Creator Q & A](#)

[Sep 26, 2021](#)

Hi friends,

My partner and I are here to answer some of your burning questions about Wayfarer! The podcast is divided into two sections--writing and game development, then worldbuilding and character questions.

Spoiler warning for ALL of the Prologue and Chapter 1's content.

TRANSCRIPT

(Tried using transcription software to reduce the amount of time to do this... it worked okay. Just know that Melchior/Mel was either transcribed as "Mel gear" and "Milk" respectively, and I think that's quite funny. Also Velantis became "Alan".)

JOSIAH:

All right, everybody. Welcome to our second question and answer session. I'm sitting here with the author and creator of the interactive fiction game *Wayfarer*. We've got Anna answering the questions. My name is Josiah, and I'll be the one asking the questions.

Just a quick note: before we begin, we will be discussing a lot of aspects that relate to chapter one, as well as some further planning within the game. So, spoiler warning for all content that is released for the game so far—which is the Prologue and Chapter One of *Wayfarer*.

ANNA:

Yes. And that includes *all* branches of Chapter One. *(laughs)* So you might hear us talk about some content that you have not seen if you did not do a particular path.

JOSIAH:

And if that send something that sends you back to try to find out what that thing was talking about, then—by all means—go right ahead. *(laughs)*

So, to begin with, we're going to start with a couple of game development related questions. Probably one of the biggest ones to begin is: how did you learn how to code?

ANNA:

That's a good question. I think... I do get this quite a bit. The thing with coding is that there's a lot of different languages out there that do multiple different things. So it's like, how do you learn? How did you learn to code?

It was more specifically about choosing the language that I wanted to work in and then messing around with it. So it's a lot of trial and error, which I think is, like, if you—well, you've done computer science stuff in school, so I'm not sure if that matches what your experience was—but it's like you get the tools from the documentation for the language you want to work in, and then you have to figure things out from base principles.

JOSIAH:

A lot of, in my experience, at least a lot of coding comes down to using a combination of things from direct documentation around certain languages, but also examples that people have used online and finding actual blocks of code that you can pull from. Somebody said—"I had done something similar. This is how I did it"—but virtually always requiring some manipulation by yourself.

ANNA:

Yeah.

JOSIAH:

To make sure it actually fits in the framework that you are trying to do.

ANNA:

Yeah. So in my case, there's three languages that I'm working with.

There's the Twine story format SugarCube, which is my chosen story format for the game. The reason that I chose SugarCube specifically was because, one: SugarCube is an extension of JavaScript, which is another language that is used in the game. So, if you can understand SugarCube, then you're on your way to understanding JavaScript.

And then the second—kind of more important reason—why I chose it was because a lot of Twine games over the past decade have been made with SugarCube. So the language is very extensively documented. And I knew going into it that if I ran into a problem or if I had a concept for something that I wanted to do, but had no idea where to start, I could Google it. And I would probably encounter someone who had been trying to do the same thing. And then I can *look* at what they're talking about and then try it out for myself.

JOSIAH:

The unwritten rule of any programming language is: the way you *really* learn how to do things when it comes down to the nitty gritty of it is having a good handle of Google search functions.

ANNA:

Yeah. *(laughs)* Because that then goes into like the next two languages that I use.

So, the next one is JavaScript. I don't really write any of my own JavaScript. It's mostly just pulling specific macros that other people have created for the SugarCube format, and then popping them into my JavaScript file.

Next major language that I use is CSS and HTML, which are the coding languages for making things look pretty on the internet. *(laughs)* And that has been a lot of trial and error, and a lot of referencing the

different resources and teaching tutorials and stuff that are available online. Like you can look up anything.

So, if you're trying to do a specific thing, you just Google it and then you mess around, and sometimes you spend two hours on Stack Overflow with people being like, "why is this thing not working?" And you're looking at it like: okay, I'm going to try what this person suggested. Oh, it kind of works, but not in the way that I want it to work. And then you just tweak it and then you try again.

But the nice thing about working in CSS is that you can use the inspect tool on your browser to see the code, and then edit it and change it and see immediately what those changes are. So if you're having a problem with... say there's part of the base SugarCube template that you want to change. When I was working with a base template, I would sometimes be like: "I want to change this thing, but I don't know how to change this thing." And then I spend like a couple hours trying to figure it out, trying to target different things, and it wasn't working. Then I was like, "Oh, just use the inspect tool. It will tell you the name of the element." *(laughs)* And you can just go in and edit from there.

That was a long ramble. *(laughs)*

JOSIAH:

And now our next question: did you have everything plotted, outlined your plan out for *Wayfarer* before you began writing or coding?

ANNA:

Yes, but with certain restrictions. The way that I handled this is basically the way that I was taught to when I took a video game narrative design course a couple years ago.

So with narrative design for video games, usually what they will do—because they're working in really, really big teams (this style of working will also be used on for things like, you know, long form TV shows and kind of thing)—but they create a beat chart. So whoever is the lead designer or the story lead, they'll create a beat chart. And the beat chart is basically where you break down the main points of your action from start to finish. These are the most important plot points. These are the things that are always going to happen on every single run. And you fill out the be chart with certain details that you need to know for those things to happen. And then once you have your whole be chart scoped out, then you can start breaking it down further into smaller and smaller pieces.

So basically what I did was that I created the entire plot and the beat chart for the full game. So, I know the contents of each act. I know how many acts I'm having. I know the main plot points of each act. I know where all the major plot sequences are going to fall.

And then after I did that, then I broke it down further, looking specifically at the arc of each act, so I could figure out how many chapters I needed in each act. And then I broke down the chapters into smaller pieces, and then sometimes the pieces of the chapters get broken down as well.

So, I'm kind of constantly in a state of outlining because you do your general outline and you don't need to... when you start something like this, you don't need to know absolutely every single possible thing that could happen, because you need to give yourself room to grow as you write. Because you learn a lot of things about the *direction* of your character arcs and the direction of your story as you're in the middle of writing the action.

I think that if you created an outline and then created absolutely every single little plot detail in advance and then stuck to the outline, it would start to feel inorganic after a while, because you'd be forcing certain things to happen. Sometimes you create an outline, and then you start writing the scene, and then you swerve off into a completely different direction because that's just where things start to organically go.

So, I guess my point is, is that it's okay to have gaps in your outline, you can flesh them out later.
(laughs)

Know your main plots, know your main plot points. And then you can continue to work on your outline as you continue to progress.

JOSIAH:

Because you generally, when you are beginning a chapter—

ANNA:

Mm-hmm.

JOSIAH:

You have the, a strong idea of all the major points that have to happen in a chapter, but you'll begin a separate outline for that chapter at the start of it, right?

ANNA:

Yes. Yeah. Yeah. So for example, I just started working on Chapter Two last week and the very first thing that I did was I broke down my Chapter Two outline into all of the *scenes*, all of the major *beats* of all of the scenes, all of the talking points within those major beats.

And now I have like a ten page outline for Chapter Two (laughs), but it's only ten pages because it's so extremely detailed. (laughs)

JOSIAH:

So from there, we're going to move on to some questions about writing and (laughs) it's kind of clear that a lot of the curiosity comes around the concept of branching paths.

ANNA:

Yeah.

JOSIAH:

Because we have three questions that deal with different aspects of branching paths. Instead of answering each one individually, we're going to try to group them all together and talk about branching paths as a whole.

So just for everybody who submitted those questions, we'll be talking about how do you plot a branching storyline, like Wayfarer? How do you manage all the branches of Wayfarer, both for coding and for writing, as well—as in, how do you deal with the butterfly effect of having so many outcomes and variables? And all those really come down to is: what is it like managing branching paths?

ANNA:

Yes. So, it can get quite chaotic if you don't have a way of keeping track of every single little detail. The most important thing is knowing what outcomes are going to continue to be used, what outcomes are not going to be continued to be used, what outcomes will be used up to a certain point, and then where are you going to drop them. And also where all of your bottlenecks are.

Basically, a bottleneck is a point in the story where regardless of your previous choices, the narrative always comes back to that point. So, if we look at Chapter One, for example, the player can navigate Chapter One in multiple different ways, but there are two major bottlenecks in Chapter One.

One: the player is always going to end back up at the Count's villa.

And two: the player is always going to end up meeting Zenaida and getting on her ship and going to Velantis—because that's where the story takes place. How they *get* there is what changes.

And I think with how things branch so much, it's taking to account... You want to make it feel organic and dynamic for the player. You want to give them a certain amount of choice in how they do things, and then bring it all back together.

So, if we look at—for example—the Viridian Lady sequence on Route B, just on its own, the way that it is structured is you start by going to the villa. And then you have to decide how you're going to enter the villa. And so there are three branches there. You can either climb the cliffs. You can go in the front. Or you can try to go in the front *or* climb the cliffs and fail to do that (and then you end up inside the atrium). So, going through those three branches, they're always going to put the player back into a situation where they're in the atrium, talking to the Viridian Lady.

Now, what changes is—do they meet Hera or not? What kind of conversations do they have with Aeran throughout that sequence, which is going to ultimately affect his approval level? Do they get the bronze sphere or not?

(Because you can get the bronze sphere directly from her. If you meet her or you, Aeran will give it to you. If your approval is high enough, there's a whole bunch of minutia that change.)

And then me—as the level designer—I need to decide what out of those tiny choices carry forwards and which ones do not. You could make the argument: “Okay, well, if you're not going to use everything, why do you have so much choice to begin with?” But the thing about choice is that it affects the players. It changes the player's perspective on the story. Sometimes their perspective on the characters.

Because I have people who come into my inbox on Tumblr yelling and screaming about how much they hate Aeran. And I'm just kind of sitting here going, “Well, I wonder what kind of content you saw, because depending on what content you see, your perspective of him may change a lot.” So though you might end up hitting the same bottlenecks, if the tiny details were different, then that's going to inform your opinion of where the story is going and of certain characters, which is going to affect which major choices you make later on.

JOSIAH:

So, I think that really answers the “What is it like for writing?” and also talk about the butterfly effect—

ANNA:

Mm-hmm.

JOSIAH:

How would you say you manage project storylines?

ANNA:

So, it comes down to keeping track of all of your variables and also conditional statements. I have a gigantic Excel sheet. *(laughs)* Every single variable that I use to control things. Like if I want to record a certain event that happened, I will give that a variable. If I need to reference a certain conversation that happened, give that a variable. If I need to reference the player visiting a certain location, that gets a variable.

So, for example, in Route B (which is the investigation route), going to the Viridian Lady's villa, going to Deadwood, going to Edgewater, and going to the Cove all have their own separate variables that are set to true or to false, depending on whether you visited that location or not.

Edgewater actually has two variables inside *(laughs)* because there's two branches. Because you can decide to either go home or you can decide to go talk to Madam Grey. So, it has two variables inside the variable. If you went to Edgewater, a lot of it comes down to just managing “blank situation, true,” or is “blank situation false”. If blank situation is true, the player gets this text. If blank situation is false, they get this other text.

JOSIAH:

So, one of the ways that really kind of comes into the whole management aspect of it is—for instance—looking at the end of the investigation route interaction within the Count's villa. It's not that all of the different paths you can take there lead you to a different...

Let's imagine every possible interaction you can have within the Count's villa as a whole bunch of different rooms. It wouldn't be so much that every interaction that you go to leads you to a different door and into a completely different room.

ANNA:

Mm-hmm.

JOSIAH:

You use those variables to have everyone enter one room and then check different things inside of it.

ANNA:

Yeah.

JOSIAH:

So there's that one bottleneck where goes into the Count's villa, but you check variables and things throughout, and that is what affects what content you actually see inside of it—

ANNA:

Yeah, and what options you ultimately can choose to get. And then there are other things too, like non-companion characters will sometimes be given an approval counter. So, the Viridian Lady has one and the Count has one. And so these are behind-the-scenes code that the player cannot see. You can probably figure out—when you're talking to them—whether they like you or not (*laughs*). But depending on which dialogue choices the player selects when they're talking to them, the approval counter will either increase or not. And if you hit a certain point, you will get different results.

So, with the Viridian Lady, it's technically a disapproval counter because that's just how I did it. Every time the player is snarky or belligerent with her, she has a higher disapproval count. And then that ultimately affects what information you get out of her (because the information you get from her has its own individual true/false failure variables), which affects whether that information leads you to the location of the Chalice or not.

If your disapproval with her gets too high, she's not going to give you anything decent. You can't really use it.

The Count, on the other hand... *(laughs)* I did this specifically because I thought it would be hilarious to punish players for being snarky because everyone likes taking the snarky options. It's not a punishment, but I wanted to have some kind of consequence for people being snarky. So, the Count has an actual approval counter. The snarkier you are with him when you get to his villa, the higher his approval gets. And then if it's high enough, he will invite you inside his villa because he wants to... He just enjoys being snarked at by the main character so much he wants them to work for him permanently. And that created a whole other combat branch that it was not planned and delayed the release of the demo by a month and a half. *(laughs)*

JOSIAH:

So, yeah, if you've ever had a situation where the Count actually forced you to continue working for him. That's because he's just been so entertained by your snark and your sass.

ANNA:

Yeah, basically. And you can get on that, regardless of whether you have the chalice or not. It's a lot harder if you don't have the chalice—or if you're pretending not to have the chalice. There's a lot of different ways it can go. But yeah, basically in terms of keeping track of it, a lot of it comes down to just recording all of the Boolean variables—

JOSIAH:

Boolean being true/false—

ANNA:

True/false, yeah. And then knowing how I'm going to use and reference them later on. So, like, there's a lot of stuff. There's a lot of variables in Chapter One that don't need to carry over because I'm not going to reference them again because Chapter One is a contained event. I don't need to know. I don't need the player to remember whether they gave Luthais their cloak or not. They don't need to. There's a variable for whether you paid Yarrow or not—if you go to the Docks and encounter them talking to Aeran—like there's all these tiny little variables that affect certain, very specific things in Chapter One that don't need to be called on ever again.

So, in my Excel sheet, when I finished Chapter One, I highlighted all of the variables that I didn't need to use anymore. And then I unset all of them in the game because I don't need the game to continue to store that information. It just takes up space.

JOSIAH:

All right. Well that was enough for **(laughs)** all the branching storyline questions. Next question on writing is: how do you balance making sure the player's main character is active in the story and driving the plot—AKA choices matter without the player feeling as though the narrative conflicts with their character's personality? AKA, how they would react or feel in the scene?

ANNA:

I think when you start a project like this or a narrative like this, you have to accept the fact that you cannot account for every single possible thing that a person could imagine. And there are going to be times when players feel that the main character is saying or doing things that is not in character for what they're imagining.

Because I've had comments about this. I've had people say that the main character is too aggressive. I've also had people say that the main character is not aggressive enough. And my perspective on that as a writer is that I have created a base personality for the main character based on *who* they are and *how* they fit into this world. So, it's taking into account the established history. They are essentially a mercenary. They are a 30-something mercenary without magic in a magical world. That is the baseline, and the character is working within that baseline.

I am inviting players to play *this* role. And if they want to imagine something that goes outside that role and something later conflicts with that, then that's kind of that's between the player and the game.

JOSIAH:

For instance, if you were to have a character who wanted to be somebody who is incredibly adverse to violence, who is frail, and also incredibly shy and a bit of a shut-in—it'd be hard to do for somebody who spent a good portion of their adult life as a mercenary.

ANNA:

Yeah. Like, those two things don't really work? They're kind of like opposite to each other?

So, my recommendation for players it to think about what the game is asking when you make your main character. Think about what the game is asking you to do in terms of role-playing. This isn't D&D, you can't create whatever you imagine because I am creating a story and I can't account for every single possible choice because those choices are infinite, right? This is the difference between running a tabletop campaign as a DM and writing an interactive narrative where you give the players a certain level of choice. But ultimately there has to be restrictions because I can't account for everything. Otherwise... you can't write infinitely. The reason it works in tabletop games is because the DM doesn't have to write all of the other choices that we're not taking. *(laughs)* You know?

So, I think if you're approaching it the way that I have approached it, where you have this base personality and you work within that framework, then you want to think about the different choices that would work, personality-wise for, someone who has lived in that situation and offer as many of those as you can. But eventually you do have to put restrictions on it because...

Like, I am kind of modeling the way that I do choices off of BioWare games, to a certain extent. I say BioWare games specifically because I tend to work in groups of three.

One is not a choice. Two doesn't feel like enough of a choice because it's either *this* or *that*. Three feels like a happy medium. Having more than three choices—although sometimes I do have more than three choices, it depends on what's going on—having more than three choices gets really difficult to generate content. Probably the game that had the biggest influence on this is Dragon Age: Origins. Dragon Age: Origins had a gigantic team of writers. So they could go through adding, you know, six, seven choice options for the main character for a wide variety of different things.

I am a single person. *(laughs)* So it's not feasible for me to constantly do four to six or more dialogue or action choices. So I usually try to keep it around a rule of three, just because two doesn't feel like enough, but four is too much. *(laughs)*

JOSIAH:

Even that being said, I feel like Dragon Age: Origins—and some other games to an extent—do suffer from the “Is there anything else?” problem.

ANNA:

Yeah.

JOSIAH:

Where you're working within a dialogue scene and you're given a list of like five options, and you say one of your dialogue choices, you get two sentences from the character that's specific to that dialogue choice. And then they say, “Is there anything else?” And then it moves on to another set of dialogue choices.

ANNA:

Yeah.

JOSIAH:

So it's less of a branching path and more of a like multiple choice exam.

ANNA:

It's a cycle. And I do use cycling questions every so often—usually for exposition because like the player needs to learn certain things.

But I like to have branches within cycle question cycles, because one of the things that annoys me about video game writing is that sometimes if you ask questions out of order, the dialogue feels very inorganic. So, I've been trying to account for using true/false statements and also referencing certain passage history and game history, to account for...

Like, all right, you have a cycle of four questions. If you ask Question 2 before you ask Question 1, the pace of it is slightly different. Or if Question 1 has—or if Question 3 has information that is important for Question 4 and you ask Question 4 first, you're going to get slightly different results than if you ask things in order. Just because, like... it's complicated. It takes a little bit of time. It's a little annoying (*laughs*). But in terms of keeping the flow of dialogue as organic as possible, I like doing that even though it is more work because ultimately... I'm a playwright, I cannot handle not having dialogue that flows right.

JOSIAH:

(*laughs*) Last question on writing: With Interactive Fiction WIPS, it sometimes seems that readers and players don't understand the concept of an alpha draft and are quick to judge. As someone who wants to create an interactive fiction, but has imposter syndrome and a fear of it flopping or being hated on, on any tips?

ANNA:

Ooh, this is a really good question because being afraid of negative experiences and negative reception is something that happens in every medium, regardless of what kind of content you create. And it's a really difficult thing to work through.

Even if you try to have... I hate, I *hatethis* phrase... When I was in school and people were like "Oh, you know, you're a writer, you're an actor, you just have to have a thick skin and don't let people's criticisms get to you."

At the end of the day, publicly released content is always going to have criticisms. There's always going to be someone who reads your thing or sees your thing or experiences your thing—and hates it. And some people will want to yell at you about how much they hate it.

And so, I think what it really comes down to is making sure that you have healthy way of receiving that negative criticism and then putting that energy and shoving it off someplace else.

Sometimes I get some really negative stuff in my inbox. Sometimes I get, you know, comments on it where someone enjoyed the material, but they *didn't* enjoy the material. And they're like, "I like this, but I wish *this*".

And the way I handle it is that I have a few close friends who I share that information with just so I can vent about it. Once I've vented about it, then it's just kind of like... You brush it off, set it aside. Don't think about it again. It's okay. I think you do need to let it out because no one likes getting criticize. Criticism is real. Especially negative criticism or unasked for constructive criticism.

This isn't just interactive fiction, it's anything, really. People who consume media... The audience doesn't understand all of the minute decisions that a content creator may have made to make the thing. They just see the thing, consume the thing, decide they don't like the thing. They're like, "Why didn't you do this? I hate this. You should have done *this* instead."

And it's like... you don't understand what that creative process is like. So sure, yell about it. Whatever. You, as the content creator, need to accept that people are not going to like it. And then you don't have to take that constructive criticism if you don't want to deal with it. Let it out. And then don't look at it again.

JOSIAH:

That's really good advice. And I think "Look at it and deal with it" comes down to one of my personal favourite things I've ever heard about anything that could upset you or things that can be tough. The bottom line is to realize that you're not alone and it's okay to have those feelings.

ANNA:

Mm-Hmm.

JOSIAH:

Because something I've seen far too much—whether it be within theater or within careers or within anything—is people who have negative feedback or have something negative happen to them, they begin to fall down a whirlpool of "I must be the only person this is happening to. I need to deal with this because everyone else seems so much better in dealing with it than I am. So *I* am the outlier." And then they don't really deal with it in a healthy way.

Whenever you receive things like that, that might give you that fear of something flopping or a fear of being hated on, and it's okay to feel upset about it.

ANNA:

Mm-Hmm.

JOSIAH:

Because it is something that is upsetting. And if you just try to think that you *should not* be feeling this way and try to bury it, then it's only going to be a negative thing. Like Anna was saying, if you have those people around you, or if you have some way of taking it in and dealing with it... Venting about it and then finding a path to let it go away, *that's* how you get past something like that.

ANNA:

And it can be like... especially if you're an indie developer, artist, content creator, or whatever, like the...

Dealing with negative criticism has honestly been the most difficult part of this entire project. Because someone gives me a one star rating on itch. I have no idea *why* they gave me a one star rating, unless they say it specifically.

It could be... maybe the game failed to load for them and they're angry about that. It could be maybe the game was really not for them. Something that comes up a lot with interactive fiction, especially on platforms like itch, is that people come into it expecting a 2D or 3D video game. And then they see they have to read and then they're angry about that. So—one star rating.

But with the rating system, unless someone actually gives a review, I have no idea what they're thinking. I don't know. I can't know. I will never know why someone gave me a two star or one star rating. And so, I can't let that... I can *process* that—and I usually vent to you about it. I'm like "Someone gave me a one star rating *mehhh!!*"— (*laughs*)

JOSIAH:

And particularly within my experiences, both within like creative endeavors and outside of it, there are sometimes situations in which somebody is coming in looking to have a negative experience. Either they are looking to vent or they're already in the bad mood. And so that affects their interpretation of what's happening.

Or sometimes. even in some extreme cases, they're actively looking to get a reaction out of you. It could be that they haven't even played your game, or it could be that they haven't read your thing. Maybe they are dealing with some type of jealousy or some type of feelings of inadequacy themselves. And for them, the way that they have chosen to deal with it is by attacking somebody else. It's an incredibly unhealthy and unproductive way of doing that. But it's what they've chosen to do. And you can't control that.

ANNA:

Yeah. The main thing is—and I think this comes down not just to like any kind of online interaction, but just life in general—is that you cannot control the actions of others. So find ways of processing it that work for you and that are healthy for you because ultimately, especially as an online content creator, you don't know what's going to get thrown at you. You need to process it and let it go.

JOSIAH:

And I think the bottom line for all of this is all of this is easier said than done.

ANNA:

Absolutely. Absolutely.

(*laughs*)

Some people are going go into your game looking for things to be wrong. And some people are going to be like, okay, here's two things that I liked, but also here's this gigantic paragraph about the things that I really, really did not like. For me, in particular, I've been getting a lot of messages about the mechanics,

because some people really don't like failure and they are very angry about it. *(laughs)* So, I can't control that reaction. It's like, okay, maybe this game isn't for you.

Like, I hate puzzle games. You cannot make me play a puzzle game. If there's too many puzzles in the game, I'm done, I'm out. I hate puzzles. That doesn't necessarily mean that the game is bad. It just means that I'm not the target audience. And some people who come in to review or rate your game, they're not going to be the target audience, but they're the kind of person who wants to be loud about it. So, you kind of just need to accept it, process it, and then move on.

JOSIAH:

Moving on to questions about characters and world building. What are your inspirations behind the city of Velantis?

ANNA:

This is a good question.

I pull from a lot of different things and a lot of different places, but the main source of inspiration is the Byzantine Empire and also Ancient Greece and Ancient Rome. I feel like a lot of fantasy draws from Greco-Roman inspiration, but I am doing this because this is what I'm really comfortable with. I've spent a lot of time with Greco-Roman history, as well as Byzantine history. Partially because of my theatre background. The first thing you study when you study theater *(laughs)* ancient Greek and Roman plays *(laughs)*.

And when you study theater history, it's not just about reading the play. It's also about the historical context, the culture, the language, how the language has been translated into English in different translations and stuff, and fashion, you know... Like architecture, you can't talk about ancient Greek drama without talking about amphitheaters.

I wanted the setting to be Mediterranean because I wanted to move away from fantasy set in Northern Europe or in England or in Scotland or whatever. I wanted to move away from Tolkien, you know, that kind of *(laugh)* that kind stuff, that kind of era of fantasy. So I moved my main source of inspiration into the Mediterranean, which meant that I then started pulling from ancient Greece and ancient Rome, and the Byzantine empire. So yeah, that's *(laughs)* that's where that comes from.

JOSIAH:

And we're going to start seeing some more of Velantis soon. What is the weather like in the various regions in the world of Wayfarer?

ANNA:

It depends on what region you're in. The whole planet is explored and settled, so there's basically some kind of real world relation in most areas of the world. All major continents are in the southern

hemisphere. So the further south you go, the snowier and the colder it gets. So with a country like Farandor, it's in the really, really far south—it's close to the south pole—but its geography is based on Norway. *(laughs)*

And then up near where Rona is on the map, in the continent Istaran, that's based on rainforests and they have monsoon seasons and that kind of stuff. It's all rainforest and jungle. And Sathir is a desert.

So there's a lot of different things.

JOSIAH:

Moving on. Would the Chalice have worked to fix the main character's injuries if they have did get injured?

ANNA:

Nope. Hard no. *(laughs)*

JOSIAH:

Because the chalice is what?

ANNA:

It's magical.

JOSIAH:

And what doesn't affect the Wayfarers?

ANNA:

Magic. *(laughs)* No, but like... The Chalice is old. It's from pre-Astrandium times. So its magic is like really, really far back, but magical immunity predates that. So they would be immune. They can't use it.

JOSIAH:

I believe it was brought up a couple times in Chapter One, but that's a thing with the Wayfarers as well that they're not only immune to magical effects being cast by a person, but they're immune to magical artifacts.

ANNA:

Yeah. And they can break the enchantments on an artifact with touch depending on how that enchantment was done. Some things that are really, really old—like the chalice—like the main character

can pick it up with bare hands and not affect it at all because the enchantments are so old. *(laughs)* And so twisted up together that they can't break it.

But something new where they might be able to pick it up and be like "Oh, hey. I broke that light. Because this light thing that was floating above my head is new conjured magic and I just reached up and touched it and now it's broken." *(laughs)*

JOSIAH:

That's why the blacksmith is very nervous when you go into their shop.

ANNA:

Yes, yes. Thelkar does not want you to be there. *(laughs)*

JOSIAH:

Would you define Wayfarer as a heist game? Since the main goal seems to be to recover the Relic?

I guess to flip that question on its head—is the main goal to recover the Relic?

ANNA:

Nope. *(laughs)* That's just one part of the game. And as Chapter Two proceeds... As Chapter Two comes out, you'll see why this is not a heist game.

JOSIAH:

That's a quest.

ANNA:

Yeah. It's a quest.

JOSIAH:

Within the overall game.

ANNA:

Yeah.

JOSIAH:

So what would the main cast—beside Aeran, of course—be like if they had no magic and were recruited by the Wayfarers when they were younger? Or even would they? I can imagine Ren dodging the heck

out of Cenric to stay with Raven and Ves.

We'll just start with Ren. What would Ren have been like in the Wayfarers?

ANNA:

Gone. Oh, he would not have joined (*laughs*). He would have found a way to peace out. Like, if Ren doesn't...

Okay. So, this question can be difficult to answer because—and the person who submitted this question did mention this—the way that I create my characters is so informed by their history and their environment that it's really hard to detach them from that because they essentially become a different character. But for the sake of a fun question, Ren without magic would have still found a way to escape. (*laughs*) And he probably... he'd be able to manage it. You're not getting a hold of him. (*laughs*)

JOSIAH:

How about Alexia?

ANNA:

Alexia would have gone. And the thing is that she's book smart. So, I think if she didn't have magic... like magic is a huge part of who she is and a huge part of her character. But she is book smart. So, I think she would have done really well mentoring under Varyn.

JOSIAH:

Would she have been someone who would have stayed in the Spire? Like as a researcher?

ANNA:

Yeah. Yeah. She would've mentored with Varyn because she would've gotten along with her. And she would've stayed in the Spire and just kind of like researched things? Maybe work with Cenric to figure out some of the weird mysteries that are happening in the basement. (*laughs*)

JOSIAH:

Exactly. How about Calla?

ANNA:

Calla? Oh my God. I think she would've gone. She would've been recruited...

Now, mind you, it would depend on *when* she was recruited. I could see her family keeping her—if she didn't have magic—I could see her family brushing it under the rug and doing everything possible to make sure that no one finds out about it, especially the Order. And so I think if she joined the Wayfarer

Order, I think she would've pulled a Varyn and joined as an adult when things in her city or town—or wherever she happened to be living—didn't go so well.

But I also think that she wouldn't have stayed with the Order for very long. She would've gone, gotten some training, and then peaced out like two years later and joined a pirate crew or something. *(laughs)*

JOSIAH:

Feel like this can be an interesting answer. What about Melchior? *(laughs)*

ANNA:

I'm making such a face right now. I'm going to pass.

JOSIAH:

Because Mel—I think more than anyone else—is sort of the... He would not be the same character.

ANNA:

You cannot take his magic away from him. It's not possible. It's not possible for that.

JOSIAH:

I was tempted because I had a feeling that was going to be the answer. I was like—what if I just skip Mel? And then just have people riot? *(laugh)* Oh, sorry—

ANNA:

Sorry. We forgot. We've forgot about the blue theatre kid.

JOSIAH:

Nelani. I think that would've also been very—

ANNA:

I don't think she would've joined. Because the thing is that Aos is so isolated because it's up in the mountains and you need to fly to get there. I there are Aeda who live in Aos who don't have magic and it's no really a big deal. So I think she wouldn't have joined the order. She would've continued to do exactly the same thing that she does, just without magic. And it's not a big deal. Yeah.

JOSIAH:

Yeah. Lastly, would Felix join the—

ANNA:

Order? Yes. This is a part of his—

This is—

This—

Yes?

(laugh)

Yes. Okay. All right. Mild spoilers. I'm okay with mild spoilers.

What I was going to say is that this is part of his backstory already. Because the thing with Felix is that he canonically has low levels of magic. So, he's not magically immune. He's magic is just so weak that he can't really do anything. A main part of his storyline is him figuring out alternative ways of using magic. That's why he's an alchemist. There's part of him, I think canonically, in the game, that wishes he had magical immunity because then he couldn't just go and join the Wayfarer Order. But he doesn't have magical immunity. He just has weak magic.

JOSIAH:

And the interesting thing about that world is that for characters like Felix, you'd actually probably be better off without magic. Because you'd have an advantage instead of just being weak. To be fair, at least you can still use magical artifacts and things. Which is a whole other thing.

ANNA:

Yes. *(laughs)*

JOSIAH:

But yeah, that is what would have happened to all the characters. And that is the end of our questions!

ANNA:

Thank you so much, everyone, for sending in questions. These are always fun. This is only our second time doing one of these, but I think we'll probably do our next one when Chapter Two fully releases on Patreon for the alpha build.

JOSIAH:

And then we can prepare for all of the Mel questions. *(laughs)*

ANNA:

(laughs) I'm sure there are many questions. Because Melchior is arriving in Chapter Two. So, I'm sure there's going to be many, many questions about him because... that's going to be fun.

JOSIAH:

To which all them will be as dodged as the one here (laughs)

ANNA:

I did not dodge that very well.

JOSIAH:

If anything, I think people are going to be even more intrigued right now, if they weren't enough already with Mel.

Thanks for joining us. Everybody hope you all have a fantastic day wherever you are and we'll catch you next time.

[The Meissandium \[WIP LORE\]](#)

[Sep 28, 2021](#)

Some details and names are WIP and may change as the game develops.

Of all the ancient organizations in Rhesainia, the Meissandium is perhaps the oldest and most powerful of all. As the dominant religious organization on the continent, Meissandic temples appear in all countries and its clergy are respected members of society. Though religious belief has shifted and changed over the past millennium (thanks, in part, to research pursued by the Guild of Mages and the Arcanists' Lodge), most Rhesainians follow Meissandic traditions and—at the very least—acknowledge the gods' touch on this world.

The Creation of the Universe

The Meissandium believes that the universe was spun from darkness by Meissa, the primordial god. They crafted stars and suns, planets and moons, all from nothing. But the act of such colossal creation was too great. As their final act, Meissa sparked life into the universe, then divided their essence, birthing six new gods to take their place and finish what they started.

Though Meissa created the spark of life, it was the Hexatheon who shaped and cultivated it. Their work was long and difficult, and fatigued them greatly. When the work was finally complete, they chose a planet to call their own and plucked it from the cosmos. Naming the planet Eisarath, they descended to the surface and crafted six divine tombs, one for each god. There they would sleep for eternity, until they were called on again.

The Hexatheon

The Hexatheon refers to the six Meissandic gods. The gods are paired, with each member of the pair contrasting with the other. All Meissandic gods are genderless and are referred to with gender-neutral terms.

PAIR	GOD	DOMINIONS	ICONOGRAPHY
N/A	Meissa	N/A	Celestial objects (stars, comets, constellations, the night sky)
I	Belennor	Sun, Justice, Law, Order, Cultivation & the Harvest	Sun, flames, phoenixes
I	Adara	Moon, Nature, Wilderness, Fertility, & the Hunt	Moon, trees, wild animals (typically deer and wild boars)
II	Lyrana	Love, Family, Friendship, Loyalty, Music, Theatre & the Arts	Water, dolphins, flowers, musical instruments & notation, swans
II	Antares	War, Courage, Chivalry, Honour, Martial Arts & Athletics	Swords, spears, shields, falcons
III	Metisara	Wisdom, Knowledge, Cunning, Science & Technical Skills and Crafts	Books, Paper, Scrolls, Quills, Mirrors,
III	Nashira	Fate, Time, Space, Navigation, Destiny & Death	Hourglass, Compass, Astrolabe

Worship & Practices

Temples dedicated to the Hexatheon have existed in Rhesainia for millennia. Most are constructed for the worship of a singular god, rather than the full pantheon. The oldest temples pre-date the Astrandum. Many are so old and have fallen into such disrepair that only parts of them remain. These ruined temples are no longer used for worship; they are preserved by municipal governments and universities across the continent and are often studied by historians and scholars.

The oldest Meissandic temple is located in Velantis, in the Ithyrian District. Constructed on the central isle of Lake Naiadros, the Eidranian City (or simply Eidrania) is a temple dedicated to the full Hexatheon and serves as the headquarters of the Meissandium. Every year, Velantis oversees a surge of Meissandic pilgrims who make the journey to Eidrania for the Dance of the Stars. The Dance of the Stars is a celestial event that occurs on the first night of Firstfall, heralding the start of winter. While it is a significant event in the Meissandic faith, the Dance of the Stars also holds great cultural importance in Rhesainian countries.

While each god is revered in Rhesainian countries, some are given more importance than others. There is a general understanding that each region of the continent has a dominant god who oversees and protects the region. However, as political lines shift, this does not match the current borders exactly.

REGION	COUNTRIES	PRIMARY GOD
Northern Rhesainia	Arathian Empire, Vestra, some countries on the Empire’s northern border	Belennor
Western Rhesainia	Sathir and Arsenia	Adara
Southern Rhesainia	Artanis and its neighbouring countries to the east	Lyrana
Eastern Rhesainia	Vestra and its neighbouring countries on the eastern border	Antares
Lotharic Sea	Former Lotharic city-states and some regions of Arsenia	Metisara
Azure Sea	Coveran Republic and some regions of Sathir and Arsenia	Nashira

Meissa is not worshipped, but appears frequently in Meissandic iconography. They are sometimes referred to as the Divinity in older Meissandic texts, or—alternatively—the primordial god.

Meissandic Denominations

Sentinels

Due to their importance in texts about the Astrandium, Rhesainia’s Sentinels have their own sects within the Meissandium. As the Meissandium considers the Sentinels to be minor gods in their own right, worshipping the Sentinels does not conflict with any of the religion’s doctrines. Sentinel sects are often considered an off-shoot or a subdivision of the Sentinel’s associated god.

SENTINEL	GOD	REGION WORSHIPPED	ICONOGRAPHY
Athor the Just	Belennor	Arathian Empire (around Erenvor); Vestra (around the coastal regions)	Axe
Phairan the Divergent	Adara	Eastern coastal Arsenia	Bow
Aureia the Protector	Lyrana	Vestra (coastal regions and around Lake Parthia)	Shield
Biara the Dauntless	Antares	Rural Arsenia, villages in the Gairloch Mountains, and some regions of Sathir	Spear
Seiara the Farsighted	Metisara	Former Lotharic city-states, primarily Velantis, Corsida, Nemain and Edessa	Scepter
Aion the Sly	Nashira	Artanis, primarily in Tyridia and some clans within the Forest of Brennath	Dagger

Sect of Meissa

In some areas of Rhesainia, particularly in the eastern edges of the continent, Meissa is worshipped as a singular god and the Hexatheon is viewed as a pantheon of false gods. The Meissandium has publicly denounced this sect as a dangerous cult.

Meissandic Views on Death

Though Nashira is a death god, their purpose is to guide souls to the next plane of existence, where they will be reborn into a new world. The concept of *hell* exists in the Meissandic faith; it is conceived as a limbo space between the worlds where souls are trapped if Nashira does not guide them. They cannot escape and are sentenced to be entombed in nothingness forever.

Meissandic death ceremonies are very important, and must be performed in order to ensure safe passage to the next plane.

Development note: Only went down this path because I started using the phrase "What the hell?" without thinking about it and now it has to be justified. 😅

Meissandic Views on Magic

Meissandic doctrine preaches that magic is a blessing of the gods. The Sentinels were the first to receive the gods' blessings; they were therefore the first to attain the ability to tap into the essence and power that permeates the world and bend it to their will. After the Sentinels saved Eisarath from the Harbingers, the gods swore to pass on their blessings forever more.

Every child born into the world since carries a god's blessing. Those without are said to be cursed, abandoned and unwanted by the gods. For this reason, the Wayfarer Order tends to ignore Meissandic texts, or treat them with great caution. Most Wayfarers are nonreligious (or follow another religion that is not part of the Meissandium).

Some Meissandic sects believe that those with exceptionally strong magic are direct descendants of the Sentinels.

Meissandic Clerics

There are several ranks within the Meissandium:

- High Meissant – the elected leader of the Meissandium
- Meissants – leaders of the clergy; typically assigned to oversee individual temples
- Clerics – priests sworn to the Meissandium

The Meissandium and Politics

Rhesainian noble houses are culturally expected to have one child join the Meissandium. They are also expected to pay annual tithes to the Meissandium, regardless of whether they are religious or not. These tithes are used to fund restoration projects, general upkeep on the temples, and historical and magical research. Since the establishment of the Guild of Mages and the Arcanists' Lodge, the Meissandium is often going toe-to-toe with other organizations when it comes to scholarly research.

[Progress Report 2021.10.06](#)

[Oct 6, 2021](#)

Hi friends,

This is just a quick update about what I've been working on. I am (unsurprisingly) behind schedule from the one I posted on Sept. 16th—I am still pretty bad at estimating how long things will take me and also how much space each plot beat actually takes up.

Game Updates

Even though it's not done yet, I am very pleased with where Chapter 2 Scene 1 is currently at. The beginning of the chapter was incredibly tricky to start because of the change in location. After over a year of writing and constructing Chapter 1, I was so used to Rona that it took some time to settle into the new location and kickstart the next stage of writing.

There's also a lot of exposition that needs to happen at the start of Chapter 2 so the player has all the information they need before they start making major choices. It was tricky figuring out how to pace and structure that without it feeling like an info-dump. While the codex entries act as a way to flesh out lore and worldbuilding, everything crucial for the player to know needs to be present in the game's main text (and not hidden away in a codex entry). To be honest, parts of it still feel like an info-dump, but I think part of that is because the player is in a fairly linear section of the game.

Figuring out how to keep player choice alive, but still progressing down the necessary path was challenging. A lot of it came down to manipulating the player's relationship status—specifically Aeran's approval level (and romance/whether you got the confession out of him or not) and the approval level of the Order of Lethalis.

Regardless, the MC, Aeran, Zenaida, Malsara and Nova have officially landed in Velantis and things are already not what they expected.

Chapter 2's text files are currently at 30,000 words. I have one more section of this scene to finish, and then I'll be sending it off for proofreading. One of my playtesters has volunteered to proofread my drafts

before I start coding, so hopefully that will cut down on the amount of typos that make it into the game files!

Once the files are proofread and edited, I'll be coding them and adding them to the alpha build. You should be able to import your public build save files directly into the alpha build (they share the same internal name, so your browser will think it's the same file), but I will do some experimenting beforehand.

Progress Schedule

I am still aiming for finishing Chapter 2 by mid-November, though depending on how long it takes me to wrap up Scene 1 and move into Scene 2, this may get pushed to the end of November.

New tentative schedule:

- **October 6 – 11:** Finish Scene 1
- **October 12 – 26:** Scene 2
- **October 27 – November 3:** Scene 3 (this is a short one, like an actual short scene)
- **November 3 – 15:** Scene 4

Other

Rory (who does the game's artwork) did some art of Brissa Varyn, [which you can check out on her blog here!](#)

I am currently shopping around for a graphic designer to design the Wayfarer symbol so it can be used in the game's visual assets. I haven't proceeded very far with this yet (mostly just browsing design portfolios and prices on Fiverr), but that is where the next chunk of Patreon funding is going.

Thank you all so much for your support! 💕

WIP SNIPPET

I've been sharing snippets on the Patreon Discord, but here's a brief selection from the Chapter 2 Scene 1 draft. I've removed some of the continuity flags for easier reading, so for fun, this is the continuity of Low Approval Aeran:



"You wield extraordinary talents," Zenaida continues. "Two Wayfarers in a city that thrives on magic? You hold an incredible power, one that can be utilized to devastating effect. From the minute you set foot on Velantian soil, it will only be a matter of time before your presence is known. There are those who will give anything—do *anything*—to put those talents to use... or remove them entirely."

You glance at Aeran. He meets your gaze, a dark look brewing in his eyes. His jaw clenches, harsh lines appearing across his face. He has not taken Zenaida's warning well, and, frankly, you can't blame him. The implications are clear: by entering the city, your mere existence puts a target on your backs.

"With that in mind," Zenaida says, "I am prepared to offer some modicum of protection." She slips a hand into a deep pocket at her side and withdraws a thin, hexangular object. It is small, no bigger than the size of her palm, and bound in thick, dark red leather. The leather is embossed with a pattern of leaves and cypress vines, fanning out from a gold clasp set in the centre. She flicks the clasp with her thumb and slides a medallion out of its wrapping.

The polished medallion is cut expertly from a dark red wood. A thin gold line is engraved around the perimeter, surrounding a phoenix with its wings spread wide. A tiny gemstone is embedded below the phoenix; it pulses with scarlet light, casting a faint glow over the medallion.

"An emissary's mark," Zenaida explains. "Engraved with the Arathian phoenix and sealed with my mother's magic. Show this to any official, any aristocrat, any guard-captain, and they will know you are under the protection of House Anaxas."

Your eyes flicker to the pulsing light. The gemstone is miniscule, barely a fraction of the size of your smallest fingernail. It is strangely pretty—the way the light dances, refracted endlessly within the stone.

"Thanks for the gesture," Aeran says, his disdainful tone impossible to ignore. "But you do realize the minute we touch that thing, the enchantment will break, right? And I take it that the medallion isn't the important thing here, but your mother's seal—"

"And you are correct," Zenaida interrupts. "A mark without the magistrate's seal is worthless at best and fraudulent at worst. While some may accept it as proof of the magistrate's favour, any official who knows the law will not. That is why I have taken precautions." She slips the medallion back into its case and closes the clasp. "It is my understanding that your abilities work primarily through physical contact."

"Yeah," he says. "Bit more complicated, but something like that—"

"Then will this casing suffice?"

She drums her fingers against the leather.

[The Undercity \[WIP LORE\]](#)

[Oct 16, 2021](#)

Little is said publicly about Velantis' seventh—and hidden—district. Located beyond the harbour slums and the factories of the industrial quarters, the Undercity is among Velantis' poorest regions. By virtue of its geography, it is cut off from the rest of the city. Without the watchful eye of Velantian officials, it has become a breeding ground for organized crime and other underworld operations.

Location

The Undercity is located within the Messeidan Gorge, a canyon that cuts a wide swath through the Velantian peninsula. The canyon is not a natural formation; like many geological oddities found on the peninsula, it is the result of a powerful eruption of magical force. It likely came into existence around the Astrandium.

The gorge is the deepest canyon in the world, reaching around 18,000 feet at its deepest point. It is notable for its red and orange rock and the massive natural pillars scattered throughout the canyon. The pillars reach to the height of the surrounding cliffs and their tops are wider than their bases (thank to their shape, Undercity residents call them “flowerpots”). The pillars effectively create a series of waterless islands. A network of bridges link the flats of the pillars, creating pathways across the gorge. Most Velantians cross the bridges without looking down and seeing the sprawling slum burgeoning below.

The north end of the gorge is bordered by Lake Messeida, a massive lake on the boundary of the Gairloch Mountains. It is the end point of the Adaranth River, which flows through the base of the canyon. Ancient magical energies surround the confluence of the lake and the river, making the river flow *up* the canyon's cliffs, surging into the lake in a reverse waterfall.

Some edges of the gorge are carved into cavern networks, which descend even further into the ground.

Undercity Structure

Because of its geographical separation from the rest of Velantis, the Undercity is effectively a city-within-a-city. Many roads lead into the Undercity, but few lead out. The district is not connected to the Pallaedrion (a stabilized portal network that simplifies travel across the peninsula). The only way in is through the heavily guarded lifts constructed along the canyon's sides, or through personal (and illegal) portal systems. Permits are required to use the lifts, which severely limits the Undercity residents' access to the rest of the city.

The bottom of the canyon is overgrown with tenements and buildings that crawl up the cliffs. Due to the narrow nature of the gorge, buildings in the Undercity grow up instead of out; many buildings are well over fifty storeys high. They follow the natural line of the cliffs, curving in and out with the rockface. Most buildings rely on magical reinforcements to keep them from falling over. Some of the oldest tenements are carved directly into the cliff-face itself.

Due to the flowerpots and the tall, crowded structures, the Undercity gets very little natural light. It is rare to see the sky unobstructed. A general rule among Undercity residents is that the wealthier you are,

the closer to the sky you will be. Richer residents are able to afford roof-top apartments, whereas the poorest will be trapped on the canyon floor.

Because of the lack of natural light, the Undercity is lit with conjured light. The walls, windows and roofs are emblazoned with colourful conjured lights, which may be bent or shaped into street signs or other images. At night, the whole gorge appears to be on fire, its lights glowing furiously below the bridges.

Due to the Undercity's congestion, the Adaranth River is highly polluted. If residents cannot conjure water themselves, potable water must be drawn from a number of wells dotted around the canyon floor, or from aquifers in the caverns. While some food can be grown on roof-top gardens, Undercity cuisine relies heavily on mushrooms and other vegetables that grow in dim light, alongside meats from rodents and small animals that roam the streets. If residents have enough money, they may be able to purchase grains and other necessities from visiting merchants from the upper city.

Soulweavers (those with a natural gift for Conjuration magic) and Dustforgers (Transmogrification magic) are highly sought after for their talents. Together, they can keep families fed and watered almost indefinitely by conjuring potable water and transforming inedible objects into food. This makes any Soulweavers and Dustforgers extremely valuable; they are often targeted and forced into the gangs that rule the Undercity, if they do not become gang leaders themselves.

The Undercity is often used as scouting grounds by the Erebian League. Many street urchins are brought into the League with promises of food, shelter, money and a better life. The Swiftmark Chapter is composed almost entirely of former Undercity urchins.

Red-Light Districts

The Undercity houses one of Velantis' most popular and bustling red-light districts. Residents from the upper city frequently visit the many shops, gambling dens, brothels, and leisure houses. While the practices of these establishments are not illegal, most are unlicensed and do not report to their associated guilds, as required by Arathian law. Many of them operate as fronts for other dubious affairs.

Leisure houses are quite common in the Undercity, providing a mix of entertainment, drink, drugs and sex work to its patrons. Many promote the services of Lightseekers. Lightseekers' powers are two-fold—some are trained in illusionary work, which allows them to craft intricate scenes for the entertainment of others, similar to the work done by performing artists in the Velantian entertainment district.

Others can alter the perceptions of others, focusing on altering emotional states. Altering emotions can be extremely dangerous if not done with care and precision. In the upper city, people with these powers become licensed mental health professionals and use their magic in addition to other strategies. In the Undercity, licensing and training is difficult to attain. Many Lightseekers end up using their powers to wipe a person's emotions entirely for an hour or two, which can become an addictive coping strategy (particularly when paired with alcohol or drugs).

Underground fighting rings are very profitable and can be found in multiple caverns throughout the Undercity.

Culture & Ties to Velantis

The Undercity has a thriving culture separate from the rest of Velantis, including their own dialect. Many Undercity residents do not see themselves as Velantian citizens. Most have never left the Undercity.

After Velantis' annexation to the Empire ninety-two years ago, many of those who resisted Imperial occupation ended up in the Undercity. A large portion of its population are the children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren of those who fought against annexation. Some surviving elves and dwarves lived directly through those events.

Rumours that a surviving member of the Velantian royal family is in hiding in the Undercity persists across the gorge, though it has never been proven.

Leadership

Since Velantis' annexation by the Arathian Empire, the Undercity has separated from the rest of Velantis. The district's governing official can do very little to exert control over the district. The true power lies with the six gangs who have carved up the gorge into their individual territories.

Though the gangs gnaw at each others borders, the boundaries have mostly remained the same. Internal politics are complex and power occasionally changes hands, leading to new leadership. Some gangs have been relatively kind to their territories; others extort their residents for crowns and services.

Velantian interference with the Undercity has decreased significantly over the past two years, to the point where the city guard can only be found around the lifts. It is rumoured that Magistrate Sophia Anaxas has a long-standing agreement with the most powerful of the gangs to leave the district alone in exchange for information or services.

Development Notes

The Messeidan Gorge is partially inspired by the Grand Canyon. The "flowerpots" are inspired by Flowerpot Island, an island off the coast of the Bruce Peninsula on Georgian Bay (Lake Huron, Ontario, Canada). The island has a number of these rock formations along its coast:



The Undercity is a major location and the Player Character will spend a lot of time there, starting in Chapter 3.

[Progress Report 2021.10.20](#)

[Oct 20, 2021](#)

Hi friends,

October has been a pretty challenging month. I've talked about this on some of my progress reports before, but I have pretty severe chronic dry eye syndrome, which impacts my ability to write and code the way I want to. I've been in and out of the optometrist's office over the summer and fall for various treatments, and I've been in different levels of eye pain and fatigue throughout the last two months.

While the condition is starting to get under control again, long stretches of screen time is the main culprit, which ultimately means I can't write as much as I would like to. I'm working on finding a writing system that works better for me (including doing some drafting by hand so I can at least still write without having to look at a computer screen), but regardless it does mean that I have to slow down and I can't produce content as quickly as I want.

Because of this, Chapter 2 is still moving along, but its material is taking longer than I had originally anticipated. I am nearing the end of Scene 1 (which was a pretty big section) and I am hoping to have it done by the end of the month. I have a few more subscenes to finish, but once those are done, the material needs to be proofread before I can code it and add it to the alpha build.

Game Updates

The current new material is approaching 50k, so when it is released, there will be a lot of content (and a lot of interesting dialogue trees and new lore 🐞) to play around with!

Ideally, I would like to update the alpha build with new content before the end of the month, but it will depend on how long it takes to finish these last few sections and have the new material proofread.

I'm going to hold off on updating the progress schedule for now until Scene 1 is finished and I have a better idea of how many hours of screen time I can devote to writing each day.

Other Updates

I have found a graphic designer and a commission for the Wayfarer sigil is in progress! I'm really excited for this and I can't wait to see it brought to life.

I've been writing [short Twine tutorials](#) on my development blog (usually in response to coding questions I receive, but sometimes on topics that I think are helpful). I am considering writing a formal, two-part interactive fiction/Twine guide in the future. It would be specifically for long-form roleplaying IF games (the kind Wayfarer is).

Volume One would be a beginner's guide to working in the Twine editor and coding in SugarCube; basically, a compilation of all the things I have learned that I found helpful or useful. **Volume Two** would be a guide on IF narrative design—basically, all the components that go into structuring, designing, and

writing an IF game. This volume wouldn't be coding-focused outside of the conceptualization stage, so its guide could be applied to IF written in any engine or language.

I also want to create a few SugarCube templates that are annotated and include elements and custom macros I find helpful.

This would be a long-term project developed when I have time (game content always comes first). I am thinking of releasing drafted chapters on here as I work on them, likely as additional bonus content for that month. When both volumes are complete, I'll likely release them here in early access before releasing them on itch.io as a game resource.

That's all for right now—fingers crossed for getting new Chapter 2 material up soon! Thank you all so much for your support! 💕

[Progress Report 2021.10.27](#)

[Oct 27, 2021](#)

Hi friends,

Just a quick update for the end of October. I have finished drafting Chapter 2 Scene 1. This is quite a hefty scene ("scene" doesn't really cover it), which means there will be a lot of material to explore when the alpha build updates. The whole thing clocks in just shy of 60,000 words, which is definitely on the long end for a Wayfarer section (oddly it's around the same length as the Viridian Lady sequence in Chapter 1).

I want to get the alpha build updated as soon as possible, but there are few things that need to happen first.

- The new material needs to be edited and proofread before I start coding.
- I have new assets to make for when the player gets to name their sword and set its history. It will be a selection screen similar to Ancestry/Origin, so it needs its own set of selection cards.
- I need to code the new material.
- Chapter 1 needs a new patch. This is most typo and small bug fixes, but there's also a section I want to take out from the town square combat branch.

There's a section where the player can opt in to a touch-averse reaction to a high approval Aeran after they escape the Count's villa. This is the only place in Chapter 1 where this variable shows up. My intention was to have touch-averse flavour text for romance/friendship interactions for players who

wanted that as part of their MC's personality. However, after starting Chapter 2's content, it is getting way too difficult to track it on top of everything else (Aeran already has 4 flags in certain sections--one for romance + the Chapter 1 confession, one for his regular romance check, one for high approval, and one for low approval). Unfortunately, the other elements are more important, so the touch-averse variable and flavour text need to get cut.

There will be some things that won't make it into the next alpha build update. I haven't written any new codex entries, so while you will get notifications for new entries, there won't be any text inside them. I also need to finish the map of Velantis; it unlocks at the start of Chapter 1, but I won't be putting it in the game until I have a version I'm happy with.

With all that work ahead, it's not feasible for an update to happen by Oct 31 and still take reasonable breaks. I am definitely hoping to get the update out the first week of November.

Thank you for understanding!! 

itch.io

<https://idrellegames.itch.io/wayfarer-alpha-build>

[Wayfarer Alpha Build 1.1.2.](#)

[Nov 1, 2021](#)

Hi friends,

The first part of Chapter 2 is finally here! From now on, the alpha build will always contain content not available on the public build. 🥳

What This Update Includes

- Scene 1 (out of 4 scenes)
- 5 new codex entries
- +60,000 words of new content

Please note that some unlockable content is in development. There are a couple of unlocked codex entries that haven't been written yet and the Velantis map still needs to be made. You will get the notification for unlocking them, but there will not be any content in your codex or map catalogue for them.

What You Can Do

- Arrive in Velantis
- Balance companion approval versus faction rapport
- See Aeran have a Terrible, Horrible, Very Bad, No Good Day
- Meet a familiar (and completely unwanted) face
- Choose your blade's name and set its history
- Take a ride on barge and see the sights, including the impenetrable prison Themistrya and a magical transit system called the Pallaedrion

Save Files

If your MC **took your mentor's last name** and your save file is older than the **September 27th patch**, you will need to start a new save file.

Otherwise, if your **save file is older** than the **September 9th** public release, you will need to start a new file.

If you have a current public build save, it will transfer into the alpha build. **Browser saves** will be available in their browser save slots automatically and manual saves made through **Save to Disk** can be uploaded.

If you go back to the public build and use a save file from Chapter 2, it will result in an error message.

Because Chapter 2 is in development, it is not considered a "stable" build. I highly recommend making a separate alpha build save to test out the new content. If variables and flags change in development, you may need to replay parts of the chapter in order to preserve your continuity.

Access and Password

The alpha build can be accessed from the link above.

January's password is: sm5TstKpV9iwzeqJ. DO NOT SHARE THIS PASSWORD!

Bug Report

If you encounter any bugs, typos, or continuity errors, please report them to the **#bug-report** channel in the private Patreon side of the Wayfarer Discord server.

Patches

Patch 1.1, November 2, 2021

- General typo fixes
- Fixed some incorrectly printed passage links
- Fixed an issue with the Rapport Lost/Gained notification
- Fixed other minor bugs

Patch 1.2, November 8, 2021

- General typo fixes
- Fixed a bug where player characters without facial hair were referenced with a beard
- Fixed a bug where a Child of the Wilds action led to a passage without a continue button
- Fixed some continuity glitches with the player's blade history

[Progress Report 2021.11.03](#)

[Nov 3, 2021](#)

Hi friends,

It's November!

This month I am continuing development on Chapter 2. The alpha build was updated on November 1st, so if you haven't checked out the new content yet, see [this post here](#) (also pinned to the top of Patreon). This will give you the link and November's password to the alpha build.

Game Updates

With Scene 1 finished (which covers the MC's arrival in Velantis, gives some exposition on new lore that will be important throughout the game, and sets up a number of complications they will have to deal with later), I am starting work on Scene 2.

Scene 2 is quite large and complex. In addition to some ongoing conflict with Aeran, the MC will also have to attend a gala at the Mahanin Palace as part of Zenaida's entourage. The gala scene uses the action point system, so the player will have control over which areas they visit in the palace and which characters they meet. It sets up a number of upcoming factions (including the Order of Solarath, the Arathian Empire, and the Velantian Loyalists). It will also introduce a number of major characters, including Sophia and Sandro Anaxas (Zenaida's parents and the rulers of Velantis), Phaedra Amestris (an aristocrat with secret ties to the exiled Velantian royal family), and Melchior Larkspur (a con artist and theatre artist who is a future companion/party member).

I am hoping I can get the full scene written and coded within the month. It's NaNoWriMo, and while I am not actively participating, it is nice to have in the background as an additional goal. I am pretty used to writing between 40k and 50k a month at this point. 😊 The scene may not end up being quite that long, it depends on how many variations/paths I decide to keep and which to cut.

Once Scene 2 is done and coded, it will be added to the alpha build. Scene 3 will round out the chapter, giving the player the chance to meet more members of the Order of Lethalis and its leader, Umbria Bellaris. The MC will also have the chance to prod Aeran for more information on the Spire and the secrets he's hiding, which has a number of potential outcomes (good and bad).


Originally, Scene 4 would take the player to Diradan Tower so the MC can retrieve the Astrial. I have decided to split Chapter 2 here and make the assault on Diradan Tower its own (comparatively small) chapter. Chapter 2 already contains a lot of content, exposition, and key decisions; adding the Diradan Tower scene feels a bit tacked on.

This also gives me a little more breathing room when it comes to updating the public build. I want to update the public build with Chapter 2 in January, however I also want to make sure that the alpha build is always one chapter ahead of the public (at the very least). In the current outline, Chapter 3 is a three-way split depending on the player's choices at Diradan Tower, which means there are essentially three versions of Chapter 3. That's a lot of content to create before January, which is not going to be possible. Splitting Chapter 2 in two gives me more wiggle room for the three-way split without delaying the public build later than I want.

Other Updates

At some point, I need to finish the Velantis map and add it to the alpha build, so there will be more map-making content.

I am also hopefully going to start working on an in-depth Chapter 1 walkthrough this month. It may take me a while to get through it all, since there are so many paths in the chapter!

Fingers crossed for a good writing month and getting new content out. Thank you all so much for your support! 

[Update Schedule Poll](#)

[Nov 11, 2021](#)

Hi friends,

As I'm progressing through Chapter 2's content, I wanted to get an idea of your preferences for updates. I've always approached the alpha build with an "update when a major story section is finished" mindset, but that does mean that there are long breaks between updates.

Since I do finish individual story beats relatively quickly (i.e. a dialogue branch, a single interaction, etc), it is possible to have more updates, but with significantly shorter content. You wouldn't get a full scene/major section (like the November 1st update, which encompassed the MC's full arrival in Velantis and several major dialogue branches), but you would get parts of scenes in stages.

I'm opening this poll for all patrons, so if you have a preference, please let me know below! This will help be determine an update schedule (as much as I can) and how to adapt it to my work week.

The poll will be open until November 24. 💕

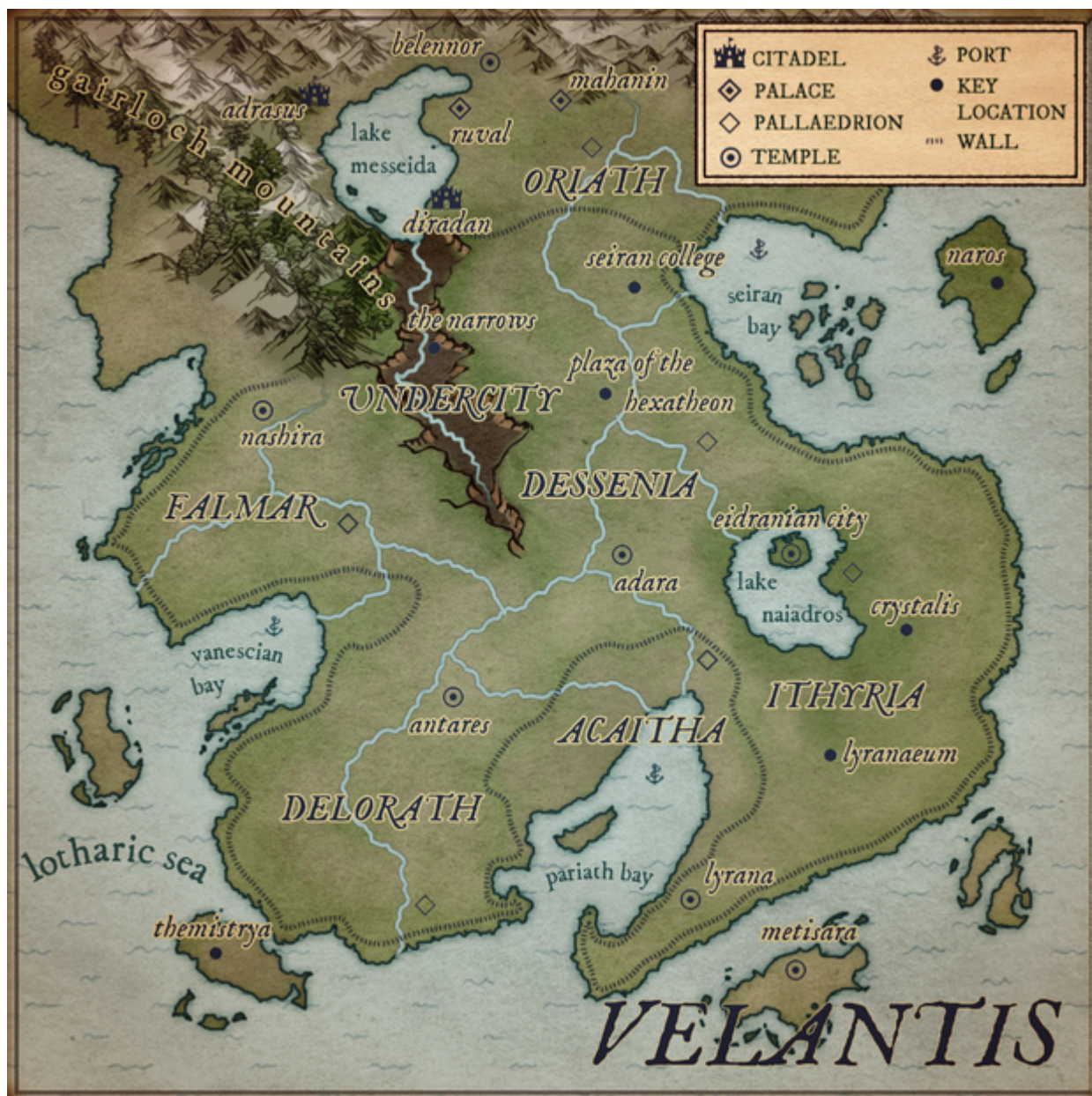
Shorter updates with less story content, but happens more frequently

9%

Longer updates with more story content, but happens less frequently

91%

Poll ended Nov 24, 2021 · 55 votes total



[Map of Velantis & Notes on Key Locations](#)

[Nov 13, 2021](#)

I shared the map of Velantis earlier in Wayfarer's Discord server, but I thought I would cross-post it here as well, along with notes on the various important locations.

This map is still a draft. I am relatively happy with it, although there are some things that I am still not 100% on (there are a lot of important locations that would be informative to include, but it runs the risk of making the map overcrowded). I will likely be adding this version to the game in the next alpha build update, but it could change a little bit before then.

City maps are difficult to pull off well in Wonderdraft, especially a fantasy metropolis like Velantis. I'm not a city planner (😅), so trying to show the major roads and buildings wasn't really possible, especially

with the assets I have access to. Velantis also has several layers of walls, which was difficult to communicate without it looking strange, so I ended up using the paths/region tool to define where the walls are instead of using any wall assets.

Map Locations

Velantis is a major metropolis, one of the largest cities in Rhesainia. It has vast cultural importance, both within the Arathian Empire and the former Lotharic city-states, as well as worldwide. Not only does it house the headquarters of the Guild of Mages, but it is also a central location to the Meissandic faith.

In its early history, the Velantian peninsula was home to several towns and villages that slowly grew together over the centuries to form one metropolis. Velantis now covers the entirety of the peninsula.

Velantian Districts

The city is composed of six official districts. These were all former townships and villages prior to the peninsula becoming one city. Each district is governed by a city councillor or magistrate. Councillors are elected officials who report to the archon and must retain a residence within their district and

- **Acaitha.** The harbour district and the only district to exist outside the city's walls. Bordering Pariath Bay, it is the first location any travellers will visit. It is home to bustling docks, a rich market, and a vast number of storehouses and warehouses.
- **Delorath.** The commercial district. Its proximity to Acaitha and the secondary port in Vanescian Bay gives it easy access to Velantis' trade system and many of its merchants sell imported goods and wares. The Merchants' Consortium has a head office here for their Velantian branch. The Greater Temple of Antares is located here. The Themistrya is located off its southern coast and can be seen for miles.
- **Falmar.** The industrial district. It is home to the Faran Enclave, where much of the Faran diaspora live. House Osgar, known for their innovations in magical technology and their ties to Farandor, owns most of the district. The head office of the Arcanists' Lodge is located here, alongside House Tormond's estates. This is also the located of the Greater Temple of Nashira.
- **Dessenia.** A major residential district. It is home to the Greater Temple of Adara, the Plaza of the Hexatheon, and Seiran College.
- **Ithyria.** An entertainment, commercial and residential district. It is home to Eidranian City, the headquarters of the Meissandic faith, and the Greater Temple of Lyrana. The Crystals, an ancient formation of blue rock and crystal, towers over most of the district. The district is home to Velantis' art scene, which includes several galleries and Iyranaeums (amphitheatres). The Greater Temple of Metisara is beyond its walls, on a small island off the south-eastern coast.
- **Oriath.** The palace district, home to the Velantian elite. It is home to Mahanin Palace, the archon's home and political hall; Ruval Palace, the private home of House Anaxas; the Greater Temple of Belennor, and Diradan Tower. The district is walled off from the rest of the city and has complex security wards. No weapons are allowed within the district.

The seventh and unofficial district is the **Undercity**. Located within a steep gorge that cuts across the peninsula, it is among the poorest areas of Velantis and is often considered to be a slum by the city. Its culture is significantly different from the rest of Velantis.

Areas of Interest

Citadels

- **Adrasus Citadel.** An ancient stronghold constructed millennia ago, well before the Astrandium. The citadel is unexplored as its magic causes hallucinations, migraines, and eventual death for all those who attempt to go within its walls. It also casts a light across the Gairloch Mountains, giving a permanent red cast to the snow-topped peaks.
- **Diradan Tower.** One of six Rhesainian citadels likely constructed around the Astrandium. Like many of its sister citadels, Diradan was seized by the Guild of Mages centuries ago. The tower has been renovated and expanded to increase its size and complexity, turning its grounds into a labyrinthine complex that houses the Guild's headquarters and one of its most important schools.

Palaces

- **Mahanin Palace.** The hereditary residence of the Archon of Velantis and the seat of the province's parliament. The Palace is one of the oldest standing strongholds in the world, with its oldest walls dating back a couple millennia, and is named after an ancient Velantian king. It is built entirely of a unique red stone that cannot be found elsewhere. The palace's grounds are extensive, featuring water gardens, pavilions, private temples, a lake, and the Anaxas Lyranæum, where Lord Sandro Anaxas invites the city's greatest players and entertainers to perform.
- **Ruval Palace.** The private home of House Anaxas, constructed not long after the Velantian annexation. It is considered a vacation home. At the start of Chapter 2, the Guild of Mages has temporarily moved into Ruval Palace in the aftermath of the Diradan Tower explosion.

Pallaedrions

Pallaedrions are an inter-city transit system that allow residents to quickly traverse the peninsula. Fuelled by multiple nodes of Dispersion magic, the Pallaedrions teleport its passengers from their current location to their desired one. The system is a new technology, created only some thirty years ago, and is the result of the combined efforts of the Guild of Mages and the Arcanists' Lodge. It requires a great amount of magical energy and constant maintenance to support. It is the only system of its kind in the world.

Each district has a major Pallaedriion, with a number of minor ones scattered across the area at key points. There are thirty-six Pallaedrions in total.

Residents who do not wish to or who cannot afford the fees to travel by Pallaedriion cross the city by foot or by barge.

Temples

- **Eidranian City.** The headquarters of the Meissandic faith. This large temple complex is located on an island in Lake Naiadros. Though it is within Velantis' walls, it is considered separate from Velantis and follows its own governance.
- **Greater Temples.** Each district as a greater temple dedicated to one of the Meissandic gods. There are lesser or minor temples scattered throughout the peninsula. The aristocracy will often have private temples built on their estates.

Ports

- **Pariath Bay.** Velantis' main port. All non-Imperial citizens must enter the city through this port.
- **Vanescian Bay.** An access port for the commercial and industrial districts. Imperial merchants will often dock at this port rather than the one in Pariath Bay.
- **Seiran Bay.** A private port used by the Velantian aristocracy, primarily for journeying to Naros. House Anaxas has a private harbour here.

Other Key Locations

- **Seiran College.** Velantis' university and a leader in magical technology research. Its entrance exams are punishing and competitive. Its alumni often graduate into well-off positions, either in Velantis or in their home countries.
- **Naros.** A private island filled with the summer homes of the Velantian aristocracy. Its white shores are considered extremely beautiful.
- **Plaza of the Hexatheon.** A large, central garden in Dessenia that features massive statues of the six Meissandic gods.
- **The Narrows.** An Undercity neighbourhood located in the narrowest part of the canyon. It includes one of the city's red-light districts.
- **Crystalis.** A massive formation of blue crystal that rises out of Lake Naiadros. It has been studied intensely by scholars from across the world and is a tourist destination. It is magically inert. Contemporary scholars believe it is a remnant of the Astrandium.
- **Lyraeum.** A major Velantian amphitheatre that stages performances by the most popular players. Melchior Larkspur's theatre company is located nearby.
- **Themistrya.** A stronghold of black rock. It was a military outpost during when Velantis was an independent city-state. It is now a high-security Imperial prison.

[Progress Report 2021.11.16](#)

[Nov 16, 2021](#)

Hi friends,

November's a little bit of a weird month. Fall and winter are very dark and dreary where I live. It's hard to get anything done when you don't see the sun for weeks on end and everything is damp (we just had a historic amount of rainfall that was twice as much rain in two days as we normally see in the whole month of November; our area thankfully hasn't had to be evacuated, but much of the province is wrecked by rain).

I've been struggling a lot with seasonal depression, which is not new for me. I have changed my work schedule a little bit to alleviate some of the symptoms and help me concentrate. I am not a morning person (I am barely functional before 9:00am), but getting up early gives me a small window of actually seeing the sun, which helps me work.

November is also a special month because it is the anniversary of Wayfarer's first demo. I had thought about writing a retrospective post, but I ran out of energy and just wanted to focus on the game's content instead. Between early drafts, the Patreon launch, and the game's public launch in September, Wayfarer has like... 4 anniversaries, it's a bit much. 😊

But the very first demo was released on November 4th last year. I remember it only had the Prologue, the Kane fight, and the Route A Zenaida contract. When I released that demo, I wasn't sure if I would be able to continue working on the game. It was completely possible that the whole thing would fizzle out before it really got started and the project would remain as a weird, unfinished sample project in my portfolio. I'm so grateful that has not been the case and that working on this game is now my primary focus and my job. 💕

Game Updates

Chapter 2 Scene 2 is progressing pretty nicely. I've finished a major chunk of the section. I keep fiddling with some of the details, so I want to let it sit before I send it off for editing/proofreading, but I'm pretty happy with it. It currently sits at around 34,000 words. If things keep progressing as they are, Scene 2 is likely going to be as long as Scene 1 due to its complexity.

This finished section contains a major conversation between the MC and Aeran which will affect how he reacts to them during the remainder of the chapter (so even if your approval is high, there is still a chance he could go prickly on you). If you did Chapter 1 Route A (accepting Zenaida's contract), you'll have an opportunity to snoop on Aeran's things (a moment that is only available if you go to your apartment in Edgewater on Chapter 1 Route B). The rest of this section covers a bunch of preparations for the gala and the player will have a chance to reset their MC's hair length.

The next section I'm working on is the gala itself. The gala's events are split into four smaller sections. I'm using the action point system so the player can control where they go during the gala and in what order. There are four areas: the water gardens, the pavilions, the lyraeum (which is an amphitheatre hosting a bunch of performances), and the Temple of Lyra.



Rough draft of the exploration map for this scene.


Each location will server as an introduction to different major characters, some of whom will be the first point of contact for the other factions the MC will deal with throughout the game. Melchior Larkspur (one of the companion characters) is also present at the gala (though I'm not going to say where, you'll have to find him 😊). You will also have a chance to meet Phaedra Amestris (an aristocrat and a secondary romance character), and both of Zenaida's parents.

I am tentatively hopeful that I can finish the gala scene by the end of the month, polish it off and add it to the alpha build. It's too early to pin down an update date, but I am hopeful for either November 29th/30th or December 1st.

Other Patreon Updates

If you haven't seen it already, I have a poll open about my update schedule for the alpha build. I am trying to get a sense of whether you would prefer shorter (but more frequent) updates or longer (and less frequent updates). The [poll is open for all patrons](#) and closes on November 24th!

In addition to finishing Scene 2, I am also working on this month's bonus content piece and also Chapter 1's walkthrough. I don't have a set timeline for releasing the walkthrough as I am working on it in stages.

Thank you all so much for your support! 

[Character Profile: Calla Tormond](#)

[Nov 20, 2021](#)

Spoilers for Calla's backstory, but no spoilers for the major points of her character arc. If you want to go into his character arc completely blind, I suggest skipping this post.

Calla is the disinherited scion of House Tormond, a wealthy Faran family now living among the Faran diaspora in Velantis. She was born in Varthrandir, the capital of Farandor, shortly before the family relocated to Rhesainia to escape the Faran Civil War. Arriving in Velantis sometime after its Imperial annexation, her family settled in the district of Falmar, where their ties with the Arcanists' Lodge and the Merchants' Consortium helped them to re-establish their mercantile empire over the following century.

As the fifth child of the house leader, Anvar Tormond, and his second mistress Vartra*, Calla was raised to inherit a portion of the Tormond merchant empire alongside her siblings. Naturally rebellious and fun-loving in nature, Calla pushed against her family's more traditional ways. The exception was her elder half-sister Cerys, a talented artificer and rising star within the Velantian Arcanists' Lodge.

**Mistress here is more equivalent to a common-law spouse. Faran dwarves rarely marry since the combination of their long lives (~300 years) and marriage complicates inheritance laws.*

Curious about anything that wasn't family politics or business practices, a young Calla was prone to pranking her parents and siblings, disrupting business meetings, sneaking away from the house, and travelling all over Velantis in pursuit of adventures and secrets. Only Cerys was able to bring her back into the fold. At their father's behest, Cerys attempted to curb some of Calla's more rambunctious desires by introducing her to the arts of magical engineering and rune crafting. Calla flourished as Cerys' apprentice, and eventually used her talents to help Cerys establish her own workshop. The shop was independent from the Tormond family fortune, much to their parents' indignation.

But Calla would eventually grow bored of Velantis. She set out on her own and joined a crew of rogues and misfits (re: pirates) on a small sloop called *Lady Luck*. The crew sailed across the Lotharic Sea, seeking treasure, plundering enemies, and uncovering magical mysteries. During her time aboard, she honed her skills and became an expert with many weapons, eventually coming to prefer a shield and spear. Proving to have a keen ear, she picked up many languages from her travels. While abroad, she was in constant contact with Cerys and described all of her adventures in depth.

But her time with the *Lady Luck* would not last. Whether it was an accident, a wound during a battle, or something else, Calla lost part of her right arm from the elbow down and the injury resisted all attempts to heal it with magic. Following her injury, she retired from the seas with a sizable fortune and returned to Velantis. To this day she is secretive about the exact circumstances under which she lost her arm.

Tensions ran high with Calla's return to House Tormond. Her family was less than pleased by her prolonged absence as it showed a lack of concern for House Tormond's reputation. This was a concern for her mother, Vartra, as she was climbing the ranks within the Velantian government and was seeking to be elected as Falmar's councillor.

Only Cerys was overjoyed to see Calla returned. Cerys took it upon herself to design a prosthetic for her sister's missing arm, pouring all of her talent and imagination into it.

In 1237 (fifteen years before the start of the game), Calla stopped by her sister's workshop for a visit and discovered a grisly scene. Cerys had been murdered, her workshop ransacked and her designs stolen. House Tormond reacted accordingly,

pressuring the city guard to find the one responsible. When the guard's investigation turned up nothing, House Tormond turned to private investigators. When they found nothing, Anvar chose to discontinue the search.

Calla refused to let her sister's murderer go and insisted on investigating herself. Defying her family's wishes, Calla pursued the culprit through every means available, even the less than reputable ones. She suspected that Cerys had been targeted by rivals, either within the Arcanists' Lodge or the Velantian aristocracy, but she could not prove it. After a decade of searching, Calla could not find the culprit and her relationship with her family was extremely strained. Exhausted with his daughter's inability to let her grief go, Anvar and Vartra disinherited her.

Disowned, Calla relied on the skills she obtained during her days aboard the *Lady Luck*. She became an accomplished mercenary, making a name for herself as one who could fulfill the most dangerous of contracts. Her notoriety, quick wit, and her in depth knowledge of the aristocracy led Sophia Anaxas, the Archon of Velantis, to hire her for her personal honour guard (a choice that mortified Vartra).

By 1252, Calla had abruptly withdrawn from the post and disappeared. Whispers among the Velantian aristocracy say that she and the Archon were involved romantically and the relationship was the cause of her disappearance. Though her whereabouts are currently unknown, there are rumours that she has appeared in the Undercity fighting grounds.

[Nov 29, 2021](#)

Hi friends,

Just a quick update to round out November. It's been a bit of a tough month; I did have to take some time off earlier as I was feeling under the weather and my province is currently in a state of emergency due to severe flooding. While my area is safe and relatively unaffected, I have family and friends who have been flooded and the whole situation is a tad stressful.

Game Updates

I have still been able to get a lot of work done on Chapter 2. I'm happy with the new content, though it is taking me a lot longer to structure the party scene than I originally anticipated. I do think the scene will be a lot of fun to play as there are a ton of gameplay elements and what content you see will change drastically depending on how well the player character integrates themselves with their new environment. There's foreshadowing for future events and subplots, meeting important new characters, first impressions—it's a pretty busy sequence!

Since the last progress report, I've written around 19k of new content, which pushes this next section to around 55k total. I've decided to hold off on updating the alpha build until the whole party sequence is complete, which will likely be sometime mid-to-late December. It will be a very hefty update, with more total playable content than the November 1st update.

I am also working on some behind-the-scenes QoL elements. After chatting with some folks about accessibility and reading, I'll be adding a setting to make the text left-aligned instead of justified. I have (briefly) looked into adding OpenDyslexic to the font selection drop-down, but because the font is custom and needs to be embedded directly into the HTML file, I need to learn a little more about how to do that first.

I am currently learning how to embed fonts and icons by converting them to Base64, but it's a slow process (aka I don't get it and I can't get it to work... yet). I'm looking into this now because I would like to offer a true offline version of the game at some point. To do that, the fonts and icons need to be embedded. Otherwise they will fail to load if the player launches the game without an internet connection and they will be playing the game in Comic Sans. 😅

I've also written a couple of widgets to make coding certain elements (like notifications) faster. Since I'm making a new widget, I thought now is a good time to reconfigure notifications. I currently have a poll

open for the game's player base to get opinions on whether to add new settings that would turn off pass/fail notifications. Because I'd have to edit every notification in Chapter 1 to implement the setting, I'm only going to add this option if there's enough interest in it.

If you'd like to participate, you can find the [poll here](#).

Other Updates

I compiled a list of common launch errors and other problems that can happen with the Twine engine. These will apply to the alpha build, so if you run into problems, [check out the post](#) and try some of the solutions. Most problems can be resolved by trying the game in a different browser.


For Chrome-users, there's a recurring problem where sometimes the game takes a really long time to load or loads without images. Wayfarer uses a preload macro to load most of its image assets so they appear right away when you navigate to a page with assets. For some reason, the preload doesn't always work and the game gets stuck searching for the asset, trying to load it, and failing.

Do I know why? Nope. Can I fix it? Also nope (not without removing the preload entirely and sometimes the game still fails to load correctly).

This is only a problem on Chrome and doesn't happen all the time. You may not have encountered it at all. I've been using Microsoft Edge to run the game when Chrome doesn't do it and Edge has worked perfectly every time. I would definitely try that if you encounter load problems.

Patreon Updates

Thank you to everyone who participated in the [Update Schedule poll](#). The results were pretty clear-cut—the vast majority of voters wanted to see larger game updates, even if they take longer to create. I'm going to stick to my current work method and update the alpha build when I finish a major sequence, rather than dividing it into smaller parts.

Thank you all so much for your support! 

[Progress Report 2021.12.13](#)

[Dec 13, 2021](#)

Hi friends,

A short update for today. The past two weeks have been incredibly busy (balancing life things with work things, as you do). While I'm not where I want to be with the chapter, I am still getting parts of it done every day, so progress is happening!

To recap from the last few progress reports: I'm currently working on Chapter 2 Scene 2, which is the largest and most complex scene of the chapter. The MC is attending a gala and the exploration mechanic lets the player visit four different locations, each of which have different important characters, foreshadowing, and lore threaded throughout. I am currently working on the most difficult section of this scene, which includes the introduction of three major characters: Allegra Arantir (conditional to the player's skill checks and choices), Phaedra Amestris (a potential secondary romance, so the player will always encounter her), and Melchior Larkspur (a future companion character; the player will always encounter him here).

I am at the end of this section and hopefully will finish up Mel's introduction today or tomorrow, then move onto the next location. I've had to cut back some content (otherwise I'm going to be writing this chapter forever).

I'm committing to finishing the whole party sequence before updating the alpha build. There are some details that will need to be edited in once I have all the areas written because those options are dependent on the player's previous actions. It's easier to do that once I have all the major beats down, but before it gets coded. When the alpha build updates, there will be a ton of content to explore!

If you're in the Discord, I've shared a few WIP snippets of this scene in the Patreon WIP channel.

I have a few re-designs for the Journal in mind, but haven't started working on them yet. I want to remove the progress bars for skills. I've never really liked how they look and they always remind me of the this % vs that % system popular in ChoiceScript games. Wayfarer's skill progression doesn't function that way, so I'd like to do something different with it.

In other news, Wayfarer reached 50,000 browser plays today! I'm not sure if I'm going to celebrate, but it feels like a milestone. 🥳

Thank you all so much for your support! 💕

[WIP Snippets](#)

[Dec 21, 2021](#)

I've been thinking about the way I'm sharing WIP snippets (excerpts from the current in-progress section of the game that haven't been coded and added to the alpha build). Previously, I have occasionally tacked them on to the end of progress reports, but recently I've been sharing these on the Patreon-only

section of the Discord server. Discord is a much easier platform for engagement and reactions than Patreon, but not everyone has Discord. Conversely, not everyone checks Patreon.

WIP snippets are always more difficult to share than I think. It's hard to find the right sample from a 50k section that's interesting, but also doesn't spoil anything major 😊. Cross-posting between Discord and Patreon is also difficult (mostly because I find it tiring to update in one place and then remember to update elsewhere).

So, my question is--what is your preference for WIP snippets? On Patreon, Discord, or both?

Poll will close on January 4th! 💕

Patreon Only (as their own posts, with a separate WIP tag)

58%

Patreon Only (as part of progress reports)

6%

Discord Only

8%

Cross-post to Discord and Patreon

28%

Poll ended Jan 4, 2022 · 50 votes total

[Chapter 1 Guide: Part I](#)

[Dec 24, 2021](#)

Happy holidays!

Due to Chapter 1's complexity, the official walkthroughs will be divided into different sections. Because I think Patreon posts aren't the easiest way to showcase a guide, once the full chapter is covered, I'll either put all the walkthroughs together into a downloadable PDF with a table of contents or create a Patreon-only webpage that has a navigation.

You'll be able to find any released guides under [the "walkthroughs" tag](#). These guides will be as complete as I can make them and will include notes on stat changes, how to get specific results, and additional fun development/process notes.

With that out of the way, let's start at the beginning of Chapter 1!



Chapter 1 is divided into three main parts: a Common Route, Route A and Route B.

- Route A refers to the events that unfold if the player character (PC) goes to the Docks, encounters Zenaida, and accepts her contract.
- Route B refers to the events that unfold if the PC either 1) goes to Rat Alley, fights Kane, and searches for the chalice or 2) goes to the Docks, encounters Zenaida, refuses her contract, and continues searching for the chalice.

While it is possible to jump from Route A to Route B by going to the Docks and refusing the contract, you cannot jump from Route B to Route A. Early in development, there was a plan to allow you to switch between them, but it got cut due to the action point system and the player potentially not having enough action points to visit both locations on Route A.

I. SKILL CHECK THRESHOLDS

Skill checks roll a D20 and add the dice roll to the player's skill level. **The regular threshold to pass is 18.** This results in the following percentages:

- Level 5 — 40% chance to pass
- Level 6 — 45% chance to pass
- Level 7 — 50% chance to pass
- Level 8 — 55% chance to pass
- Level 9 — 60% chance to pass
- Level 10 — 65% chance to pass
- Level 11 — 70% chance to pass

Skill checks roll before the passage renders. Even if you save on the passage with the skill check, it will randomize a new number every time. This is true for both hidden skill checks and regular skill checks.

Hidden skill checks do not count towards the player's skill check records (available in your Journal). The records—which show how many times you've passed or failed a specific skill check—are mostly a fun addition originally.

DEVELOPER'S NOTE: The player's records are inspired by Fable 3, which tracks a number of different stats (like how many spouses the player character has, how many children, how many times they're knocked unconscious, etc.). However, in Wayfarer, they aren't just for show. The game will eventually incorporate them into ability selection, meaning that some abilities will only be unlocked after the player's successes or fails pass a certain threshold.

II. APPROVAL

During Chapter 1, Aeran's approval is locked to 5 and 90. Even if you gain or lose more approval, you cannot go lower than 5 and you cannot go higher than 90.

Similarity, in this chapter, Lethalis' rapport is locked between 20 and 79. Because Lethalis is not unlocked as a faction until the end of the chapter, there are many instances of reputation gain/loss that do not have notifications.

Both companions and factions need to be unlocked in order for their approval/rapport notifications to be shown.



SECTION 1: THE COMMON ROUTE

The start of Chapter 1 unlocks a number of codex entries and letters. While there are entries for each of the major Rhesainian countries, only the country of the PC's origin will be unlocked here (i.e. if you're a Child of the Desert, you'll unlock the codex for Sathir; if you're a Child of the Wilds, you'll unlock the codex for Artanis).

The first event is a hidden perception check that determines whether you are robbed by Luthais or not. Hidden skill checks are not very common in Wayfarer, however they occasionally show up in moments where I want something *to* happen to the player, rather than having them choose how they react to something. As the PC is standing in the middle of a busy town square and are a little distracted thinking about their contract, the perception check essentially measures how aware they are of their surroundings in the moment.

The exact passage the hidden check occurs on is here:

Your skin prickles at the nape of your neck. You stop. Raising your head, you scan the market. Even as the crowd jostles around you, no one paying you any attention, you can't shake the feeling that someone is watching you.

Someone who isn't here to argue about discounts on fish or imports from Farandor.

Continue.

Clicking continue will either lead you to the passage where Luthais steals from the PC or to the passage where the PC catches him in the act.

I-A. IF LUTHAIS STEALS FROM YOU

If Luthais steals from the PC, the PC will **lose** the following items:

- Wayfarer pendant
- Medical kit
- 5 crowns

The PC will then tail him, bringing you to the following choice:

The boy stops looking through your purse and ties it to his belt. He takes off down the thoroughfare, walking quickly, but not so quickly as to draw attention from passersby. You follow him, unnoticed, from a distance.

After tailing him for several blocks, you decide it's time to catch up.

1. **[AGILITY] Chase him down.**
2. **Approach him calmly.**

1. **[AGILITY] Chase him down. [PASS]**

If you succeed the agility check, you will catch Luthais and get all of your stolen items back. The next choice will be:

Unless the kid is lying. Or whoever paid him to cut your purse is lying.

1. **Go to Rat Alley. You can't take the risk that Aeran is in trouble.**
2. **Go to the Docks. The kid must be lying and you don't have time to deal with this shit.**

Choosing **Option #1** will send the player to Rat Alley and you will be locked onto Route B. You will not have an opportunity to flag his friendship stat (which will come into play in the Flotsam Grove scene).

Choosing **Option #2** will send the player to the Docks, circumventing the Kane fight. You will encounter Zenaida early and have the opportunity to either accept or decline her contract.

1. **[AGILITY] Chase him down. [FAIL]**

Failing the agility check here will send the PC chasing after Luthais. You will follow him directly to Rat Alley, which will lock you onto Route B.

This is the only variation in this sequence where the PC is never given the choice to go to Rat Alley.

2. **Approach him calmly.**

Choosing this option will let the PC catch up to Luthais. Luthais will tell the PC about Kane and give some additional backstory.

You exhale sharply, your frustration starting to get the better of you. You could easily take the pouch back, but you don't want to hurt Luthais in the process. The only thing the kid is guilty of is living in a world that doesn't give a shit about him.

1. **[PERSUASION] Persuade him to give you back your belongings.**
2. **[STRENGTH] Take back what's yours regardless**

Option #1-A – [PERSUASION] Persuade him to give you back your belongings. [PASS]

Outcome: Stolen items returned.

Passing the persuasion check here will convince Luthais to return the PC's belongings and the stolen items will be returned to their inventory. This choice will lock the PC into going to Rat Alley, which locks them onto Route B.

Option #1-B – [PERSUASION] Persuade him to give you back your belongings. [FAIL]

Outcome: Stolen items lost for good.

Failing the persuasion check here will cause Luthais to kick the PC in the shins and run off down the street with your belongings. You can either choose to go to Rat Alley and deal with Kane, or ignore Kane and meet Aeran at the Docks.

Choosing to go to Rat Alley locks you onto Route B. Choosing to go the Docks will send you to Zenaida.

Option #2-A – [STRENGTH] Take back what's yours regardless. [PASS]

Outcome: Stolen items returned.

Passing the strength check here allows the PC to forcibly take their belongings back. All stolen items will be returned to the player's inventory. Luthais will then run off down the street, which means the PC will no longer have the opportunity to flag his friendship stat (which comes into play in Flotsam Grove).

You will then have to choose between going to Rat Alley or going to the Docks. As before, going to Rat Alley locks you onto Route B and choosing the Docks will send you to Zenaida.

Option #2-B – [STRENGTH] Take back what's yours regardless. [FAIL]

Outcome: Stolen items lost for good.

Failing the strength check here allows Luthais to run off with the PC's belongings. You will no longer have the chance to flag his friendship stat. You will then have to choose between going to Rat Alley and going to the Docks.

I-B. IF LUTHAIS DOES NOT STEAL FROM THE PC

If the PC catches Luthais in the act, he will not steal from them and your inventory will remain intact. Your next options will be:

“Please, ser—” The boy squirms in your grip. “I won’t try it again, honest, I won’t.”

1. Let him go with a warning.
2. Push him for answers.

Option #1 – Let him go with a warning.

If you let Luthais go with a warning, he will tell you that Aeran is captured in Rat Alley. You can either choose to go to Rat Alley and rescue him or assume Luthais is lying (which he is) and go to the Docks.

Option #2 – Push him for answers.

If you push Luthais for answers, he will get spooked and attempt to attack the PC by conjuring fire and throwing it in their face. The next dialogue choices change whether the PC knows about Kane before they go to Rat Alley or not.

1. “A bit rude, don’t you think?”
2. “You’ll have to try better than that.”

#1 will lead Luthais into telling the PC about Kane.

#2 will *not* lead Luthais into telling the PC about Kane.

Regardless of which option you take, you will have to choose between going to Rat Alley or the Docks.

II. IF THE PC CHOOSES RAT ALLEY

If Luthais has not run away from the PC, you will have to choose between letting him come with you or going to Rat Alley alone.

You frown. Luthais looks cold and miserable, as pathetic as any street urchin caught outside in the rain could be. But behind those bright eyes, a deep anger burns.

Maybe he has a score to settle with these thugs. Or maybe there’s something else going on. You don’t know—and you don’t have the time to find out.

Besides, you have a feeling arguing with Luthais is a lost cause.

1. Leave Luthais.
2. Tell Luthais he can come with you.

Choosing **Option #1 – Leave Luthais** will make the PC go to Rat Alley alone.

Choosing **Option #2 – Tell Luthais he can come with you** will let Luthais go with the PC to Rat Alley. Walking with Luthais will open up a chance for the PC to give him their cloak, open new dialogue options with him, and flag his friendship stat. Giving Luthais your cloak doesn't do anything major, aside from changing some extraneous flavour dialogue (Aeran will occasionally comment on the PC's cloak being missing, for example). The dialogue options are also flavour text; passing or failing them will add to your skill check records.

DEVELOPER'S NOTE: Luthais's friendship stat was originally a scale and changed depending on how the PC interacted with him (for example, giving him your cloak gained points, but being caught in a lie decreased points). However, this was removed in favour of a simple Boolean variable since he ended up being a minor character.

Regardless of whether you walk with Luthais or go alone, you will end up at Rat Alley (**see Section 2: Rat Alley**).

III. IF THE PC CHOOSES THE DOCKS

If you choose to the Docks, the PC will leave Luthais behind and proceed to the Docks (**see Section 3: the Docks**).



SECTION 2: RAT ALLEY

Rat Alley encompasses is the PC's first fight scene. It will be your first experience with Wayfarer's combat system and it can end in multiple ways. The MC's actions can have ripple effects throughout Chapter 1 that results in different flavour text and different options becoming available. **You cannot do this fight if you go to the Docks.**

After arriving in Rat Alley, the PC will encounter Two-Fingers Kane. Depending on whether they heard his name from Luthais earlier, they will either recognize him or not. There are three main "entrances" into this scene:

- If Luthais walked with the PC to Rat Alley, he will "betray" them by taking Kane's coin and running off, revealing that this was all a guise to get the PC cornered in the alley.
- If the PC went alone, Luthais will show up briefly to accept coin from Kane before running off.
- If the PC chases Luthais into Rat Alley, he will yell at Kane that the PC is "here" before taking the coin and running off.

IV. KANE FIGHT

Regardless of which entrance, the game bottlenecks to the same point and combat begins. There are three outcomes here.

1. Stall for time and look for an exit.

2-A. [STRENGTH] Strike Kane before he strikes you. [PASS]

2-B. [STRENGTH] Strike Kane before he strikes you. [FAIL]

Because of their complexity, I've divided these outcomes into three branches.

BRANCH 1: Stall for time and look for an exit.

Stalling for time will open up a single choice for the player:

1. [AGILITY] Bolt for the tree and climb it.

DEVELOPER'S NOTE: This option had several different versions that were slowly whittled down for time and pacing. Originally, stalling for time lead the player to a sequence where they used perception checks to look for different ways out. There was only one "correct" way out—using an agility check to get out via the tree. If they spent too much time looking for a way out (i.e. selected every available option), they would get attacked and wounded automatically and send down the main combat branch. If they pursued one of the "bad" options, they would end up on the main combat branch. The only way to escape was to check the tree early and pass the agility check to climb it.

This was unnecessarily complicated and really messed with the continuity of the PC's dialogue with Aeran after the fight scene. I was felt that hiding the "escape over the roofs" option behind multiple checks made it too difficult for players to access. Not only did they have to pass their checks, but they also had to select the right *options*. Because the "escape over the roofs" option was originally the only way to unlock Deadwood and the Guild, I needed to make it easier to access.

In the next draft, the agility choice here was a hidden perception check, but I found that playtesters were a little confused about what controlled what happened to their character. Because climbing the tree is something the PC *does* (rather than something that happens to them), I decided to make it a single-choice option. The PC knows their only way out is to climb the tree, so it's the only choice they have to make. They can either succeed or fail.

Passing the Agility Check

Outcomes: PC not injured, no action points lost, Rat Alley set on fire, Deadwood unlocked

If you successfully climb the tree, the PC will end up on the rooftops. Kane's people will shoot conjured fire at the PC, but it doesn't do anything to them. Instead, it sets the alley on fire and Kane remains alive, two events that are flagged for continuity. Once the PC get away, they will encounter Aeran on the rooftops and he will have his official introduction (see **Section 4: Setting Aeran's Relationship Stats**).

The PC and Aeran will discuss the magical fire in the alley, leading to this sequence:

Aeran jumps the gap and alights next to you with ease. “Doubt it,” he replies, casting an uneasy look towards the alley. “If the fire was summoned by magic even the wrath of nature won’t be able to douse it.”

“Yeah. I suppose so.”

He glances at you. “Don’t tell me you’re feeling sorry for the people who tried to kill you.”

Your eyes narrow as you watch the plume of smoke rise through the rain.

1. **You don’t care. You need to move on with your mission.**
2. **You don’t care about Kane, but you are concerned for the townspeople nearby.**

Choosing **#1** will lock you out of going to Deadwood as the PC has no interest in helping people. You can unlock it later.

Choosing **#2** will unlock Deadwood right away and it will be available when you reach the Exploration map.

The next section, **Route B Exploration**, will be available in **Chapter 1 Guide: Part III**.

Failing the Agility Check

Outcomes: PC Injured, 2 action points lost

Failing the agility check causes the PC to fail in getting to the tree. Kane attacks the PC, injuring them. The PC’s health status is now **injured** and they lose 2 action points.

The fight continues. Aeran will appear on the rooftops and pick off Kane’s lackeys. The PC’s next action will be a timed choice, where they can either:

1. **[EXECUTE] Kill him.**
2. **[SPARE] Let Kane go.**

Executing Kane will give the player +1 to their executions and flag Kane dead. **Sparing Kane** will give the player +1 to their spares and flag Kane as alive.

If you have timed choices enabled, letting the timer run out will default to the PC letting Kane go. This choice does not have a unique alternative.

Afterwards, Aeran will have his introduction and you can set his relationship stats (see **Section 4: Setting Aeran’s Relationship Stats**).

For the next section, jump down to **V. HEALING THE PC**.

BRANCH 2-A: [STRENGTH] Strike Kane before he strikes you [PASS]

Passing the strength check will give the PC the upper hand. It leads to the following timed choice:

1. **Get out of the way, but let Kane go.**
2. **[AGILITY] Cut Kane's throat, but risk taking the hit.**
3. **[ABSTAIN]**

This additional third option allows the player to abstain from either choice. If you have timed choices disabled, you will see an [ABSTAIN] choice. If you have timed choices enabled, let the timer run out.

Option #1 - Get out of the way, but let Kane go.

This choice moves the PC into a new phase of the fight. Their next choices will be:

1. **Goad Kane.**
2. **[PERSUASION] Persuade Kane to leave for good.**

Choice # 1 – Goad Kane

Outcomes: Kane alive OR Kane dead (executed by the PC)

Goad Kane will give Aeran enough time to arrive and start shooting Kane's lackeys. You will encounter a timed choice where you must decide whether to **EXECUTE** or **SPARE** Kane.

- **EXECUTING** Kane will add +1 to your executions and flag Kane as dead.
- **SPARING** Kane will add +1 to your spares and flag Kane alive.

If you have timed choices enabled, letting the timer run out will default to sparing Kane.

Afterwards, Aeran will have his introduction and you can set his relationship stats (see **Section 4: Setting Aeran's Relationship Stats**).

For the next section, jump down to **VI. LEAVING RAT ALLEY**.

Choice #2 - [PERSUASION] Persuade Kane to leave for good. [PASS]

Passing this check will force Kane to give up and leave. Afterwards, the PC will encounter Aeran. He will have his introduction and you can set his relationship stats.

For the next section, jump down to **VI. LEAVING RAT ALLEY**.

Choice #2 - [PERSUASION] Persuade Kane to leave for good. [FAIL]

Outcomes: Kane alive

If you fail the persuasion check, Kane will attack the PC. Aeran will show up at the last minute and shoot his lackeys. Like in other variations, the PC will have the chance to execute or spare Kane.

Afterwards, Aeran will have his introduction and you can set his relationship stats (see **Section 4: Setting Aeran's Relationship Stats**).

For the next section, jump down to **VI. LEAVING RAT ALLEY**.

OPTION #2-A - [AGILITY] Cut Kane's throat, but risk taking the hit. [PASS]

Outcomes: Kane dead (killed by the PC)

If you pass the agility check here, the PC will kill Kane. Because this occurs in battle, it does not count as an execution. Meera's throwing dagger will miss the PC and they will not be injured.

Regardless of how you interact with Kane's lackeys after his death, they will leave the alley and Aeran will arrive. He will have his introduction and you can set his relationship stats (see **Section 4: Setting Aeran's Relationship Stats**).

For the next section, jump down to **VI. LEAVING RAT ALLEY**.

OPTION #2-B - [AGILITY] Cut Kane's throat, but risk taking the hit. [FAIL]

Outcomes: Kane dead (killed by the PC), PC injured, 2 action points lost

If you fail the agility check, the PC will kill Kane but get hit by Meera's dagger, injuring them. Aeran will arrive and shoot the rest Kane's lackeys. He will have his introduction and you can set his relationship stats (see **Section 4: Setting Aeran's Relationship Stats**).

For the next section, jump down to **V. HEALING THE PC**.

OPTION #3 - [ABSTAIN]

Outcomes: Kane dead (killed by Aeran), PC injured

Abstaining from killing Kane or moving out of the way gets the PC injured. Aeran will then arrive and shoot Kane. The rest of his lackeys flee.

Aeran will meet up with the PC and have his introduction, where you can set his relationship stats (see **Section 4: Setting Aeran's Relationship Stats**).

For the next section, jump down to **V. HEALING THE PC**.

BRANCH 2-B: [STRENGTH] Strike Kane before he strikes you [FAIL]

Outcomes: PC injured, 2 action points lost

If you fail the strength check, the PC will be injured. The fight continues. Aeran will appear on the rooftops and pick off Kane's lackeys. The PC's next action will be a timed choice, where they can either:

1. [EXECUTE] Kill him.
2. [SPARE] Let Kane go.

Executing Kane will give the player +1 to their executions and flag Kane dead. **Sparing Kane** will give the player +1 to their spares and flag Kane as alive.

If you have timed choices enabled, letting the timer run out will default to the PC letting Kane go. This choice does not have a unique alternative.

This is the same sequence of events as the one that happens after the PC fails the agility check to climb the tree and escape.

Afterwards, Aeran will have his introduction and you can set his relationship stats (see **Section 4: Setting Aeran's Relationship Stats**).

For the next section, jump down to **V. HEALING THE PC**.

V. HEALING THE PC

If the PC is injured, they will have a chance to patch up their wounds. This is the main introduction to Wayfarer's health status system.

DEVELOPER'S NOTE: This scene was written before the health status system came into effect. It's part of the reason the player's health status operates on a 4-level scale (injured – healing – recovering – full health). Because Wayfarer is a gamebook text adventure, it doesn't have the same suspension of disbelief as video games. The player can't just take a health potion or devour a bunch of baked apples in a row ala Link (circa Breath of the Wild) and be good to go. It breaks the suspension of disbelief to *not* acknowledge the hinderances that come with being injured. It takes time to recover from your wounds.

If I was going to the trouble to adding flavour text dealing with injuries, then I wanted injury to have importance in the gameplay as well. There needed to be a consequence to the PC getting injured—and in this case, it's decreasing the amount of locations they can visit during their investigation. The logic behind the player's health decreasing their action points is because action points are a representation of how much time/energy they have to investigate a location. If they are injured, they're slower, they have less energy, and therefore they have less time to investigate locations.

If Luthais stole from the PC, they will either be able to borrow Aeran's medical kit to patch themselves up, or let Aeran help them. If you do not have your medical kit and you get injured, this should be an indication that the player should **prioritize getting a new medical kit**. You cannot heal without one.

If the PC has their medical kit, they can either do it themselves or let Aeran help them.

Your choices here do not affect Aeran's approval.

Once the PC is patched up, their health status goes from **Injured** to **Healing**. This does not recover any action points.

The next section, **Route B Exploration**, will be available in **Chapter 1 Guide: Part III**.

VI. LEAVING RAT ALLEY

If the PC is not injured, they will leave Rat Alley with Aeran.

The next section, **Route B Exploration**, will be available in **Chapter 1 Guide: Part III**.



SECTION 3: THE DOCKS

If the player goes to the Docks, they will search for Aeran upon their arrival. After finding him interrogating Yarrow in a nearby alley, the player is given a number of options:

1. Intervene and toss Yarrow a coin for the information. (only available if you did not have your belongings stolen by Luthais)
2. Stand back and don't interfere.
3. Threaten Yarrow for the information.
4. [PERSUADE] Intervene and convince Yarrow to give you the information.

Depending on what you do, Yarrow will either give information to the PC or to Aeran. The choices here are reflected mostly in flavour text, with option 1 being the only choice to have concrete changes (in that the PC loses a single crown). Your original opinion of Aeran may change depending on which option you take—some options give a darker view of his character.

Afterwards, Aeran has his introduction and you can set his relationship stats (see **Section 4: Setting Aeran's Relationship Stats**).

The PC and Aeran will then be approached by Malsara, who forces them to follow her to a nearby tavern. Upon their arrival, the PC and Aeran will be requested to give up their weapons.

1. Refuse to hand over your weapons.
2. Surrender your weapons.
3. [PERSUADE] Convince her to let you keep your weapons.

Selecting **Option #2** will net -1 approval from Aeran.

VII. MEETING ZENAIDA

Codex Entries Unlocked: The Guild of Mages, the Annexation of Velantis, the Astrandium

There are a number of dialogue choices that affect Aeran's approval here. In general, he disapproves of the PC being too polite to Zenaida or just generally interested in listening to her.

Passage 01

"Mistrust?" Aeran scoffs. "That's putting it lightly—"

"—but you must hear me out." She pauses, locking eyes with Aeran. "If you can deign to hear a desperate plea from a mage."

1. "Fine. I'll deign." [-1 to Aeran's approval]
2. "Get to the point or we're leaving." [+1 to Aeran's approval]

Passage 02

"I had hoped I could plead to your sense of compassion," she says. Behind her, Malsara and Nova seethe, but draw away. The elven bodyguard sheathes his sword. "But perhaps I was wrong to assume you would do what you can to prevent the deaths of thousands."

1. "I care about the people, make no mistake of that." [-1 to Aeran's approval]
2. "Don't try to guilt us, your Grace, we're not so easily manipulated." [+ 1 to Aeran's approval]
3. "This is your fight, not ours. We don't want any part of it." [+1 to Aeran's approval]

VIII. LEAVING THE TAVERN

Outcome: +250 crowns

Regardless of what you do, Zenaida will always give you 250 crowns. When the PC and Aeran leave the tavern, they will then have to decide whether to talk to Aeran about the contract or not.

1. Follow him out of the tavern and continue on with your day. Zenaida's offer is probably too good to be true. You already have a contract and you've wasted enough time.
2. Stop him. You need to talk about Zenaida's offer.

Option #1 - Follow him out of the tavern

Outcomes: Zenaida's contract refused, -20 Lethalis rapport, -2 action points

This will flag the PC's refusal of Zenaida's contract, which leads to an automatic -20 loss of rapport with the Order of Lethalis. The player will lose 2 action points for the time they spent with Zenaida and they will be routed onto Route B.

The next section, **Route B Exploration**, will be available in **Chapter 1 Guide: Part III**.

Option #2 - Stop him. You need to talk about Zenaida's offer.

Selecting this option will give the PC a chance to talk about the offer with Aeran. If you want to pursue Route A, you must select this option.

Aeran's approval can be affected in the following choices:

"I'm not asking you to trust her." You cross your arms. "I don't, by the way. Just to clear that up —"

He snorts. "Good. Glad to know you're not swayed by false promises of gold, I was starting to worry."

1. "It's not a false promise." [-1 to Aeran's approval]
2. "Good. Glad to know you still worry about me." [+1 to Aeran's approval]
3. "False or not, I think we need to consider her proposal carefully." [no approval change]

Regardless of which option you select, you'll end up with the same options (with slight differences in text depending on which one you did above):

1. [PERSUADE] Convince him to drop the Count's contract and take Zenaida's offer. Yes, it means working alongside Guild mages, but it's a one-way ticket out of Rona and you'll be paid handsomely. It's a better deal than what you have going on here.
2. Give up and continue your contract for the Count. You can always return to this argument when the chalice is found. / Drop it.

Option #1-A – [PERSUADE] Convince him to drop the Count's contract and take Zenaida's offer. [PASS]

This skill check is not a regular skill check. The threshold to pass is 20 (2 points more difficult than regular skill checks). You can also automatically pass it if Aeran's approval is over 60.

If you pass this check, Aeran agrees to taking Zenaida's contract and you return to the tavern. Jump to **IX. ZENAIDA'S CONTRACT.**

Option #1-B – [PERSUADE] Convince him to drop the Count's contract and take Zenaida's offer. [FAIL]

Outcomes: -1 to Aeran's approval, Zenaida's contract refused, -20 Lethalis rapport, -2 action points, Kane alive (because the PC never encountered him)

If you fail this check, Aeran will override you and the player will be routed to Route B. You will flag Zenaida's contract as refused, lose 20 rapport with Lethalis, and lose 2 action points for the time spent with her.

The next section, **Route B Exploration**, will be available in **Chapter 1 Guide: Part III**.

Option #2 - Give up and continue your contract for the Count. / Drop it.

Outcomes: Zenaida's contract refused, -20 Lethalis rapport, -2 action points, Kane alive (because the PC never encountered him)

This will flag the PC's refusal of Zenaida's contract, which leads to an automatic -20 loss of rapport with the Order of Lethalis. The player will lose 2 action points for the time they spent with Zenaida and they will be routed onto Route B.

The next section, **Route B Exploration**, will be available in **Chapter 1 Guide: Part III**.

IX. ZENAIDA'S CONTRACT

Codex Entries Unlocked: Blood Oaths

When you return to Zenaida, she will make the PC's acceptance of the contract official. When she offers wine, you will have the chance to set your character's alcohol preferences.

1. **What the hell, it can't hurt. Might as well accept – you could use the drink.** [the PC will be open to drinking throughout the game.]
2. **You've never been much of a drinker. Refuse her offer.** [the PC will automatically refuse alcoholic drinks throughout the game.]**
3. **You never take drinks you have not prepared yourself. Refuse her offer**.** [the PC drinks and be open to drinking throughout the game, but for roleplaying purposes they refuse her offer here.]

If you do not do this route, you will have a chance to set your alcohol preferences in Chapter 2.

Afterwards, the PC and Aeran will be free to explore as they want. The PC loses 2 action points for the time spent with Zenaida, but this doesn't matter as there are only two locations they can visit on Route A.

The next section, **Route A Exploration**, will be available in **Chapter 1 Guide: Part II**.



SECTION 4: SETTING AERAN'S RELATIONSHIP STATS

Aeran is unique among Wayfarer's companions because of his established relationship with the MC. In order to reflect that, the player can set his relationship stats. All other companions in the game start with 50 approval, which is the dead centre of the approval scale.

When Aeran is introduced, you will have the same 4 options, regardless of which path you followed:

1. Your friendship has waned over the past few years, as friendships sometimes do. You're not sure what has changed, but you know something has.

This option sets Aeran's approval to 40. If you want your PC to have a strained relationship with him, this is the option for you.

2. You are good friends. Though you share much of your life and you trust him, you know the day will come when you no longer travel together.

This option sets Aeran's approval to 60. This is a general friend option and the closest to a neutral relationship.

3. Your friendship is as natural as breathing. At this point, you trust Aeran more than you trust yourself.

This option sets Aeran's approval to 80. This option means that Aeran and the PC begin the game as extremely close friends.

4. You are friends and you are partners. You can't imagine this life without him at your side. Though nothing romantic has happened between you, you can't help but wonder...

This option sets Aeran's approval to 80 and his (hidden) romance stat to 10. This option means that Aeran and the PC begin the game as extremely close friends with burgeoning romantic tension.

While it is possible to slowly build Aeran's romance stat throughout the game, you will cut yourself out of his Chapter 2 (and possibly all Act 1) romance content if you do not select this option now.

This is the end of Chapter 1's current guide. In Part II, I will cover the events of Route A, including the different options available in Edgewater and the Cove, the various combat branches at the Count's villa, and Chapter 1's different endings.

[Progress Report 2021.12.27](#)

[Dec 27, 2021](#)

Hi friends,

Happy holidays!

I hope you all have had a relaxing, stress-free time. I took several days off around Christmas to rest and spend time with family and friends (over Zoom and phone calls, as the current Covid situation isn't that great in my area). I haven't taken any proper time off from game development for a while aside from a few sick days here and there. It's been nice to actually press pause on Wayfarer and relax for a bit. We even have a little bit of snow! (I love snow in the winter, though my area almost never gets it).

Game Updates

While I did take a stab at finishing Chapter 2's party sequence before Christmas, I was feeling pretty worn out and ended up taking some time off instead. This sequence has been extremely complex to craft. I didn't want to push myself too hard and write something I was unhappy with just for the sake of meeting an arbitrary, decided-at-the-last minute deadline. I am currently working on the final location (of four) and then there is a small bottleneck to bring the player character to the next area. When all of that is drafted, I need to go back and edit in some minor continuity details and choices, and then the whole thing can be sent to my proofreader for editing.

Once the editing is done, I can then code the sequence and update the alpha build. The next update will add over 100k words of cumulative content to Chapter 2. I'm not sure what the average will be yet (likely around 30k-40k for a single run, but that's an estimation that may be off until I run it myself). Some things to look forward to:

- Have a heavy, approval-changing conversation with Aeran that reflects on your interactions with Sabien Quirinus
- Another chance to snoop on Aeran's things and find the letters [if you didn't find them in Chapter 1; this is a conditional event locked to a specific approval rating or a specific dialogue choice]
- Redo your hair length options [so if your character's beard grew out in the time between chapters, you'll have a chance to reset it to whatever you want; same thing with hair length]
- Get ready for the party [be careful—what you decide to wear and what items you choose to bring with you will effect how other guests treat you]
- Explore up to four locations at the party, each with their own characters, foreshadowing, rumours, gossip, and interactions
- Meet new major characters, including Melchior Larkspur (a romanceable companion), Phaedra Amestris (romanceable non-companion), Allegra Arantir (an Archsage), Sophia Anaxas (the archon of Velantis and Zenaida's mother), Sandro Anaxas (Zenaida's father)
- Swipe an important item from a noble [if you're nimble-fingered enough]
- Get drunk (or don't...) [this will have major consequences for the end of the chapter, so mind what you drink]

My partner has read all of the current WIP content and he's given me a few comments. The most important one, I think, is that even though this sounds like a lot of content (maybe too much content), it doesn't feel that way. He flew through the material in a few hours and that was reading everything (which you won't be able to do on a single playthrough). He also noted that in this section—more so than any other—the player character will really start to feel like *your* player character. There are numerous moments of flavour text that reflect your previous choices (certain actions in Rona, your origin choice, your ancestry choice, your approval level with Aeran, how you treated Rasmira, what order you did the party locations in). While the party will always lead back to the same place, there are plenty of options that will change what information you gain and how you encounter certain characters, which will affect how your character engages with the storyline further down the line.

I am back to writing full time tomorrow, so I hope I can finish up the last location in a few days, write the bottleneck, and then get the edits done by January 1st. While the new material is being proofread and edited, I'll be working on a few QoL updates.

- Consistent capitalization of fantasy words/titles (Wayfarer will likely remain capitalized--I keep going back and forth about it--but Melusine and Aeda won't be capitalized anymore so they match human, elf and dwarf)
- A new title for Chapter 2 (Chapter 3 will be called The Tower). I may put some of the options in a poll!
- An autaname function for saves. This will be turned on by default and fill the named save slot with your PC's name, the chapter you're playing, and your current location. For example: **Ilia - Chapter 1 – Marshwall**. This will allow browser saves if you're playing on the itch.io app. If you want to name your own saves, you can toggle it off and you'll be prompted to name your save instead.
- A fix for a bug that prevents your settings from being saved from playthrough to playthrough.
- Minor colour changes to the light mode appearance*
- A live update fix for image assets so they load the correctly coloured asset when you switch between dark and light modes*
- A redesign for skills/abilities that remove the progress bars and replace them with a different design*
- A redesign for companion and faction profiles*

*I may not finish these for the next update since I'm still debating different designs.

I am also considering changing "Chapters" to "Episodes". After a few conversations with my partner and others, I feel that "chapter" doesn't quite capture the full scope of Wayfarer's chapters. Structurally, they are much closer to individual episodes of an episodically-released narrative video game (think Life is Strange or Tell Me Why). While many video games do divide their story into chapters (Red Dead Redemption 2 or The Last of Us, for example), because Wayfarer is text-based and delivered through prose, "chapter" makes me think of chapters like a book.

I get messages every so often from well-meaning folks asking why it's taking so long for the game to update and I think part of it comes from a misunderstanding of what "chapter" actually covers, especially

in the interactive fiction/gamebook sphere. Changing it to episode gives a different impression. I'm still debating this change, but I am strongly considering it.

Once the Chapter 2 party sequence is added to the alpha, I'll start work on the last two scenes. I will likely write both of them before updating the alpha again. Since they are relatively short and straightforward, I hope that I can finish all of it by the end of January. If I can keep to that schedule, we'll be looking at a complete Chapter 2 on the alpha build during the first week of February.

Chapter 3 is a scene that was originally supposed to happen in Chapter 2. I moved it into its own chapter since it is a very linear, contained event that deserves its own space. I do not want this chapter to be very long since the PC and Aeran will have a very specific, very clear mission and I don't want it to span much more than 30k of cumulative content.

This will make feel extremely short and linear in comparison to the other chapters, but Chapter 3's importance cannot be emphasized enough. I hope I can complete Chapter 3 by the end of February and add it to the alpha build the first week of March. With the completion of Chapter 3, I can update the public build with Chapter 2.

Patreon Updates

I am currently [running a poll about WIP snippets](#). I've changed how I share WIP snippets multiple times, so I wanted to get your opinion on what you prefer for how I share in-progress material. This poll is open until January 4th and is open to all patrons.


Finally, for Wayfarer+ tier patrons, Wayfarer's first guide/walkthrough is [available](#)! This is only Part 1 of Chapter 1's guide, so there will be more to follow. It takes me a very long time to put these together so the next one won't be coming any time soon, but the guides include a lot of content. There is a breakdown of every choice, approval changes, specific outcomes for certain choices, and additional development notes about how and why certain sequences came to be.

Other Updates

I released [three character previews](#) on my development blog over Christmas. One of these previews contain some content that was previously shared as a WIP snippet, but otherwise they are unique. I will not be sharing any other Chapter 2 content publicly until the chapter is released to the public build.

Finally, there's a full series of [six secondary character portraits](#) on my development blog! These were gifted by a friend and created by artist griever-receiver on tumblr. You can check them out at the link above.

As we move into January, I'm excited to start another year of development. I have a 2022 roadmap for Wayfarer's development and a plan for a (very) additional background project I'll announce on my one-year Patreon anniversary.

Thank you all so much for your support! 

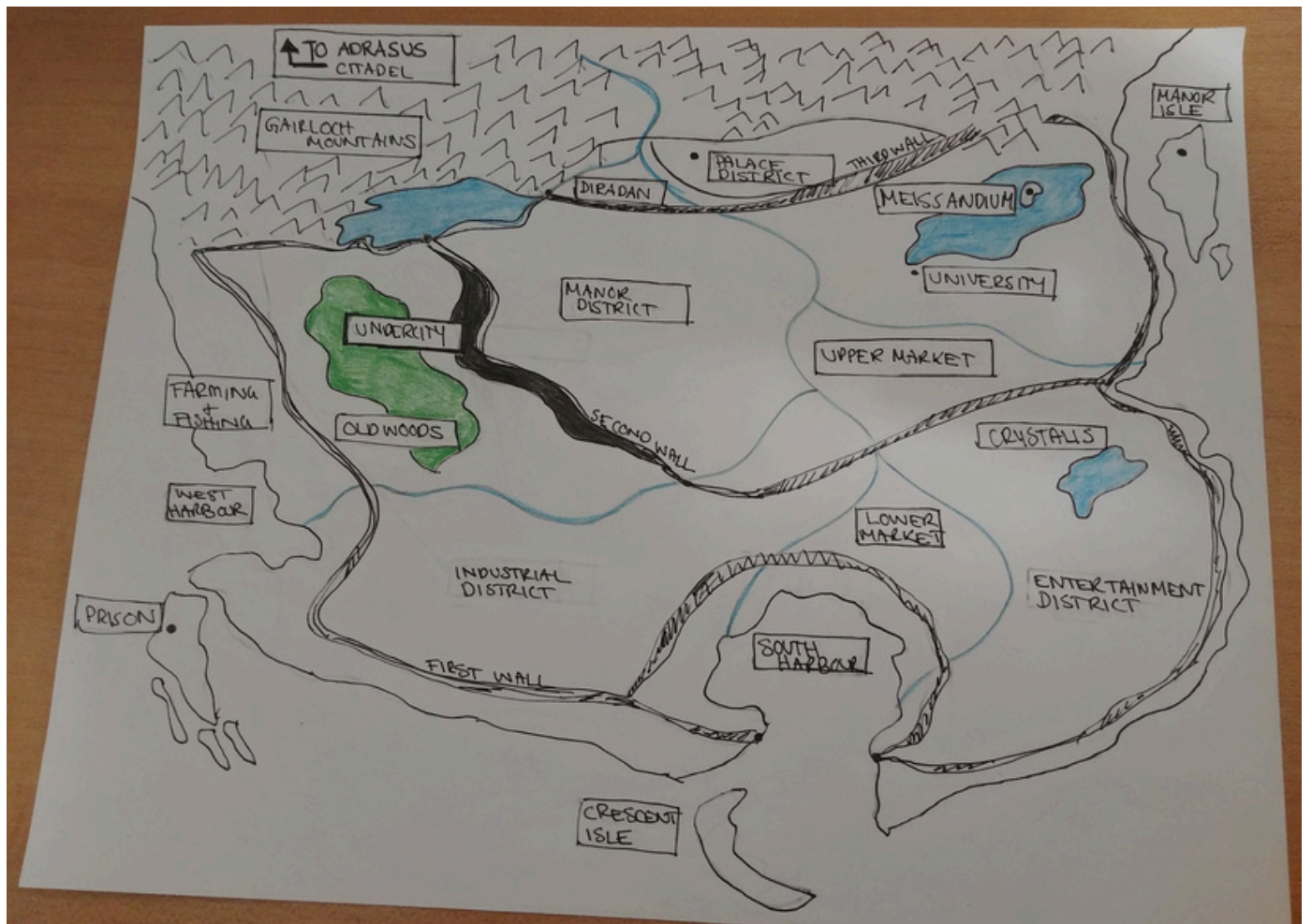


[Mapmaking: Velantis](#)

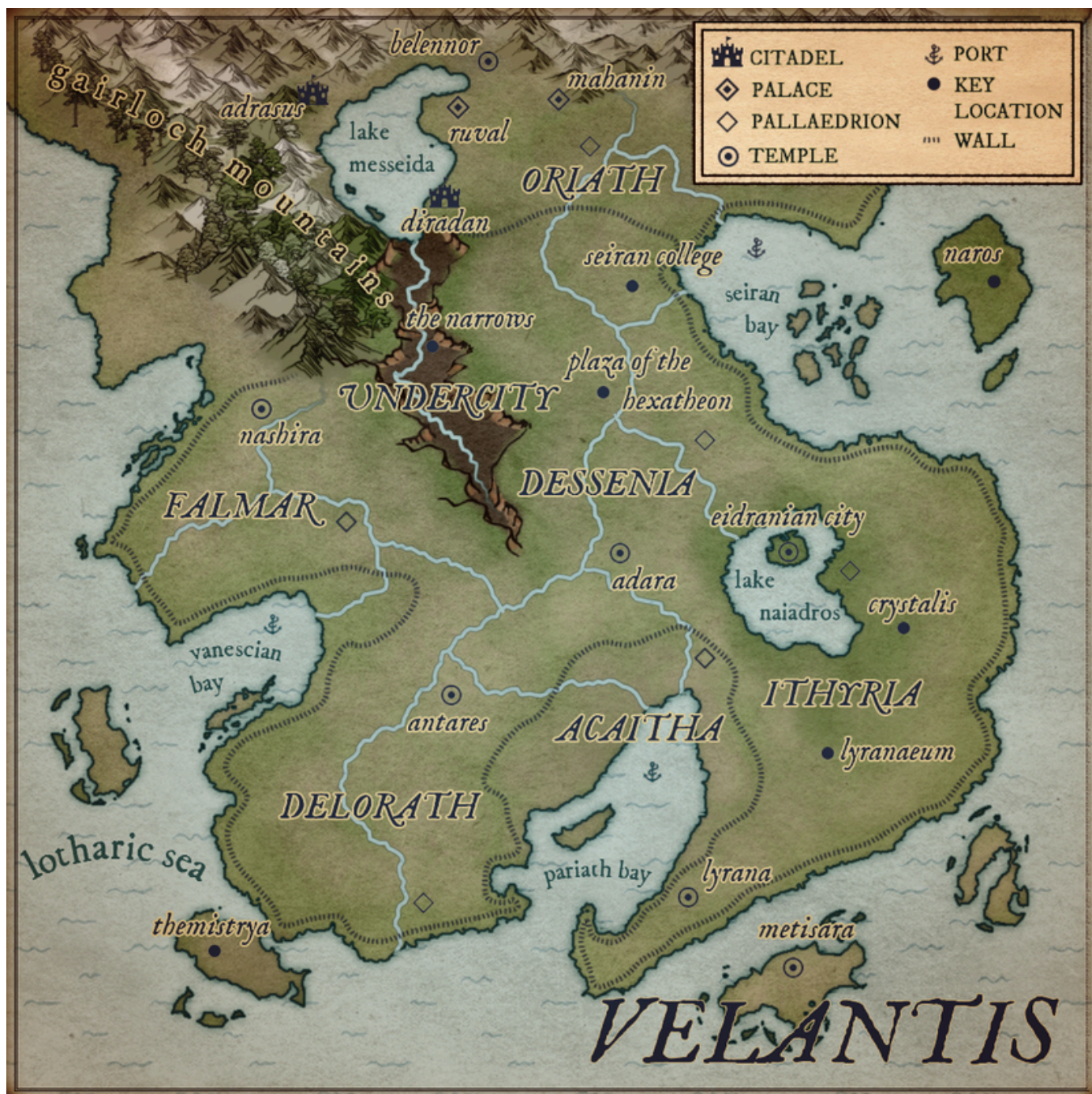
[Dec 28, 2021](#)

This month's bonus content is a process video for the map of Velantis. I decided to change it up a little and try a "speedbuild"-style video with a voice over explaining my different tools and strategies for mapmaking.

I use Wonderdraft for all of Wayfarer's in-game maps and this is a quick look at how I got from this:



To this:



Just a quick note that the video is hosted as an unlisted video on YouTube (Vimeo requires a paid subscription to use their Patreon-only embedded videos and I don't do enough videos to justify paying for that 😊). The embed should work, but if it doesn't, you may have to copy the link and open it in YouTube to view the video!

[Progress Report 2022.01.11](#)

[Jan 11, 2022](#)

Hi friends,

Happy January! I hope everyone had a good holiday and a good New Year's.

Game Updates

The month is really flying by for me. I've been a bit quiet since getting the alpha build update out as soon as possible is my number one priority right now. I finished drafting the party sequence a few days into January. Since then, I've done most of my personal edits, the draft has been proofread by my editor, and I've started coding. Currently, I have about 60% of the new material coded. It's taking a lot longer to code this section than I anticipated, but this section is extremely content dense and some of its code is more complex than usual because of the way the non-linear sections overlap.



[New Exploration map for Episode 2]

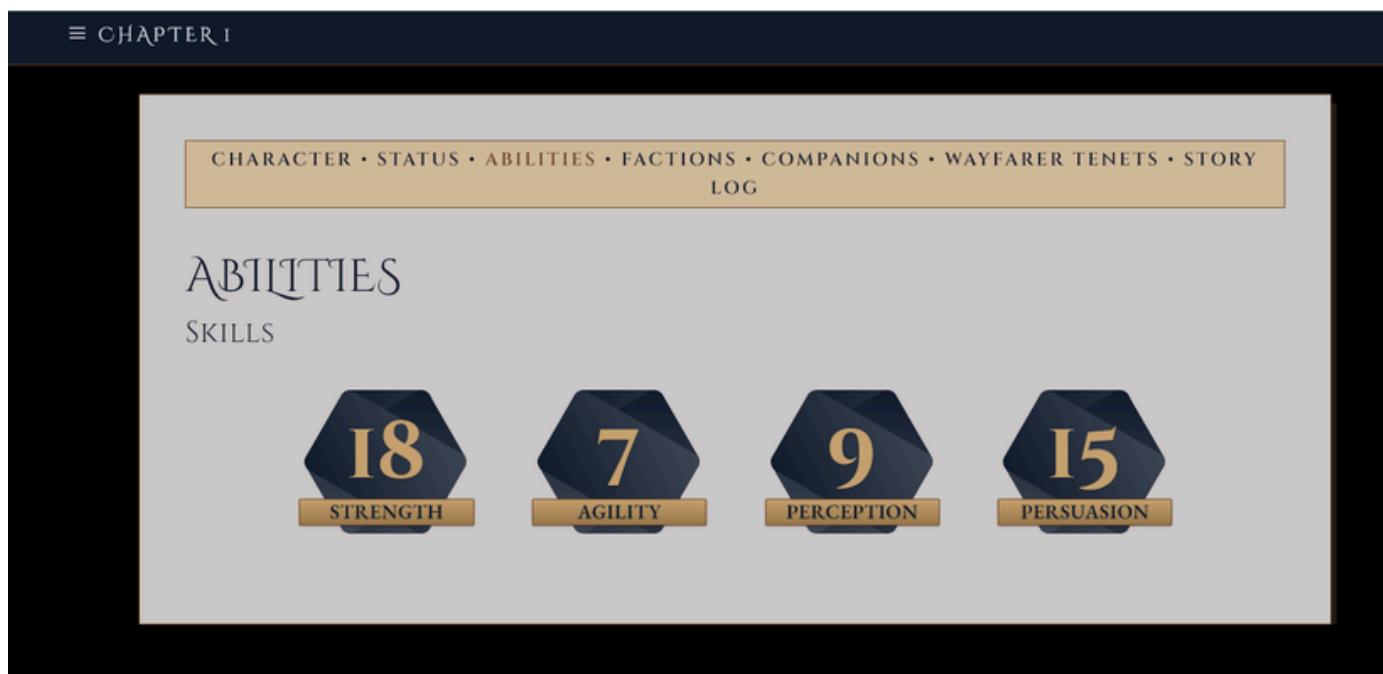
In addition to the new content, I've fixed a couple of small bugs/errors and I am working on a number of UI edits and revisiting some mechanics

- Chapters are now called "Episodes"
- Light mode has been updated with a slightly different colour scheme
- Made a few minor changes to the new game screen
- Added a toggleable autaname system for save files which will state the player character's name, their current chapter, and their current location in the chapter (if you're playing on the itch.io app, you'll be able to use the browser saves now)

- Level ups are still determined by your health status at the end of the chapter, but the RNG factor has been removed. Full Health will receive 3 skill points and Injured/Healing/Recovering will received 2 skill points.
- Replaced the Skill progress bars with badges that show your skill's current level number



[Dark mode skills]



[Light mode skills]

I am working on a refresh of the status effect system. While some of the seeds for this were in place before with the Poison status, I've finally worked out a way to implement buffs and debuffs. Buffs and debuffs will be applied to the player's stats when they reach different story outcomes, and they will also be used to track different flavour text relating to the buff/debuff.

There are five buffs (called Vitalities) and debuffs (called Ailments). These status effects are **temporary** and will wear off either with time (usually indicated by a chapter change) or if the player locates the correct item to remove the effect (as in the case of Poison). Status effects are triggered by story moments and outcomes.

Vitalities

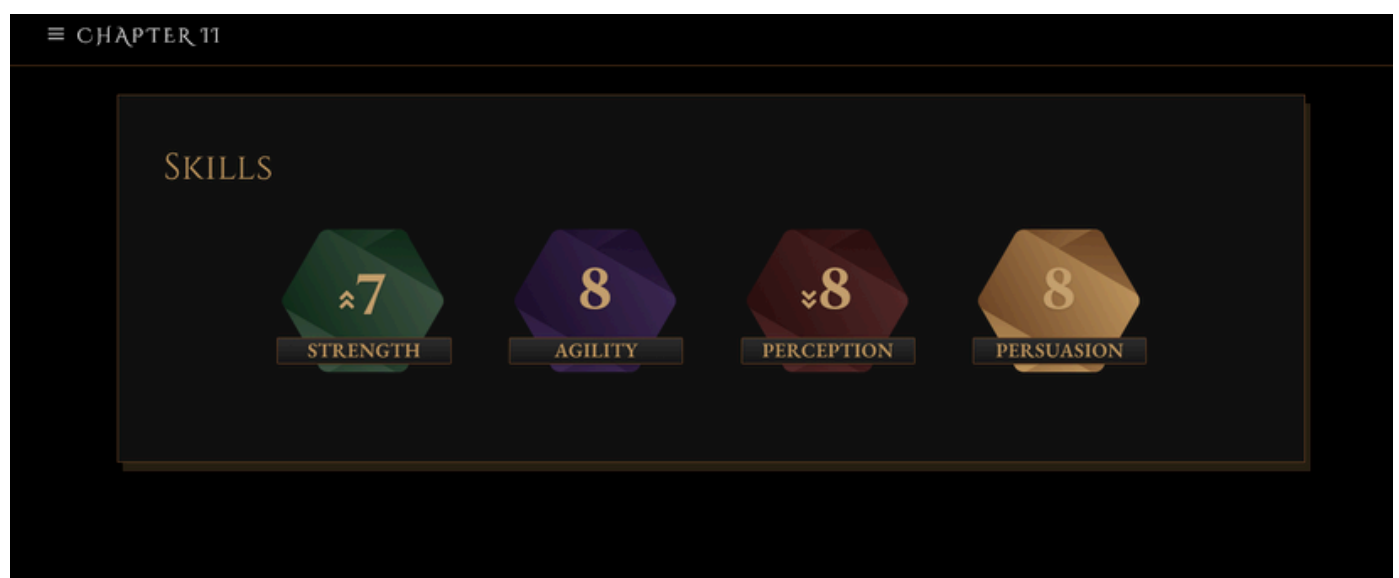
- Contented: +2 to all skills
- Tenacious: +2 to strength, +2 to agility
- Confident: +2 to strength, +2 to persuasion
- Well-Rested: +2 to agility, +2 to perception
- Focused: +2 to perception, +2 to persuasion

Ailments

- Poisoned: -2 to all skills
- Intoxicated: -2 to agility, -2 to perception
- Fractured Bones: -2 to strength, -2 to agility
- Hungover: -2 to perception, -2 to persuasion
- Fatigued: -2 to strength, -2 to persuasion

Active status effects will be recorded in the Status page of the Journal, alongside health and action points. I will be redoing this page with a new design, probably something similar to the skill badges.

On the Ability page of the Journal, skills affected by status effects will be indicated by their colour. Gold/blue (depending on dark/light mode) for normal, green for Vitalities, red for Ailments, and purple for skills affected by both. If you click on the skill's label, the popup will tell you what the skill is, what it affects, and it will list any status effects current applied to that skill.



SKILLS



SKILLS



I want to get this system and all of its design elements in place before I update. I also want to redesign the companion/faction profile pages, but I might have to save that for later, depending on how long it takes to code the rest of the material.

I will likely release a public build patch shortly after the alpha build updates since this change will affect players' playthroughs going into Episode 2.

Patreon Updates

Thank you to everyone who participated in the WIP poll. Going forwards, all Patreon-exclusive WIP previews will be posted on Patreon under the tag "wip". The wip channel will stay open on the patron Discord server so you can discuss any previews you want there, but I won't be posting WIPs in Discord anymore.

I was hoping to release Wayfarer's 2022 roadmap this week, but everything else is on hold until coding the next update is finished.

Thank you all so much for your support! 💕

[Wayfarer \(Alpha Build\) by Idrelle Games](#)

[A browser game made in HTML5](#)

<https://idrellegames.itch.io/wayfarer-alpha-build>

[Wayfarer Alpha Build Version 1.1.2.2 Patch 1.5.2.](#)

[Jan 19, 2022](#)

Hi friends,

The next alpha build update is here! This is a massive update; in addition to new content, it is also a UI/Gameplay patch, so I highly encourage everyone to check out the patch notes below so you know what's changed and how it affects your save files.

Because of the addition of the autaname save function and the status effect system, you must either:

1) Start your file over from the beginning of the game. This is recommended if your save file is from the Prologue or the middle of Episode I.

You can proceed with an old save file if you haven't started Episode II yet, but the autaname system won't operate correctly until you hit certain passages and the variable triggers. The status effect system also won't trigger during Episode I if you don't start over. You will see the notifications if you encounter any buffs/debuffs, but they will not trigger.

OR

2) Start your file from the save prompt between Episode I and Episode II (before the first passage of Episode II loads). You **MUST** start from this point if you want to play Episode II. If you pick up an old save file from the middle of Episode II, the status effect system **will not trigger**. Additionally, any MCs with aeda heritage will miss out on an important addition to their ancestry.

What This Update Includes

- Scenes 2 and 3 (out of 5 total scenes)
- +113,000 words of cumulative new content, bringing Episode II's total cumulative word count to ~173,000

- The new material's average playthrough is 26,000 words, which means there is a *ton* of different paths and replayability in this update! (Episode II's total playthrough average is now 49,000 words)
- A major patch that implements new accessibility options, fixes some issues with the settings, and adds the new status effect system

Please note that while some codex entries trigger in the new material and you will see the notification for them, the actual entry info is still WIP and hasn't been added to the game.

What You Can Do

- Relax in Mahanin Palace
- Have a heart-to-heart with Aeran (or don't)
- Change your hair and get ready for a gala
- Attend a gala and explore the Mahanin Palace grounds
- Meet several major characters, including faction leaders, political figures, romance options, and a new (future) companion
- Be a flirt (or don't)
- Get drunk (or don't)
- See some theatre
- Run away from a cleric (or don't)
- Give a certain someone a much-needed comeuppance

Access and Password

The alpha build can be accessed from the link above.

LINK: <https://idrellegames.itch.io/wayfarer-alpha-build>

MAY PASSWORD: r6QCvz2Aur4DfFvg.

✗ DO NOT SHARE THIS PASSWORD! ✗

Patch 1.3.2. Notes

UI

Accessibility

- Added OpenDyslexic as a font choice
- Added sans-serif headers and titles when a sans-serif font is selected
- Added a line-height option (1.0, 2.0, and 2.5; the default is 1.5)
- Added a justified text toggle. Turning the toggle off will make the text left-aligned.

Systems

- Fixed an issue with the settings. All settings will now be remembered between playthrough sessions and restarts.
- Added an autaname function. When enabled, this will prefill the browser save slots with the player character's name, current chapter, and current location. If you want to name your own saves, toggle this setting off. If you are playing on the itch.io app, you must leave this setting enabled in order to use browser saves.
- The interactive map will now toggle on and off without having to refresh the page
- The records will now toggle on and off without having to refresh the page

Other

- Updated light mode appearance (adjusted colours, etc)
- Updated some image assets used during character creation
- "Chapters" are now "Episodes".
- Fixed capitalization consistency (melusine and aeda are now not capitalized to match human, dwarf, and elf)
- Fixed an issue with the click to proceed arrow where it failed to show if the icon font failed to load, preventing the player from proceeding with the game. The arrow is now a Unicode and will always appear.

GAMEPLAY

- Minor spelling/grammar fixes
- Fixed some dead-end passages
- Adjusted some tutorial popups and removed others
- Removed the RNG based on health status system for level ups. If the player is at full health at the end of an episode, they will receive 3 skill points during their level up. If the player is recovering, healing, or injured, they will receive 2 skill points.
- Added a **status effect** system.

STATUS EFFECTS

Status effects are an extension and replacement of the poison status previously implemented in the game. They **temporarily** increase or decrease the player's skill level. There are ten status effects in total—five vitalities (buffs) and five ailments (debuffs). The player can encounter any number of these status effects if they meet certain requirements or pursue specific story paths.

Status effects last until the end of the chapter, with some exceptions. Some ailments can cancel out vitalities (and vice versa). Status effects can also be cancelled by using certain items (such as drinking an antidote to remove the poisoned ailment). Outside of these exceptions, status effects last for the duration of the chapter.

Vitalities

- Contented: +2 to all skills
- Tenacious: +2 to strength, +2 to agility
- Confident: +2 to strength, +2 to persuasion
- Rested: +2 to agility, +2 to perception
- Focused: +2 to perception, +2 to persuasion

Ailments

- Poisoned: -2 to all skills*
- Intoxicated: -2 to agility, -2 to perception*
- Debilitated: -2 to strength, -2 to agility
- Hungover: -2 to perception, -2 to persuasion
- Fatigued: -2 to strength, -2 to persuasion

*Dwarves are immune to the poisoned ailment as part of their ancestry bonus. It also takes them longer to become intoxicated than other ancestries.

Patch 1.4 Notes

Bug Fixes

- Fixed grammar, typos, and HTML tag errors
- Fixed some continuity flags for the gala

UI Fixes

- Removed tutorial popups completely. The player will not longer be disrupted by tutorials when playing; they will have to manually check tutorials available through the game menu.
- Interactive map toggle fixed so that the highlighted areas also toggle on and off without the need for a refresh
- Additional small fixes to the UI settings for line height, fonts, etc.

Other Updates

- New Wayfarer sigil and logo has been added to the game! More on that in the next progress report.



Patch 1.5 Notes

Bug Fixes

- Fixed all bugs/typos currently reported in the bug-report channel on Discord

Changes

- Changed the way Aeran's argument flag works during the scene in the apartment for high approval playthroughs (high approval here meaning over 40). Instead of a true/false variable, it is now on an invisible counter. If the counter rises too high (watch for disapproval notifications), he will leave the MC in the apartment before the party.

Patch 1.5.2. Notes

Bug Fixes

- Fixed inventory duplication bug in Lars Drakehand's scene in the Cove in Episode 1, Route A
- Fixed continuity error in Aegineta's scene on Episode 1, Route B

[Progress Report 2022.01.25](#)

[Jan 25, 2022](#)

Hi friends,

It's been a pretty busy few weeks. If you missed it, the alpha build was updated on January 19th with new content, new mechanics, and some UI refreshes. Since then there's been a few patches to fix bugs and continuity errors, among some other things. You can read the patch notes at the bottom of the pinned alpha build post.

Game Updates

The most exciting part of the latest patch is the new Wayfarer logo and sigil! I've been working with a graphic designer for the past few months on this project and it's now in the game! A huge thanks to Jessica Roy, who did a fantastic job at bringing all my random and abstract ideas to life. I'm so happy with the design and I've had a lot of fun finding places to put it in the game. 💕





The next thing I'm working on is getting the 1.5 patch ready for the public build. This patch will add the new gameplay mechanics and UI changes that are already in the alpha to the public version. I've been holding off on doing this update until I know for sure the status effect system isn't broken (don't want anyone to end up with permanently increased or decreased stats by accident 😄). The build's been playtested enough times now that I *think* everything is good.

I am also going to be updating all of Wayfarer's graphics with the new logo, so keep an eye out for that!

As coding the update and the UI changes took more out of the month than I anticipated, I haven't had a chance to start working on the last section of Episode II. Once I'm done everything with the public build patch and the January bonus content post is out, I'll be able to get back to writing. Episode II is about 75% complete in terms of story. The last 25% is not going to be as large or complex as the gala sequence. The next sections are fairly linear and there is not as much version iteration going on since

the exploration section of the episode is done. I am likely going to hold off on updating the alpha build again until Episode II is complete.

I am hoping that I can finish Episode II by the end of February and I can start Episode III in March. This is pushing any public build content updates a lot further back than I wanted, but I am committed to finishing Episode III before updating the public build so the alpha can always be one chapter ahead. Episode III is thankfully short and non-complex (fairly linear, no exploration; it used to be the last section of Episode II before I split it off) but I am extremely bad at estimating how long development takes, so I'm not going to plan for an Episode III complete date yet.

And finally, I've changed the way I'm doing playtesting. Previously the playtesters had access to the same alpha file as patrons. Now they have their own early, "pre-alpha" file. My hope is that as the alpha build continues to develop, I'll be able to playtest more rigorously and fix the more noticeable bugs and errors before I update the game for patrons. I'll be doing a public call for playtesters when Episode II is complete so it can be more thoroughly tested to get it ready for public launch.

Thank you to everyone who submitted bug reports! Those errors should be fixed in the patch I uploaded today.

Other Updates

I'm postponing Wayfarer's 2022 roadmap to February when I have more time to sit down and actually look at how the year is going to go. 😊

Thank you all so much for your support! 💕

[Romance in Gaming, Part I: Why Romance?](#)

[Jan 28, 2022](#)

It's hard to think of a gameplay element more beloved in story-driven roleplaying games than romance. When gamers discuss a new RPG, there's usually two questions that come to mind first, two questions that dominate the discussion and are talked about with more passion and excitement than any other: 1) who is your favourite character? and 2) who did you romance?

Reviews of Mass Effect and Dragon Age are never complete without mentioning the romances. Video essays on the Witcher 3 have been debating the Triss vs. Yennefer choice since 2015. I've had friends pass over the first Pillars of Eternity installment and proceed directly to Pillars of Eternity II: Deadfire because it is the entry that includes romantic attachments. RPG fans lamented the lack of romance

options and “serious relationships” in The Outer Worlds, despite this being a conscious choice from the developers that allowed them to focus on other areas of the game.

And that’s just in traditional video games. In the indie scene, many interactive fiction games (visual novels included) are dating sims or otherwise romance-focused. Non-romance games usually include romance of some kind. Regardless of where you look for your games, role-playing and romance tend to align one way or another.

This is a two-part series on romance in gaming. Part I will explore romance as a popular game mechanic and storytelling tool, and the impact it has on interactive fiction development. Part II will focus more closely on how romance is presented in interactive fiction, and discuss the good and the bad that comes from elements such as player-sexual characters and gender-selectable romance options.

Why Romance?

So, what’s the big deal about romance anyway? Why is it such a beloved mechanic?

I think the crux of it comes down to characters and characterization and how they are used to enhance the player’s experience with the story. There’s a world of difference between how romance is handled in a Dragon Age game compared to a Fable game, despite both series being fantasy RPGs. Dragon Age: Inquisition has fully actualized romances and uses romance to further character development and relationships. Fable III does not have fully actualized romance; romance is instead used as a jokey caricature, where the romanceable NPCs are little more than exchangeable dolls and you get some crass humour in your character stats out of marrying multiple people, catching STDs, and having children for a quick laugh.

Players who enjoy fully actualized romance are often people who enjoy character-driven stories. They are playing a game to enjoy the characters and story first, and game mechanics second. Games that include in-depth romance storylines are usually character-driven to begin with. These games place either an equal amount of importance on character/story and mechanics, or put character/story before mechanics.

From my own experiences as a gamer and conversations with others, there are four things that make romance a desirable part of the game for the player:

1) Romances feel good to play.

I’m not a scientist and there’s not really a study on this (that I could find at least... and I did look), but I wouldn’t be surprised if there’s some kind of endorphin rush involved when playing romances. Successfully unlocking new scenes in the romance’s progression can be extremely satisfying for the player, particularly when there’s an approval system involved and your effect on a character is made tangible.

2) Romances are fun to roleplay.

A large part of roleplaying is creating a character and exploring all aspects of their life. Whether you're roleplaying a fantasy version of yourself or someone completely unconnected, there is usually a desire from the player to flesh out their character and understand them fully.

For many people, romance is an extremely important part of life and it is an element they want to include in their roleplay for a variety of reasons. Sometimes this is to create a satisfying character arc, other times it is to explore and empathize with experiences that are not your own.

3) Romances make character more interesting.

Romances in games often function as additional character content that under certain conditions (take the right dialogue options, get the right amount of approval points, unlock the right bond rank, etc). Because romances are written as additional, optional content, they expand on the romanceable character's foundational characterization. There has to be something new for the player to unlock, otherwise why add the romance in the first place?

The end result is that romanceable characters become *more* interesting when they are romanced. This can be structured in a way where in some games, you miss out on crucial character details if you don't romance the character.

In *Dragon Age: Origins*, Morrigan is a tempestuous character who can be difficult to get along with. Her romance gives the player completely new insights about her, and the player character develops a personal connection that is far deeper than if she remains just a friend. These insights ultimately impact *Dragon Age: Origins*' endgame and a particular decision Morrigan makes.

Another example is Dimitri from *Fire Emblem: Three Houses*. While his character arc is complete if you pursue the Blue Lions story route in the game, there is a significant detail that you will miss if you don't unlock his S rank scene.

I don't want to spoil anything, but in very vague terms: Dimitri is a character who struggles with an immense amount of trauma throughout the entire game. If you don't unlock his S rank, the end assumption is that his journey concludes with him healed and whole, and he'll never have to deal with his trauma again. If you see his S rank scene, the result is the opposite: he admits that he is never going to be fully healed, that his trauma is something he will have to carry for the rest of his life. Considering that much of his story and journey is about how trauma shapes a person, this is the more significant end result for his character arc—and it can only be accessed if he is romanced by the player character.

Even when you can access similar information about the character through a friendship path, I still feel like I am missing out on content if I don't romance a character. This is not necessarily good or bad. From a gameplay perspective, this is undoubtedly a good thing as it adds to the game's replayability. I have played all entries in the *Dragon Age* series multiple times because I *want* to see how all of the romances play out and invest more time in characters I may have otherwise ignored on my first few playthroughs.

On the other hand, it makes romanceable characters and their additional content more important than friendship paths or non-romanceable characters. Are romanceable characters more interesting because of the romance? Or is it because their romance gives the player *more content* and *more time* with them?

If that's the case, then maybe it's time game writers question how non-romance content is structured. Friendships can be just as important and interesting as romances, but in games they are not often written as such.

The only game I have played recently that attempts to put romantic and platonic relationships on even footing is Boyfriend Dungeon, which offers romantic and platonic versions of all its character paths. Despite being a romance Visual Novel/dungeon-crawler hybrid, you can play the game to its full extent and invest fully in the characters and their arcs without doing any of the romance paths (and I think that's neat).

4) Romances personalize your playthrough.

In most games with romance, you can only romance one character. Sometimes this takes the structure of a romance "lock", where after you gain a certain amount of points, you choose who you want to romance, choose a dialogue option to lock into it, and romance prompts for all other ROs disappear from the game.

Other times, a game may employ a jealousy system, where you are eventually forced to choose between your romance options. And then there are games that actively punish the player character for romancing multiple ROs (Witcher 3 has Triss and Yennefer work together to reject Geralt completely and you are banned from further romance content; Persona 5's "harem route" has all of the romanceable characters gang up on the protagonist on Valentine's Day). And finally, there are games that allow you to romance as many characters as you want without consequence.

Pursuing a specific romance path makes the player's experience unique. Because this choice affects the story and character relationships, choosing who you romance is much more of a personal choice than other types of choices in an RPG (such as what class you are or what weapons you use). Additionally, if you are playing an LGBTQ+ character, romancing queer characters as a queer person makes it even more personal.

This personalization effect makes games with multiple romanceable characters and a player-defined player character very different than games that include a single romance between a pre-defined player character and their love interest. Gamers are going to be more excited to talk about their romances for a character *they* created than a pre-defined romance.

For example, Dragon Age fans will be a lot more excited to talk about their characters and their romances across three games than, say, Uncharted fans are to talk about Nathan Drake and Elena Fisher's relationship. It's the difference between personally shaping your character's story yourself and watching one play out before your eyes.

Great (Romantic) Expectations: Is Romance the Default?

Romance's popularity in traditional gaming extends deep into the interactive fiction scene. After a quick look through Choice of Games, Hosted Games, and itch.io's visual novel and interactive fiction pages, you could argue that romance is the dominant genre in the interactive fiction scene. Even if a game isn't a romance game or dating sim itself, it often includes romances as a subgenre or additional game mechanic.

I have a few ideas why this is the case. Outside of the general "romance is popular" argument discussed earlier, player demographics for interactive fiction are predominantly female and LGBTQ+. Not only is romance already popular within these audiences, but marginalized gamers also seek out interactive fiction games because they are the only place where they *can* experience in-game romances that reflect their own lives. Romance is an undeniably important part of this medium since interactive fiction can offer a broader, deeper, and more nuanced approach to gender and sexuality than is found in traditional, AAA games.

While it's good to have players invested in their favourite mechanics, there is an unintended downside. Just as the expectation for modern fantasy RPGs is to have an open world level design (whether it's needed or not), I find that there is an expectation among visual novel and interactive fiction players for their games to *always* include romance.

Whether this expectation comes from potential players putting it on developers or developers putting it on themselves is a moot point; regardless of where it comes from, the end result is the same. Interactive fiction games often list their romance options directly on their landing page, include them in their promotional material, and otherwise display them front and centre. Considering the romance's popularity and how it is often the first thing players are excited to talk about, this is a good marketing move. You want people to talk about your game. You want people to be excited about your game.

But as a developer, there are many frustrating aspects that come along with this. When all interactive fiction games are structured the same way, players start to make assumptions about what "makes" an interactive fiction game. Potential players may assume that "the main cast" (the major characters of the game) is synonymous with "romance option", regardless of whether the game is actually a romance game or not. They may judge your game solely on which characters are romanceable, regardless of your game's other qualities. Which characters are and are not available as romances can make or break an in-development game—particularly if you're doing your outreach and community management on platforms like Tumblr and the Choice of Game forum, where the assumption is romance options first and everything else second.

My feelings about this are very complex. On one hand, I am frustrated that romance is the single most pervasive gameplay element that players want to talk about. It affects my engagement, which affects my game's growth and reach. Yet on the other hand, I absolutely understand why players love talking about romance, because as a player, I also enjoy talking about romance. It is one of the most interesting aspects of roleplaying games.

I like romance. I really enjoy the types of stories that can be explored through romance. If I didn't, I wouldn't have put it in *Wayfarer*, and I certainly wouldn't have as many optional romance paths as I do. But I also really dislike when development is hampered by assumptions. Tumblr has been an excellent platform for building a community, but it is also an echo chamber. I see time and time again players and other developers who assume that “interactive fiction”—which is a *medium* or *type* of video game, not a genre—is synonymous with “romance game”. This idea is reinforced when questions directed to developers are primarily concerned with romance, romanceable characters, and romantic scenarios between the romance option and the player character.

And the effect of this is that new developers assume that they have to put romance in their game because that's what *all* the other games are doing. The expectation is there, so you *have* to deliver, otherwise you're not making an interactive fiction game.

Romance is complicated enough to pull off in traditional media; choice-based, non-linear storytelling makes it even more complex. It's important for interactive fiction developers to fully consider how romance content will enhance their characters and storylines in the early stages of development. It should be an intentional choice, one that is integral to the game's mechanics and design—not one made because the developer is put in a position where they feel like it should be there.

So How Do You Write a Romance for Interactive Fiction Anyway?

Though interactive fiction shares many similarities with writing a novel, implementing romance is completely different. Not only does a choice-based narrative shift how the story unfolds, but player interaction immediately changes how a romance will play out. In traditional writing, the author controls the when, the how, and the why of the plot and character arcs. In interactive fiction, player choice immediately changes how the romance plays out—in order to make it *interactive*, the author needs to give the player some level of control over the romance's progression through their choices.

These choices can take different forms. It can be about the dialogue options you choose, when and where you unlock certain scenes, or how quickly you gain or lose approval points. Some games give the player more control, some give them less. But regardless, the most important option—and the one players are most likely to talk about—is which character the player chooses to romance.

The inclusion of several romanceable characters is a major defining difference between romance in interactive fiction and romance in traditional media. Typically in interactive fiction games, there are a handful of characters for the player to choose from. These romance options are usually from the main cast of characters and present throughout the course of the game. As each romance needs to feel like a unique experience, developers may use a number of tools to ensure there is no overlap between a particular RO and their counterparts:

- A defined look that is different from the other ROs
- A character/romance trope for each RO (i.e. Soul Mates, Childhood Friends to Lovers, Forbidden Love, Jerk with a Heart of Gold, etc)

- A side story or subplot revolving around the RO dealing with some kind of personal problem that only the player character can help them resolve (sometimes this subplot compliments the main plot, sometimes it is a separate issue)

However, I think the mark of a good romance—beyond anything else—is *how* the character is written into the game. When romance becomes the sole focus and the primary reason why a character is included, the character runs the risk of becoming purposeless.

In some games, there's a rush towards romance and romance elements, a tangible pressure to "get to the good bits" first—and then there's nothing substantial outside the romance itself. To be a good romance, a romance option needs to be a good character first. They need to exist on their own terms, outside the player character and beyond their romance arc.

I've learned this lesson myself the hard way. When I was originally developing Wayfarer's characters, I took a romance-first approach—an approach which I regret, because it ended up making me waste a lot of time. Early in development, I felt pressured to focus on romances since it was the question everyone wanted answers to: not just who was in the game, but *who* was romanceable, who they were attracted to, and what their romance would look like.

While I'm sure these questions from players were well-intended, it became slowly became more and more frustrating. I was creating lists of characters and laying them out on a grid so I could count how many female, male, and nonbinary romances I had and figure out the ratio male-attracted characters to female-attracted characters. I spent weeks stressing over representation, whether I had enough, whether I had too little, whether it would be good enough for players.

And at the end of it, it felt like I wasn't treated characters as characters, but rather as ticks on a list. I was effectively tokenizing my own cast. It didn't matter who these characters were, but that they existed to be romanced.

This was not a good approach to character development, let alone romance development. The foundation of a good romance are the characters—you need solid characterization first and foremost. And I don't think you can build good characterization if the first thing you do is focus on ticking off boxes.

Something about this whole process rubbed me the wrong way. I have never developed a cast of characters based on what their romance looks like because you would never approach character writing this way in any other medium. I knew from the moment I started sketching out Nelani and Felix's backstories and character arcs that a romance arc wouldn't work for them. Nelani has other things to be concerned with, and Felix is ten years younger than the player character and not in the right mindset for a romance. Forced romance actively detracted from their character development and didn't make their role in the game better.

I think it's important to keep in mind that just because you can make a character romanceable, it doesn't mean that you should. This is why I stress treating a romance option as a character first and a romance second. Interactive fiction developers need to know who their characters are beyond romance. They need to know how they develop if the player character chooses *not* to romance them. They need to

know how their characters affect the plot, and what trajectory their development takes throughout the course the game.

WAYFARER

2022 ROADMAP



WINTER

January - March

- ♦ ALPHA Episode 2 complete on Patreon
- ♦ ALPHA Episode 3 begins development
- ♦ Playtester applications open



SPRING

April - June

- ♦ ALPHA Episode 3 complete
- ♦ ALPHA Episodes 4-A, 4-B, & 4-C begin development
- ♦ **Episode 2 Public Launch**
- ♦ Open discussion board on itch.io page



SUMMER

July - September

- ✦ Annotated Twine template + guide
- ✦ Game development paused during July

FALL

October - December

- ✦ ALPHA Episode 4 complete
- ✦ **Episode 3 Public Launch**
- ✦ IF design/Twine Compendium
- ✦ Playtester applications open

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IDRELLEGAMES.ITCH.IO/WAYFARER

[Wayfarer 2022 Roadmap](#)

[Jan 30, 2022](#)

Welcome to Wayfarer's 2022 Roadmap!

This is an outline of my project goals for the coming year. It should hopefully give you some insights on how development is going to go this year.

Changes from 2021

I do all of Wayfarer's writing, narrative/gameplay design, and coding myself. I have previously vastly underestimated my workflow, which lead to me pushing myself too hard to meet self-imposed deadlines.

This ultimately led to me overworking myself throughout most of 2021 (which was not--surprise, surprise--great for my health).

Completing and releasing Episode I taught me a lot about how my workflow actually functions and how long it takes me to complete a section of the game. While the 2022 roadmap outlines a vague timeline for each of my goals and I am intentionally overestimating the amount of time I need, there is always the possibility some may take more time than anticipated.

Additional Projects

In addition to the game, I am also working on two related side-projects. These side-projects will not overtake Wayfarer's development (development always comes first), but they are projects I am excited about and I am looking forward to working on them.

◆ A Twine template and annotated guide.

This is something I've been planning to do for a while, but haven't had time to figure out how I wanted to do it yet.

The Twine template will be geared towards new IF developers who want to make gamebook-style interactive fiction games, or for current developers interested in using Twine as their engine. It will be written in the SugarCube story format and use the default UI. It will include a number of popular quality-of-life elements (light mode/dark mode, imported and custom fonts, formatted for mobile, etc) and gameplay mechanics (character creators, implementing skills and stats, skill checks, inventories, notifications, etc).

The template is primarily intended as a teaching tool. It will be annotated so it explains how each element works and how to create your own. It will also explain how to import your game to itch.io and how to use relative paths to store your game's assets.

The template will be available on Patreon first.

◆ An interactive fiction design and Twine compendium.

The compendium will be written to go with the template. It will be broken into two sections: basic interactive fiction narrative and game design (which can be applied to any engine) and Twine/SugarCube specific coding tips.

Like the template, it will be released on Patreon first.

2022 ROADMAP

WINTER • January to March

During Winter, my main goal is to complete the alpha version of Episode 2 and begin development on Episode III. If all goes well, Episode 2 should be complete by the end of February/early March.

As Episode 3 is one of the shortest episodes in the game, I am hoping I can get the bulk of it finished during March and heading into April.

Additional Goals:

- ◆ Start designing and writing the annotated Twine template and guide
- ◆ Applications for new playtesters will open when Episode 2 is complete

SPRING • April to June

While I am working on finishing Episode 3, Episode 2 will be playtested and prepped for its public launch. When the alpha version of Episode 3 is complete, Episode 2 will launch publicly. The public launch will hopefully occur sometime in April.

After Episode 3 is complete, I will start work on Episode 4. Episode 4 is unique because it splits into three separate versions of the episode based on a choice the player makes at the end of the previous episode. While each version itself will not be overly long individually, the sum of their parts makes Episode 4 a content-dense episode.

Patrons in voting tiers will be able to vote on which version of Episode 4 I work on first.

Additional Goals:

- ◆ When Episode 2 launches publicly, I will be changing Wayfarer's game page from a comment-based page to a community discussion board. This will make it easier for me to sticky important development notes (such as the post about common launch errors) and an update post to keep non-Patreon players informed about the alpha build's progress.

SUMMER • July to September

Summer will be primarily devoted to developing Episode 4. I will be releasing the Twine template and annotated guide during this quarter (likely towards the end of it) and I will continue to playtest and prep Episode 3 for public launch.

I am taking the entire month of July off. I'm hoping to prepare some additional bonus content for Patreon which will release while I'm away, but regardless, I will not be working on the game during this month.

FALL • October to December

If all goes well, Fall will see the completion of Episode 4. When Episode 4 is complete, Episode 3 will have its public launch. Provided I am not behind schedule on the game's development, I will be releasing the interactive fiction design and Twine compendium at the end of December.

Additional Goals:

- ◆ Applications for new playtesters will open when Episode 4 is complete
- ◆ I would ideally like to start work on Episode 5, but I am not going to push myself to finish it by the end of the year

[Episode 2, Scene 4 Sneak Peek #1](#)

[Feb 5, 2022](#)

Hi friends,

Episode 2 Scene 4 is in progress! Though my focus is all over the place, it is moving along nicely and I have about 5000 words drafted. This is a snippet of some of the new stuff I've been working on. If you want to avoid spoilers for the next update, skip this post!



“Your Rona solution was a ramshackle excuse of an idea and you know it!” the dwarf says, his booming voice bellowing across the table. “Umbria would have never devoted resources to it if you hadn’t agreed to foot the bill—”

“And yet when I returned, my ramshackle excuse of an idea is the only avenue we have left,” Zenaida interrupts. “Solarath is squeezing us. Alexia and Lucien are gone, Quirinus has ousted us from Diradan, Nova is in his hands, and Pallas abandoned us to join his cause. Our numbers are dwindling and instead of devising a new strategy, you waste your time blaming me—”

The woman at the head of the table rises from her seat. Chairs scrape against the floor as the mages follow suit and turn as one, seven sets of eyes fixing you and Aeran with a piercing gaze. In the silence,

Idris slips by, his duty fulfilled, and quietly takes up a position beside Malsara. Unlike her companions, Zenaida remains seated. Though she manages to give you a tight smile, she cannot hide the weariness infecting her usual composed bearing.

“Thank you for coming, Wayfarer Kellis, Wayfarer \$lastname,” the woman says, gesturing to the empty chairs at the end of the table. You and Aeran find your places, scraping your chairs against the hardwood floor as you settle between the reserved dwarven woman and the eerily quiet melusine. “I understand your day has been much longer than expected, but this is all the time we can afford to deliberate. Given how our circumstances have changed, haste is all but necessary now.”

The dwarf snorts and thumps unceremoniously back into his seat. “Hasty this, hasty that,” he grouses. “Maybe we should acknowledge that *hasty* antics based on mismanaged intelligence and overreactions is what got us into this mess in the first place—”

“And if you had it your way, we’d be waiting out the years while Solarath conducts their experiments and sees their goals through to the end with little interference,” the freckled woman snaps.

“Sod it all, Quinn, I know you’re new to Diradan, but even you should realize staying ahead of Solarath is impossible since Sabien Quirinus took control—”

“So you’d rather be complacent?”

“His chance of success is slim to none—”

The lanky elf rolls their eyes. “Oh, stuff it, Oshiro, no one agrees with you,” they mutter.

Oshiro ignores them. “Quirinus will die eventually. If an assassin doesn’t get lucky, then by his own tomfoolery or natural causes,” he says, leaning heavily on the table. “And when he’s gone, we can neatly—and quietly—put Solarath back where it belongs—”

“Not all of us have the luxury of waiting,” Quinn interrupts. A piece of hair unravels from her bun and she angrily sweeps it out of the way. “You and Airiani, perhaps, but you put too much faith in your ability to outlast him. Solarath is more than the Grand Archsage—”

“Oshiro does not speak for me,” the melusine says, their melodious voice as smooth as velvet. Despite the quiet tone, their voice resounds deeply, throbbing in your ears like the ocean pounding against the shore.

“See?” the elf says, folding their arms comfortably behind their head. “Even Airiani doesn’t agree with you—”

The curly-haired woman slams her hands on the table. “Enough!” she calls, her voice echoing through the room. In the silence, a faint clink catches your ear. Drawn by the sound, your notice a glimmer on the woman’s hand. She wears a distinctive piece of jewelry—a gold chain bracelet that extends from her wrist and down her hand to attach to a set of rings on her fingers. In its centre, pressed against the back

of her hand, is white gemstone that pulses with a faint light. “Regardless of Archsage Oshiro’s feelings on the matter, this is not a matter of discussion tonight. Zenaida has given us the means to act. We will not forfeit this chance while it is available to us.”

[Progress Report 2022.02.07.](#)

[Feb 7, 2022](#)

Hi friends,

Another February has rolled around! A year ago, I launched my Patreon and started the process of taking making this game from a hobby project to a full-time job. I’m so grateful for all of you and your support of this project; Wayfarer wouldn’t even be close to the kind of game it is without you. I am so blown away by how far it’s come since then. This time last year, I was just starting Episode 1 Route B and spent most of my time worrying about the Twine editor lag and figuring out how to merge multiple story files into one.

(As a side note, that problem got solved ages ago (pewh 🥳), but I did recently put together a little tutorial on my development blog on how that process actually works. So, if you’re interested in Twine things, [you can find that here!](#))

Games Updates

I have started work on the next section of Episode 2, which sees the MC through the meeting with the Order of Lethalis. I have about 5000 words of new content down and the base dialogue tree is shaping up nicely. While there are some variations involved based on your choices, most of it is structurally the same. This is because regardless of *how* things happen, this scene delivers important lore and information to the player, so they always need to walk away knowing the same things. I am hoping that once I get the base version fleshed out, I can copy it over to the other variations and tweak/edit from there to fit differing circumstances. This is a much easier process than the crossing continuity progression in the gala scene.


I have started to post snippets/previews from WIP parts of new content. I don’t have a set schedule yet (I may end up choosing a day of the week later down the line and always posting a WIP snippet on that day), but you can find them under the [sneak peaks](#) tag. I’ve left the wip-snippet channel in the Patreon Discord up, so if you want to discuss any WIP content, that’s the channel to go to.

Finally, if you missed it, I shared the 2022 roadmap last week. [You can check it out here!](#)

Bonus Content

For Patrons with access to bonus content, I am changing up how I am approaching it. Because I want to create both a Twine guide and an interactive fiction guide this year, bonus content is going to shift away from Wayfarer-specific things (lore posts, process stuff, character profiles, etc.) to focus on Twine and interactive fiction development things. I'll be using bonus content as an opportunity to write articles, early chapters, and templates for both guides. I would like to still do occasional Wayfarer-specific bonus content, but since I don't want to overwork myself, it will likely be one-off things when I have something interesting to share.

While I want to keep the monthly bonus content vote available, I'm not sure how I am going to approach that yet. February will not have a bonus content vote as I will be publishing Pt 2 of my article on Romance in Gaming.

As always, thank you all so much for your support! 

[Progress Report 2022.02.21](#)

[Feb 21, 2022](#)

Hi friends,

I should not be surprised at this point that February is a short month, but... ahh February is a *short* month. While I'm happy with what I have accomplished so far, there still is a lot of work to be done on the end of Episode 2. At this point, I think it's safe to say that the rest of the Order of Lethalis scene is going to take me to the end of February and into March, and then March will be spent wrapping up the Episode with a few unique moments that hinge on the player character's decisions throughout the episode.

Game Updates

Currently, the next scene is around 25,000 words. When I started working on it at the beginning of the month, my plan was to keep it as linear as possible, but I found this strategy did the scene a disservice. For one, it was turning it into a major lore info dump without any space to breathe. For another, by keeping it so linear, it was taking away player agency, which is rather counterintuitive for a game with choice-based gameplay. And finally, I was missing a lot of moments for character growth and depth, and the characters and subject matter introduced in the scene was becoming inherently uninteresting.

So I scraped some of the sections I was focusing on and the scene has been re-structured around a dialogue tree. This keeps the player engaged in what's going on, rather than simply delivering

information to them. In the words of my partner, “I’m a lot more excited for this scene now, it seemed kind of boring before.” 😊

While I am hoping to wrap this dialogue tree up at the end of the month, February hasn’t given me a lot of time to breathe. I’m used to writing between 40k and 50k a month, but I’ve been writing a lot slower since the January updates. I have a hard time focusing on writing new content since I keep wanting to fix issues with both the public and alpha builds.

Additionally, I reopened the public bug report after I had a few folks ask about it. I had previously closed it because it was too difficult to keep my focus on writing new content when I was also fielding bug reports from the playtester and patron bug report channels in the Discord server. While the public form is helpful in the long term, there are also a lot of useless reports that come through the form (either people trolling, sending me hate mail, or submitting reports that are so unclear that I can’t understand the problem they encountered, let alone how to replicate and fix it).

I think the ideal solution is to find a volunteer I trust (probably my partner) to check the form for me and delete anything that isn’t actually helpful so I don’t get sidetracked worrying about the next thing that ends up in the form.

Other Updates

For the non-Wayfarer-related things, Part 2 of my article on Romance in Gaming will come out later this week. Next month I’ll be starting work on some of the Twine guide/template things, so I am looking forward to that.

I’m hashing out a few ideas for my interactive fiction compendium and I’m taking a bit of an analytical approach to it. I figure that if I want to write about common narrative structures and gameplay in IF gamebooks, then I should play as wide a range of games as possible. I already have a list of suggestions, but if you’re into IF gamebooks and have a game you think I should play, let me know!

I am looking for:

- Completed and published games (no WIPs)
- Ideally standalones. If they are part of a series, then the series should be complete.
- Interactive fiction gamebooks only. This means they are text adventures, delivered through some type of prose. I am not looking at visual novels (interactive fiction with static sprites and backgrounds) for this project.
- Any engine/platform. A lot of suggestions that have been given to me are ChoiceScript games (either Choice of Games titles or Hosted Games titles), but I’d like to move outside of COG, too.
- Any genre (though I tend to stay clear of paranormal romance and urban fantasy since they’re not my cup of tea)

Wayhaven Chronicles, Fallen Hero, Sabres of Infinity, Soul Stone War, and Superstition have already been suggested to me, so no need to repeat them.

As always, thank you all so much for your support! 💕

[Episode 2, Scene 4 Sneak Peek #2](#)

[Feb 23, 2022](#)

Hi friends,

Another snippet from an ongoing WIP dialogue branch. Conditional statements that control flavour text have been removed for the sake of clarity. In this preview, the player character trained with Varyn.



"I heard it in passing," you say. "Do you know how much information you can glean simply by walking through a room at a party? A little drink, a little comfort, and the sweet pleasure of boasting will make anyone's lips loose."

The elf smiles darkly. "Must be delightful," they say, twisting their ring idly around their index finger. "It's so difficult to come across information with ease these days. Most mages and nobles are accustomed to raising a dampening ward to prevent unwanted eavesdroppers. But if garnering intelligence is as simple as walking through a room, I wonder how long it will be until *magianis* becomes tantamount to *spy*?"

You swallow hard. Though the rest of the table has bought your explanation, you're certain this mage doesn't believe you. "I can't answer that," you say. "Espionage was never part of our training."

"You were trained by Brissa Varyn, Wayfarer. You even carry her name. I doubt the topic was never broached during those long winters at the Spire

You pause. There's something about the elf's tone... "I see you're familiar with her reputation. Did you know her?"

They shrug. "Briefly. I've been stationed in the Erenvor court for nearly four decades. I was there when she plead Avennor's case to the emperor."

You exchange fleeting looks with Aeran. You always knew Varyn had ties to Rhesainian courts. She was the Wayfarer Order's ambassador, after all; you accompanied her on various diplomatic missions during your training, sitting in on conferences with anyone from local Artanisian mayors to high-ranking

Rhesainian politicians. But you never thought much of the depth of those ties or how many Guild mages she made an impression upon.

“Enough, Veyer,” Umbria says warningly, her voice cutting through your thoughts. “I see no reason for \$lastname to lie about what \$heshe overheard. Perhaps this is a rare moment of luck; I wouldn’t shun it when such moments are few and far between.”

“Luck or not, this news about the Brightblade is a rumour at best,” Oshiro says quickly. “Are we willing act on unsubstantiated gossip? I don’t think so. Regardless of what \$lastname heard, we have time to consider our actions thoroughly—”

“Time?” Zenaida snaps. “What time? Have you forgotten Nova? She was by all means abducted by Quirinus today. How long will it be before his truthseers pull the truth from her mind?”

Behind her, Malsara’s posture turns to stone. Though she observes the arguing mages with respectful silence, even she cannot hide the dark look seeping into her expression.

[Romance in Gaming, Part II: Playersexuality, Gender-Selectability, and LGBTQ+ Representation in Gaming Romance](#)

[Feb 27, 2022](#)

This article is a continuation of January’s [Romance in Gaming](#) article. Last time, I spoke of romance as gameplay in a broad scope, and its impact on interactive fiction development. I want to now focus in on the mechanical gameplay of romance, how it is implemented, and what it says—intentionally or unintentionally—about diversity within LGBTQ+ games.

Though I am focusing on interactive fiction, some of my examples will continue to pull from traditional video games. I’m doing this because interactive fiction gamebooks are a relatively new genre in gaming, pioneered predominantly by Choice of Games and its subsidiary labels. The vast majority of interactive fiction games I have played are incomplete works-in-progress and I don’t think it is fair to critique games that are still in development. This article will probably warrant an updated version as more WIPs are released and published in their finished state.

Because the terms are used a significant amount of times in this article, I will be referring to romanceable characters as ROs (romance option).

What Makes a Good Game Romance?

Before we can discuss romance mechanics and why they are used, we first need to establish what games a good romance in a game. There are multiple ways of writing romance depending on a game's needs, but I think it comes down to a few core elements:

1. The romance has important, definable stakes.

By pursuing a relationship, the player character and the RO are putting something valuable at risk. They are going to be tested, they are going to be challenged. Maybe the thing they are risking is political and social standing; maybe it's the RO's past, which they have kept hidden against all odds until now. I think inexperienced writers often make the mistake of equating high stakes with extreme situations. High stakes are not always about life and death. But they are about internalized value. By romancing the player character, the RO is jeopardizing something they hold dear, something they wish to keep the same, or something wish to keep hidden.

2. The romance fundamentally changes the characters.

In playwriting, there is the concept of "changing the status quo". The status quo is the state in which the characters are in at the beginning of the scene. By the end, the status quo needs to shift—a new discovery comes to light, a relationship changes, someone says something they shouldn't. Regardless of what it is, once the scene reaches its end, the characters cannot go back to the way they were before.

When this concept is applied to romance arcs, the romantic relationship needs to fundamentally change the characters involved. Because of this intimate relationship, the RO cannot be the same person they were before they met the player character. There needs to be substantial growth (positive or negative) throughout the course of the relationship.

3. The romance impacts the game's overall plot.

In most game narrative structure, there is an overarching plot or goal for the player character to complete, and character relationships are subjugated to side quest or side story content. Similar to how a book series may relegate character romances to subplots that enhance the narrative but do not overtake it, the side story/side quest structure provides additional or optional content for the player to pursue that often has its own unique story arc in addition to the main story. Boyfriend Dungeon, for example, has an overall plot (the weapon people are mysteriously disappearing and waking up in dungeons with no memories of what happened or how they got there) and seven individual romantic subplots, one for each RO (plus a cat).

The separation of game plot and romance plots can make the narrative design easier to execute in the long run. If romance is isolated to its own storyline, then the developer doesn't have to account for a host of scene variations in the main plot.

However, depending on the game, I find this ultimately can do the romance a disservice. If the romance doesn't impact the main plot in some way beyond a scattering of referential text and

dialogue, then the romance feels supplementary and detached, existing only within its own boundaries as if it didn't need the main focus of the game for the romance to happen.

To go back to the Dragon Age series for a moment, there is a reason why Morrigan's and Alistair's romances make a stronger impact on the player than Zevran's and Leliana's. Though Zevran and Leliana have their own individualized stories with high stakes and character growth, they are detached from the main story arc of Dragon Age: Origins. Both Morrigan and Alistair's romances lead up to a choice that impact the end of the game. And while there are non-romance versions of these choices to account for the players who didn't romance them, the romance versions are executed in a way that make them feel more important than the non-romance ones. How you handle this choice can lead to major narrative consequences, such as Morrigan leaving the player's party (ultimately leading to their death) or Alistair sacrificing himself for his lover in the endgame.

By virtue of their connection to the main plot, Morrigan's and Alistair's romances are given more significant narrative weight. They have more meaning. And, in a narrative defined by player choice, that means they ultimately feel more "canon" or "real" to the player in the broader scope of the story.

Diversity & RO Cast Composition

The execution of a romance's storyline is only one part of a successful romance. Which romance option a player romances is often an important and personal decision, one they feel very strongly about. Players want to play a romance arc that is fun, that speaks to them, that works for their player character—and, ultimately, is with a RO who appeals to them in terms of looks, personality, and character trope. This is inherently a good thing. As a developer, I want players to be excited about the romances they encounter in my game. When a game's characters and relationships are just as important as the story and mechanics, nothing can sink a game faster than an unfulfilling, shallow romance.

However, there is a grey space that falls between developers and players when romance is involved. And that space has to do with the very complex relationship between diversity, player expectation, and player entitlement.

Interactive fiction is very popular among the LGBTQ+ community. There's something fundamentally queer about the medium—it's indie, it's outside the norm, it's this weird thing clinging the edge of the gaming sphere (and some folks don't even consider interactive fiction games because they are text-based). There are more opportunities in interactive fiction to explore gender identity, sexuality, and many other marginalized, intersecting identities that are overlooked by mainstream media*. This is one of the reasons I love interactive fiction so much—the stories told in this medium are ones that you can almost never find in traditional gaming.

** I should note here that diversity includes so much more than just LGBTQ+ representation, but intersections of race, class, and disability are more than what I can cover in a single article, so I'm going to focus on gender identity and sexuality.*

The creators and players of interactive fiction want diverse romances. Implementing diversity, however, is a much more difficult task than it seems at first glance. When romance is involved, there is a natural desire for players to see characters with similar experiences represented as interesting and desirable people. But identity is complex and human experience covers a much vaster breadth than can be captured in a single game. The more planned content you have, the more work you have to do and the longer it takes to develop your game. At some point, the developer is going to have to choose which character types they implement, what experiences they represent, and which ones are left off the table.

There are three main methods interactive fiction games handle this challenge of content vs. workload:

1. Multiple romances.

The developer puts as many individual romance options into their game as possible, sometimes numbering up to and beyond 8 different romances. These games may sometimes employ other romance mechanics (such as gender-locking straight, gay and lesbian characters). They tend to offer a greater pool of romanceable characters with a broad scope of experiences, character types, and tropes.

2. Bisexuality.

The developer has fewer romance options, but they make them accessible to all players regardless of gender by making them bisexual. The ROs will always be attracted to the player character. These games often have a smaller pool of ROs, but have the opportunity to create romances with a deep scope.

3. Gender-selectability.

The developer has fewer romance options, but they make them accessible to all players and make them fit all gender identities and all sexualities by allowing the player to select the ROs' gender. The ROs will always be attracted to the player character and player can always play as their preferred gender identity and still romance whoever they want (for example, if the player wants to play as a straight woman, the game's ROs will all be male). Gender-selectable romances can sometimes be seen as the best of both worlds. By making the ROs' gender and sexuality configurable, they can showcase a broad scope of experiences while also having the time and energy to create storylines with a deep scope.

The first two are common practice in traditional video games as well as interactive fiction. The Dragon Age series has utilized both over the course of the series, with Dragon Age: Inquisition creating 8 unique romances (giving players two bisexual options and employing gender-locks for gay and straight characters). Its predecessor, Dragon Age 2, utilized the bisexual framework (four characters, all "bisexual", who are available to both the male and female renditions of the player character, Hawke). Dragon Age 2's format is itself a re-working of the four character (one straight man/one bisexual man, one straight woman/one bisexual woman) arrangement used in Dragon Age: Origins.

The third is (as far as I know) unique to interactive fiction gamebooks. And with good reason: it utilizes the strength of a text-based medium. With little to no visuals, changing a character's gender is as simple as changing the variables that control their pronouns and descriptors. This is a massively different task than visual games, which would require multiple sets of sprites, artwork, and character models to implement gender-selectability.

While I can't say for certain where gender-selectable romance options began, this mechanic was certainly popularized in Seraphinite Games' Wayhaven Chronicles (four ROs, all gender-selectable) and remains a popular way of handling romance in current in-development interactive fiction games (both ChoiceScript and other platforms).

Multiple Romances

To have a diverse cast, you need to have enough characters to diversify it in the first place. It makes sense, then, for developers to add multiple romance options who represent many walks of life. There are two main benefits to having a large RO cast:

1. More unique characters and character designs.

This ensures a game has ROs that reflect a wealth of experiences. A large cast allows the developer to play with multiple narrative and character tropes, and ensures there is at least one RO to appeal to every player.

2. Representation of specific sexual orientations.

When you have a large cast, you can incorporate gender-locked romances more easily. Gender-locked romances are exactly what they sound like: romances that can only be unlocked if the player is a specific gender.

Gender-locked romances are everywhere in traditional gaming, but typically only as straight romances. It's far less common to see the same for gay and lesbian romances. When there is queer romance, the game will typically make the queer ROs bisexual. This fills a same-gender attraction quota while still making those characters available to opposite-gender players.

I think it is incredibly important for LGBTQ+ games to have gender-locked same-gender romances. I will discuss this in more detail in the bisexual and gender-selectable sections below, but the trend of making all ROs bisexual (or playersexual) actively hurts queer representation. We need gay and lesbian romance options. There is a wealth of stories to be told through queer romance, and gay and lesbian ROs are integral to that. These stories fundamentally cannot be the same if all queer ROs are made bisexual.

Creating and managing multiple romances is very difficult to pull off well, particularly if a game is being created by a small studio or—as in most cases with interactive fiction—one person. Writing multiple rich, rounded, and in-depth romances takes time and resources, and, ultimately, developers may not have enough time to bring all those romances to fruition, leading to shallow writing or imbalanced romances

(where one RO is clearly favoured by the text to be the “true” option over other ROs with less fulfilling or desirable content).

The more characters there are, the more work the developer has to do. That work grows exponentially when you have branching paths and player choice involved. The impulse to keep adding romances can be very difficult to squash, particularly for indie IF game developers with public development blogs, forums, or servers.

While there are many benefits to community engagement as you build your game, the downside is that sometimes players feel entitled to shaping your game because they have involved themselves in the process. Players following public in-development games may start to ask for specific elements, particularly what they personally want to see for the game’s romances.

These requests are challenging to handle in the long run, especially if you are working by yourself. Where is the line between making a decision that aligns with your artistic vision, and making a decision because it would make your game more marketable and draw more players to it? Furthermore, depending on how community engagement is handled, player requests can get aggressively entitled when a developer refuses a certain idea (such as making a non-romanceable character romanceable, or requesting a polyamorous route between the player’s favourites).

As a developer in the middle of my game’s creation cycle, it’s a difficult balance to maintain when romance weighted so heavily in the eyes of the player base. The decisions you make about romance can turn potential players away from your game. How do you stay true to what you want to do as a creator, while not actively harming your game’s potential success?

I understand players wanting to see certain types of people as ROs, particularly for marginalized or underrepresented groups (trans, nonbinary, polyamorous, and asexual folks come to mind). I understand the frustration that happens when a game doesn’t include a RO a player wanted to see. But I think there also needs to be a middle ground for developers to focus on the characters and romances they want to create.

If you want to develop deep, meaningful characters and story arcs, you will eventually have to cap how many romances you put into a game—which means that not every experience can be represented. I know players who really want to see polyamorous romances in every game they play; but not every developer is interested in writing polyamorous romances, particularly because of the additional coding work it takes to implement. A developer’s choice about what romances they choose to focus on should be respected. Public requests for having specific romances or making certain characters romanceable put developers in a position where they feel like they need to add the player’s request, otherwise they are building a “bad” game.

Having a large amount of romances to satisfy player requests (or what the developer *thinks* players want—such as adding polyamory because they see a lot of players discussing the wish for more games with polyamory) can harm the game more than it helps. Either multiple romances extends the developer’s work to the point where they may never finish it, or the romances become shallow and

surface-level to off-set the amount of work that needs to be done. And when diversity—especially queer diversity—is involved, shallow romances can end up feeling like tokenism rather than the representation they were intended to be.

It is always more important to focus on a small group of experiences and write those well, than to stretch a game thin over a giant cast to satisfy community requests or tick identities off a list to meet a representation quota. The saying “quality over quantity” comes to mind here.

If the argument against multiple romances is that it creates shallow romances, then how can developers create deeper romance arcs while still accommodating representation? I believe this is where bisexual ROs and gender-selectable ROs come into play—as mechanics to decrease RO cast size (and workload) while maximizing diversity as much as possible.

Functional Bisexuality

Bisexuality holds an interesting place in gaming. By making the ROs bisexual, a game can accommodate more players’ preferences with fewer characters. However, when bisexuality becomes a game mechanic, it is thought of as a game mechanic first and a sexual orientation second. There are many bisexual ROs in gaming, but their bisexuality comes with some fine print:

- They are bisexual so they can be romanced by player characters of any gender.
- Their bisexuality attraction is not addressed in-game. The unspoken rule of a RO in interactive fiction is that the character never discusses attraction outside of the player character.
- The character shows either straight or gay attraction based on the player character’s gender.

Bisexual romances—particularly when all ROs are bisexual—have been criticized for not being a true representation of bisexuality. These criticisms raise an important question: when bisexuality is implemented for the sake of game mechanics, is the character in question actually bisexual? If there is no in-game confirmation of their identity (such as expressing attraction to multiple genders outside the player character), does it count as representation?

Functional bisexuality in gaming creates a RO whose sexuality is relative to the player’s gender. They are *functionally* bisexual—in that player characters of any gender can romance them—but in the text of the game, the character is straight-coded when they’re romanced by an opposite-gender player character and queer-coded when they’re romanced by a same-gender player character.

Possibly the most infamous example of functional bisexuality comes from Dragon Age 2. In the early stages of his romance, Anders will mention his past relationship with a male character, Karl—but only if the player character is male. This dialogue never triggers if the player character is female. While the lead writer did later state that Anders’ past relationship with Karl always exists regardless, the text of the game overrides it as this information literally does not exist when the player is a woman. Without the acknowledgement of Anders’ relationship with Karl, the player can freely imagine him as straight.

When sexuality is treated as a game mechanic first, it does the characters and the identities they represent a disservice. It takes away meaning to their identity and makes it hollow. There are many

bisexual romances in gaming, but many of these characters are not textually *bisexual*. If their attraction to multiple genders is never addressed in the game itself, then where does the mechanic end and the character begin?

Dragon Age 2 was released over a decade ago and attitudes surrounding LGBTQ+ representation in games have shifted significantly. And as interactive fiction games are generally more queer-friendly than mainstream games, I think most of them aren't nearly as strange and offhanded about their queer romances as DA2 had been. However, even the most well-meaning developers—even queer developers—can still make their bisexual characters functionally bisexual.

Media is created within and in response to cultural norms. Even if the game in question is set in a fantasy world where there is gender equity and no discrimination based on sexual identity, the audience will—consciously or subconscious—apply their cultural norms and assumptions to it. In western media, the assumption is that characters—like people—are straight and cisgender until proven otherwise. For representation to be representation, marginalized experiences must be acknowledged in the game itself, not hidden behind mechanics.

Bisexual romance options can be a worthwhile method of reducing workload. By making an RO's romance content accessible to players regardless of gender, it can drastically minimize the time taken to bring that romance to fruition and gives you more time to flesh out romance arcs and create satisfying, meaningful relationships. However, I do think care needs to be taken with an all-bisexual RO cast. Bisexuality should be represented and reflected in the characters as part of their characterization and history, not simply a game mechanic. When a character's identity revolves around the player, it is no longer part of the character.

They become “playersexual”.

Playersexuality is a term used to describe ROs who romance the player character regardless of sexual orientation and gender identity. It is often associated with bisexual ROs, but I think it also applies to gender-selectable characters.

Gender-Selectable Characters

Gender-selectable characters are exactly what they sound like: characters whose gender can be selected by the player. Gender-selectivity is not out of the norm for video games—RPGs do it all the time for the player character. But interactive fiction games have found a new use for it by applying it to romance and letting the player select their RO's gender.

If this mechanic sounds odd, you are not alone. In the vast majority of fiction, a character's gender is off-limits to the audience. With functional bisexuality, the player may be able to determine a romance option's sexuality (gay or straight), but the player cannot change their gender.

Gender-selectable characters bring a lot to the table. While functional bisexuality makes its ROs available to all player characters, this mechanic favours bisexual player characters. There are still instances where a player may view an RO as unromanceable (even though the option is open to them)

because the *character* is the wrong gender. In Dragon Age 2, male Hawke can romance Anders, but a player playing the character as a straight male will not because Anders is not a woman.

Gender-selectability removes gender as an obstacle. It double downs on the concept started with functional bisexuality and puts the player's desired experience front and centre. By letting the player select the gender of their romance option, they can shape the exact experience they want, regardless of identity. On the development side, gender-selectability also cuts down on time and resources. If you have four gender-selectable romances, you can have any combination of straight, gay, or bisexual relationships, satisfying requests for LGBTQ+ representation while keeping RO cast size down.

This mechanic is a unique staple of interactive fiction games. While changing personal pronouns, names, and character descriptions is much easier when there are no visuals involved, it still requires a certain amount of work and attention to detail. Gender-selectable ROs are not always gender-inclusive, often operating on a binary and the player choosing either male or female (even in games where the player can be nonbinary).

This could be, in part, related to background mechanics. If nonbinary characters are using they/them pronouns, then there needs to be a function to conjugate grammar in the plural. This is much easier to do for the player character, especially if the interactive fiction game is written in first or second person—the player character's personal pronouns don't come up nearly as many times as they would if the text was written in third. I could see how they/them grammar can potentially deter new developers from providing nonbinary options for their gender-selectable ROs if they aren't confident in their coding skills (I think it's important to acknowledge that interactive fiction is a young medium and many of its developers are new to coding).

With that in mind, there are two primary ways interactive fiction games handle gender-selectability:

1. Automatically setting all romance option genders based on the player character's gender and the gender they are attracted to.

The game will make all ROs female if the player character is attracted only to women; it will make all the ROs male if the player character is attracted only to men; and it will make the ROs a mix if the player character is attracted to both men and women. Very rarely are nonbinary ROs included in this, and I've yet to see a game that sets all ROs to nonbinary.

In these contexts, the mechanics of gender-selectability can negatively impact player experience when a player uses a bisexual or nonbinary player character. If gender-selectability is left up to randomization, it can be very difficult to get the ROs back to their original gender configuration if players have to restart the game. But if gender-selectability has pre-determined configurations (for example: when the player character is female, Character A and Character B are always male and Character C and Character D are always female; when player character is male, Character A and Character B are always male and Character C and Character D are always female), then it defeats the point of having gender-selectability in the first place.

Regardless, this automatic gender-selectability based on the player character's gender and sexual orientation makes for seamless gameplay. There are no instances where the text awkwardly asks you to select whether the person you're talking to is male, female, or nonbinary. Gender is taken into account before the player begins the game, crafting an experience similar to games where gender cannot be selected.

2. The game asks the player to manually set each RO's gender, either as they encounter the characters or before the game starts.

This type of gender-selectability gives control directly over to the player. While the mechanics may not be as seamless as setting gender based on the player character's gender and sexuality, it curbs the potential negative gameplay for bisexual player characters.

It also allows the player to set the genders of ROs they do not want to romance to genders they are not interested in. As most games lock the player to a specific RO, if a player has their heart set on that RO, then it doesn't matter what gender the unchosen ROs are. One of the faults of gender-selectability is creating a lopsided main cast (especially in all female or all male cases; I'll discuss this more thoroughly below). Making gender-selectability manual from the beginning circumvents this problem.

Gender-selectability is an attractive concept, particularly for romance-focused games. It allows the game to market itself to anyone and everyone. By putting the romance options' genders into the player's hand, the game encourages players to pursue their ideal romance arc however they please without being weighed down by gender and sexuality.

But there is something about gender-selectability that gives me pause. Despite the popularity of the mechanic, I can't get on board with it. After playing several games with gender-selectable ROs, I can't help but feel this is an extension of the playersexuality concept so condemned by gamers. Perhaps even more grievously than functional bisexuality.

Gender is important. Social construct though it may be, gender affects how we view ourselves and others. Our personal relationship to gender is often complex and multifaceted. As with other social norms, we bring those views into the media we consume. As I discussed earlier, even when we are presented with a story set in a fantasy world with gender equity, we are still going to interpret that story through our own understanding of gender and the greater cultural context at hand.

Gender is so much more than changing pronouns and descriptors. Even when gender doesn't matter to the story, a character's gender will shift the context of every scene. Romance options are often the most important characters in interactive fiction games. They are the core, the companions, the major characters whose relationships to the player character drive the story forwards. When gender-selectability is compounded with the game's main cast, it creates a dynamic that can completely shift the story's tone and implications depending on gender.

For example, if the player character is a woman and all her ROs are men, the game is now a male-dominated story with a single main female character (the player). If the ROs fill an advisor-type role

(they're stronger, they're more knowledgeable about the new world/situation the player character is thrust into), then you now have a story where it is the male characters who are in positions of power, which has a greatly different read than if the genders were reversed. The context shifts. And context matters.

Then there is the question of LGBTQ+ characters. Regardless of the developer's intentions to make a queer game or not, most games with gender-selectable ROs can be played completely heteronormatively. The game doesn't just leave a character's sexuality unspoken like functional bisexuality, it conforms to whatever the player wants. While gender-selectability opens the doors for queer players, it shuts the door on authentic representation. If I can choose to remove queerness from the game completely, how queer *is* the game? Is it that different from Dragon Age 2 hiding Anders' in-game bisexuality from half their playthroughs?

To further this point, there's a kind of strange gender essentialism that—unintentionally or not—lies beneath gender-selectability. Trans identities are almost never part of the discussion. Nonbinary options are infrequently included. And gender-selectability is often presented as a choice between a cisgender man and a cisgender woman. Combined with the fact that gender-selectability is *only* ever used in the context of romance and sex (non-romanceable characters are, as far as I've seen, never gender-selectable), this gives the mechanic some pretty uncanny implications. There are times—especially with 18+ games that include interactive sex scenes—when it feels like gender-selectability only exists to make sure the player's ideal romance option has the correct body and the right genitals.

Which is... weird?

Strange...?

...Uncomfortable?

The most difficult part of writing gender-selectable characters is considering how they are impacted by gender. What makes the male version different from the female version? From the nonbinary version? This is a question all interactive fiction games face because the player character themselves *is* gender-selectable. But I think there is a major different between writing the player character and writing an NPC. You're in the player character's head, you're writing from their point of view, and you're inviting the player to see the game through their character's eyes. The player character requires far more flexibility than NPCs because they need to fit every player's imaginations, and imaginations are infinite. You, as a writer, need to make room for the player to inhabit their own character.

I write Wayfarer's player character as gender-neutrally as possible for two reasons: 1) I need them to fit as many interpretations as possible, and 2) Wayfarer's world is a fantasy where real world gender norms don't exist. However, I do have to check myself because it's easy for me to slip into a default where I write the player character as myself. Though I have a very detached relationship to my own gender, I still identify as a woman. And sometimes—either through phrasing or flavour text descriptions—I find myself writing in things that read as traditionally feminine in western culture. I then have to edit

those out or find different phrasing that reflects a more neutral state that the player can then interpret however they want depending on the character they're playing.

It's a very delicate balance, one that I don't think is present in gender-selectable ROs—simply because the player is not in the ROs' heads. They are not in their point-of-view. They are not *playing* the ROs. They are interacting with them. Because of this, extra care needs to be taken with gender-selectable ROs.

Gender-selectability is strange*. It is *strange* to write this way. It's unconventional, and almost never seen in other mediums. I think even when a developer has the best intentions in mind, it's still easy for them to steer towards writing a default version of the character and then switch out the pronouns because it feels unnatural to write a female character and a male character *and* a nonbinary character all at once. I have played games where even though I could select the genders, there were characters that *felt* like they should be male and others who *felt* like they should be female. Something in the context combined with the flavour text descriptors created a dichotomy between the character presented in the text, and the pronouns I had assigned them.

This dichotomy goes beyond just the developer's writing; it also factors into player perception. Different gender versions of the same RO are going to be perceived differently by the player. When you can select gender, there's an underlying desire to know what the developer's intentions were, what gender the character would be if the developer *hadn't* made them gender-selectable. (Just look at when Assassin's Creed: Odyssey came out and fans were relentlessly arguing with each other about whether Cassandra or Alexios was the canon mysthios). First impressions are extremely impactful for a game, and I find that players will often associate a gender-selectable character with the gender they had when first encountered.

For example, I saw Wayhaven Chronicles fan works long before I played the first game. My first exposure to M was through the male version of the character, Mason. In my head, the male version of M is the canonical version. That is what I think of when I think of that character. When I played the game for the first time, I played as a lesbian and made the whole of Unit Bravo women. I romanced Morgan—the female version of M—and the entire time I felt like I was watching a false version of the character.

If you take developers writing unintentional defaults and players' first impressions into account, gender-selectability can end up feeling cheap. This is particularly true if the heteronormative versions of the romances feel like or are treated as the default by the author. Regardless of the developer's intentions, this gives the impression that gender-selectability was only added to give the game credibility with queer audiences and capitalize on their interest. If the game can be played heteronormatively from start to finish and the gender-selectable ROs are the *only* queer characters (or the only important ones) in the game, then I really question whether the game is LGBTQ+.

I am being harsh on this mechanic. And while I am biased because I don't like it, I do think it is overused and often used without care. Developers need to craft their romance options with extreme care if they want to use this mechanic. They need to be aware of all the moving parts—unintended biases and implications included. They need to weigh the benefits of gender-selectable characters against the

drawbacks, and ultimately choose what serves their game the best. Gender-selectability shouldn't be implemented as an easy way to cater to players or to avoid the problems that come with multiple romance options. It is a decision that impacts all aspects of a game and the developer needs to fully commit to it.

But there is something of value within the mechanic. It adds something no other gaming medium can do. Recent WIPs are handling gender-selectability differently than older published interactive fiction games. Instead of making the whole RO cast gender-selectable, they will sometimes have only one or two gender-selectable characters among a cast of romance options with defined genders. I think this is a good choice; it off-sets some of the contextual problems that arise when all the major characters are set to one gender by providing a balanced gender ratio in the rest of the main cast. More and more games are breaking away from the gender binary and including nonbinary options for their gender-selectable romance options. And I would love to see a trans developer's take it.

Romance in games is complicated. Not only do game writers need to deliver an impactful, enjoyable, and interesting romance storyline, they need to do it multiple times over while taking non-linear story structures into account. They have to take important elements such as gender identity and sexuality into account, and balance player expectation against the characters they want to write and the stories they want to tell.

Ultimately, romance in my own game is a composite of a number of different problem-solving elements. Having too many romances, especially in a large game, can either sink the game or lead to shallowly-written romances. But I have many characters of a multitude of different identities who have interesting romance content within their storylines. So, I split my romances into two types: core romances (who have romance content throughout the entire plot of the game and most closely resemble a traditional game romance structure) and secondary romances (which are shorter, intentionally experimental, and outside the main cast so the romanceable character isn't going to be at the player character's side 100% of the time).

I've seen the issues that can arise from making all your romance options bisexual, so I intentionally made the core four romances (Alexia, Ren, Calla, and Melchior) bisexual so they are open to as many players as possible, but I have also worked their bisexual identities into their character arcs. Their sexuality is not player-determined, and will be made explicit in the text. Most of the secondary romances are gender-locked and are intended to explore different identities and situations beyond what is possible with the core four.

(And we're not going to talk about Aeran.)

Will this plan work? I don't know yet. I hope it does; but that's the best you can do on a large-scale, long-term project—plan in advance, do the work, and hopefully it doesn't fall apart at the seams. And if it does start to fall apart, make cuts where necessary so you can put it back together again.

If I can make any kind of conclusion after almost ten thousand words of rambling, it's that romance writing is hard. Writing a game romance is even harder. I don't have answers on how to make it happen.

There's no set path for writing and executing a good game romance; there's no magic recipe that will make your romances successful. Even if you tick off all the boxes, it still may not work. And there are absolutely elements that will make an in-development game popular on social media and in forums straight out the gate, but they don't matter if you can't deliver in the end.

In the end, I can't help but wonder that maybe we put too much weight on romance. If it wasn't placed on the pedestal we put it on—making it larger than life, making it one of the most important aspects of a game, making it the *thing* that can deter players from your game if you mess it up—then maybe it wouldn't be so difficult to execute in the first place.

[Episode 2, Scene 4 Sneak Peek #3](#)

[Mar 2, 2022](#)

The opening of Scene 4 can go differently if the player selects to take control of the meeting with Lethalis themselves or leave it to Aeran. The first two previews were from the player-controlled branch; this is from the Aeran version.

Conditional statements have been removed; this version is for low-approval Lethalis.



She smiles faintly. It's impossible to tell whether she finds his prickly demeanour amusing or not. "Aeran Kellis, I take it? You certainly match your description."

"I'd love to know who gave it to you," he says flatly.

The mage fixes him with a cool stare and rests her bejeweled hand against the table's surface. Its gemstone pulses dimly, casting a strange light around her wrist and fingers. "You're notorious among certain circles, Wayfarer Kellis," she says. "People talk."

"Do they now? Hate to know what I did to get the attention of the Guild—"

"Divided though we are, there is one commonality shared among all sects of the Guild of Mages. Our alliances go beyond the Council, beyond the Guild. The Order of Lethalis has supporters across Rhesainia, from political courts to the Merchants' Consortium to the lords of the criminal underworld. I had heard of you long before Zenaida proposed her alliance—"

He laughs harshly. "Alliance? Do you know why I'm here, Umbria Bellaris?"

She regards him with a cool look and gestures for him to continue.

"I'm here for the crowns *she* promised us," he continues, pointing at Zenaida. "I don't care about the petty politics of Guild sects, I care about \$nickname's well-being. You may know me by reputation, but I'm not here to live up to it. Forget the Wayfarer Order; it no longer exists. We're mercenaries now. We were hired for a job. Let us do it or get out of the fucking way."

An uneasy silence settles over the table. The Lethalis mages shift in their seats, seemingly uncertain how to handle Aeran's curtness. If his interchange with the Archsage is any indication, he has made it clear he is unwilling to waste time on simple things like politeness and civility.

You can't blame him. It's not like you'd have the patience for their bullshit either.

The lanky elf clicks their tongue and leans forward in their seat, resting their elbows on the table. "And here I thought you were a student of Brissa Varyn," they say, fiddling idly with an emerald ring and spinning it on the table's surface. "I see you inherited her sharp tongue, but none of her tact."

"She didn't train me to be a diplomat, she trained me to be a Wayfarer," Aeran retorts. "And even she had her limits—"

The elf scoffs and flicks their ring, spinning it faster and faster. Aeran pauses, the harsh lines of his scowl standing out sharply in the chandelier's white light. His fingers flex, a movement you know all too well—almost as if he's about to reach for his quiver and put an arrow on the string.

"Veyer Krellion, right?" he says.

The elf tilts their head, a dangerous smile on their lips. "So you do recognize me. I wondered how much Brissa spoke of me—"

"Nothing flattering. I know you're the Guild's representative in the Arathian court. You argued against the retraction of the decree outlawing Wayfarer movement in Imperial territories."

The smile disappears. "Didn't think you'd be interested in politics ten years gone, boy."

"Ten years is not that long ago. I was there, I heard you speak—"

"Regardless, what does it matter? Brissa Varyn was successful and the decree was retracted. Be thankful for that. If it still had effect today, this little gathering would not be possible."

[Mar 7, 2022](#)

Hi friends,

Happy March! Just a quick progress report for this week. I'm still working through the last scenes of Episode 2 (which are coming along), and I've made a couple of small additions to my Patreon which I'll go over in a moment.

Game Updates

Episode 2 Scene 4 is currently at 50k words. I've finished a major dialogue branch (which can drastically affect the outcome of the scene and the player's options going into Episode 3). It's good to have that done, but I still have some more important exposition sections to get through before I can wrap it up and move onto Scene 5 (which I am excited for, I've been dying to write Scene 5 for *months* now 😊).

There's a lot going on here in terms of exposition, so there's a bit more re-writing and re-drafting going on than usual to make sure the pacing works. I'm hoping that I can stay focused this week and get most of Scene 4 finished by Friday. Scene 5 is the last scene of the episode and is mostly a major conversation with Aeran and a few other characters.

Patreon Updates

I've made a couple small changes to my Patreon (nothing major).

Sneak Peaks are now an official benefit for all tiers. These are the WIP snippets/episode previews from my WIP documents and are Patreon exclusives (I won't be cross-posting them to my development blog or anything like that). Since I'm always writing new material, there's always something to share. Sneak peaks will be posted on Wednesdays (sometimes they'll be a little longer, sometimes they may be only a paragraph or two).

I also added a new goal to my Patreon. While I'm still working towards the long-term goal of making Wayfarer's development my full-time job, I've added a \$2000 per month stretch goal. If I reach this goal, I want to replace the current Q&A schedule (Q&As are released after an episode is published; I've only done two so far since starting my Patreon last year) and make them a monthly event. I also want to launch a dedicated website for my IF projects so I have a place to share my public Twine/IF tutorials that doesn't break the code and have a more professional landing page than my tumblr development blog.

As always, thank you all so much for your support! 💕

[Episode 2, Scene 4 Sneak Peek #4](#)

[Mar 9, 2022](#)

Another dialogue variation from the Lethalis scene, this time with a mention of a certain someone...



A small murmur ripples through the room as the Lethalis mages shift in their seats, their gaze passing from you to Oshiro with interest. The lanky elf smirks and tosses their ring a final time, catching it expertly and slipping it onto their index finger. Across the table, a faint smile crosses Zenaida's lips. She catches your eye and nods gratefully.

Oshiro notes the shifting temperament and grimaces. "I trust my peers as I trust myself," he says. "I meant no offense to Savant Anaxas. However, just as I judge too quickly, my colleagues act too quickly. If Zenaida had her way, you and Kellis would be sent to Diradan Tower tonight."

[dialogue choice] "Is there a problem with that? From what I understand, Lethalis wants the Astrial. The Astrial is in the tower. And the tower is unapproachable—except by a Wayfarer."

"Theoretically," the elf says, examining the ring on their finger.

"Theoretically?" you reply. "What do you mean, *theoretically*?"

They glance upwards and meet your eyes with a smirk. "As far as I'm aware, this is the first time the citadel's wards have ever been dissolved. The remnants devour flesh and bone within minutes and no ward, barrier, or shield can stop them. Not even our experts know how much power resides within that cloud. By sending you to the tower, I wonder... will we finally discover a magic potent enough to affect a magianis?"

Your jaw clenches. "It's not possible," you say automatically. No magic can affect magiani; it can't, even if you wanted it to. The powers that imbue this world simply do not acknowledge your existence.

"Do you know that for certain?" the elf presses. "Have the Wayfarers run tests and experiments the Guild is not aware of? Your Grandmaster, as I recall, was quite interested in the extent of your natural immunity. Its causes, its applications, its limitations..."

Your brows draw together, a headache pounding in the back of your skull. "If you knew Sero, you'd know that's bullshit."

The elf raises an eyebrow. "Do you think so, \$lastname? Maybe you didn't know your namesake as well as you thought."

[Episode 2, Scene 4 Sneak Peek #5](#)

[Mar 16, 2022](#)

There's going to be a lot of lore in the next update. Here's a bit of it:



"The Astrial's been sitting in Diradan Tower for hundreds of years. Why hasn't the Guild tried to use it before? Why now?"

"There was no reason," Umbria says. "The staff was dormant, its magic dead. It was little more than a relic of the past, an empty husk coveted for its historical importance."

"What changed?" Aeran asks, examining his nails as he feigns casual disregard. He doesn't fool you; you know him too well. Something in Umbria's explanation has caught his attention.

"The magic returned. Slowly but surely, like the regrowth of a forest decimated by fire. It was small at first, barely noticeable, but over the course of decades it gathered its strength and... awoke."

"Awoke? What do you mean, *awoke*?"

"Merely a turn of phrase, Wayfarer Kellis. The Council of Mages has watched the staff's awakening for three decades. Our agents in Erenvor, Tol Covere, and Nesactium have confirmed similar reactions within their Astrials. We don't know what caused it, but we are certain the Astrials are connected. What happens to one, happens to all."

[Progress Report 2022.03.21 aka Writing Exposition Hurts My Brain](#)

[Mar 21, 2022](#)

Hi friends,

I'm not quite sure where to start with this one. Episode 2 is continuing to kick me in the butt and March's progress has been quite a struggle. At this point I'm writing anywhere between 1500 and 3500 words a day and the mental energy it takes to keep focused, fill in the gaps in the dialogue trees, and keep progressing is very draining. So, forgive me if this update is a little more... ramblingly? Rambling?... than usual.

I think, even though there are a lot of parts I'm happy with, the end of Episode 2 has been significantly more difficult to create compared to Episode 1. This is when the player really starts to get into the thick of it: lore needs to be established, basic world mechanics need to be explained (to the player—the main character already knows this information, so that's another thing that requires delicate balance—more thoughts on that in a bit), major characters need introductions, and relationships and dynamics need to be introduced. There's a lot of long-term set up involved in this final stretch of the episode and, to be honest, it's not the most fun thing to write.

Exposition is always difficult, regardless of the medium. It's also hard to do—conveying new information to the audience in a way that feels both engaging and natural is hard. Even professional writers who have been writing for a really long time struggle with it. There's lots of “don'ts” about how to do exposition, but there's not a lot of “dos”. There's no magic formula that automatically works for each and every project. You have to spend the time to figure it out based on your story's worldbuilding, characters, point in the narrative, a dozens of other factors and small moving pieces.

Narrative design makes delivering exposition even more challenging than normal because now you have the question of how to keep exposition *interactive*. Some games don't—exposition is delivered through narrated openers, in cutscenes, in dialogue sessions where the player asks question after question and an NPC gives them important information piece by piece. Some games cut out exposition entirely and put their worldbuilding in codex entries or hidden away in item descriptions.

But interactive fiction is not entirely a game—or, at least, its roots are as much in prose and novel-writing as they are in gaming. You need to figure out the best of both worlds in order to make it work in IF. One common criticism of interactive novels is when there's too much text in-between choices. And while some moments *do* require the player to take the backseat and just read (kind of like sitting back and watching a cutscene in traditional video gaming), not all of your exposition sequences should be like this. Dumping information on the player just to get it out and catch them up drags the game to a halt.

When I'm drafting new content for Wayfarer, I'm always mindful of where the player is situated and how to keep them an active participant in the game. What questions are they asking and when? To who? How do they see things unfold? How do you deliver all of this information in a way that is engaging and fun to play through, and not something that just becomes a click-fest where the player is clicking through to get to the end of it as quickly as possible?

I have a few solutions that I am very happy with. I think this section will ultimately be fun to play. But I've had to pay extreme care to how all of this lore is established and how it all unfolds. And that has taken a significant amount of work that has set my timelines back by several weeks, if not a month.

So while I am happy with the content, I'm frustrated that I'm not further along. I can feel March coming to a close and I don't think I'm going to have all the scenes finished by then, let alone edited, proofread, and coded. Because I'm establishing a lot of important lore in this sequence, I have to go back and edit some previous passages from Episode 1 to adjust for lore changes that happened during the writing process (thought one thing earlier, changed my mind later because I found something that just *works* better).

As it is, the next update of Episode 2 currently contains 80,000 total words and I still have a lot of work to do (I am expecting to lose a significant part of that word count in edits). I am through the major dialogue tree, but I am still wrapping up the bits and pieces that come after it before I can move on to Scene 5 and the actual end *end* of the episode. To make a comparison to Episode 1, Scene 4 is the "boss fight" of the chapter, except instead of an actions sequence, it's all political intrigue, lore, and character dynamics, whereas Scene 5 is more akin to the boat scenes.

(Does that make sense? I don't know. 😊)

I did not want to be still writing Episode 2 by the end of March, but here we are. Decisions were made, writing's hard, writing interactive fiction is even harder, and hopefully it will be worth it in the end.

I've been thinking a lot about whether or not to update the alpha build when I'm done Scene 4. I'm of two minds on this: on one hand, you would get to experience the new content a lot sooner and I would be a lot less stressed about getting an update out ASAP. But on the other hand, knowing the scope of the episode as a whole, it will be a **significantly better** experience for you as players to play Scenes 4 and 5 together. There's a few extremely impactful narrative moments that would be disrupted if you played them separately for the first time.

I'm going to keep working on getting this finished, but as I am very bad at estimations, I'm not sure when the new material will be done. I think I need to wait and see where I'm at next Monday before I can have a better idea of how close or far away an update will be.

As always, thank you all so much for your support! 💕

P.S. For Patrons with access to bonus content, this month's Twine tutorial should be up later this week once I finish editing it and checking to make sure my code is correct. 🛠️

[Episode 2, Scene 4 Sneak Peek #6](#)

[Mar 23, 2022](#)

There's a lot going on in this scene and a *lot* of dialogue variations (both positive and negative), but here's a taste of what happens when things go poorly. Because that's always fun. 😊



“The circumstances of your employment have changed significantly since you left Rona,” she says. “So much so, the original mission Zenaida envisioned for you no longer exists. It is the will of this council that we look to other measures.”

“Other measures?” you snarl. “Like what? Not even Solarath can figure out how to get through that damn magic cloud—”

“You are among the most experienced researchers and scholars of the arcane arts in the world, Wayfarer \$lastname. Three weeks is so very little time; hardly enough to create a miracle. We are still studying the remnants. With time I have no doubt we will discover how to breach it.”

“Time? What *time* do you think you have?”

Her expression hardens. “I believe we have adequately explained the delicate situation here. And regardless, you are still considered an ally. We may still wish to call on you for your services in the future—”

A harsh laugh crosses your lips, unbidden and uncontrolled. “What do you want us to do? Wait? Unless Zenaida intends to keep us trapped in the palace, we’re not going to sit here until you decide we’re useful to you.”

“You’re under no blood oath, you’re at liberty to go,” she says, gesturing to the library exit. “Though I’m sure House Anaxas will have many questions as to why the archon’s daughter’s new bodyguards have fled the palace. Considering Arathian wariness of your order, it will come as no surprise if the House suspects you of illicit activities. And as Savant Anaxas is not in good standing with her mother, she can do very little to vouch for you should you act out of turn.”

Shit.

Your fingers curl inwards, your fingernails scraping against your palms. Knowing what you know now, the Order of Lethalis has no intention of letting you leave Velantis. Umbria will use Zenaida’s position—and the lies she told to get you into the palace—as leverage against you, keeping you within arms reach. If you abandon your fake post as Zenaida’s bodyguard, House Anaxas’ suspicions will be raised and the House guard will hunt you across the city.

[Mar 24, 2022](#)

This is part of a larger project I am working on this year. The goal is to eventually release a PDF guide to creating IF gamebooks in Twine (SugarCube only) and an annotated template that provides sample code and examples of popular IF elements.

I've included a Twine HTML file available on this post that has some examples of the character creator elements I discuss here. Because the Patreon text editor doesn't allow code blocks, I highly recommend looking at the code in the HTML file rather than copy/pasting from here.

Character creators are an essential part of an interactive fiction game. While some IFs give the player an established or pre-existing character to play, the medium is known for its customization and roleplaying capabilities. The ability to make a character and define who they are within the game's world is a valued mechanic, with many games implementing the ability for players to choose their character's gender, pronouns, and a multitude of other customization options.

Your game's character creator (CC) will likely be one of the first things you code. As many of the variables defined in the CC will be used throughout your entire game, you need to decide how much customization you're going to offer, how and where you are storing that data, and how you are going to present customization options in a clear, concise way to the player.

TYPES OF CHARACTER CREATORS

There are three types of character creators in IF games: fixed, embedded, and mixed. There are pros and cons to all three; which one you want to use will depend on the design of your game, how much customization you offer, and the impression you want to leave on the player.

Fixed Character Creators

Fixed character creators are CCs that occur at the very start of the game. Before the player does anything else, before they even hit the first passage of text or make any choices, the game walks them through making their character. All aspects are chosen, set in place, and once the player is happy with what they have, they can proceed to the game itself.

Fixed CCs are good in instances where you have a lot of customization options. You can design your pages to make the customization as clear and concise as possible, so the player knows exactly what they're choosing as they design their character. The player can easily backtrack if they make a mistake or change their mind without requiring them to replay any actual gameplay.

Fixed CCs are "gamey" and more closely resemble the CCs of traditional video games. While they may break immersion in the moment, they do allow the player to set everything up first so they're not

interrupted later.

Embedded Character Creators

Embedded character creators are a staple of IF games. They take the customization options of the fixed CC and put them into the text of the game itself. Depending on the game's handling of prose and description, this can make the character creation process immersive and part of the game's actual gameplay, rather than something separate. An embedded CC makes a game feel more like a novel than it does a game.

However, because they are embedded the gameplay itself, it is harder for the player to easily backtrack if they change their mind or make a mistake. It is also very easy to write yourself into a cliché (such as the player looking at themselves in the mirror to choose their hair and eye colour). If you have a lot of customization options, embedded CCs can get very unwieldy to implement and take up far more space and time than they should.

Mixed Character Creators

Mixed character creators use elements of both. For example, a game may have most of their customization options defined at the beginning of the game, but leave the name and background choices to an immersive dialogue option during the first section of gameplay. Some games set the player character's gender and pronouns in a fixed CC at the beginning, then put the rest of their customization options in an embedded CC later in the game's text.

CUSTOMIZATION OPTIONS

I. THE BASICS

Gender, pronouns, and player character names are the main components of a CC.

Selecting Gender

Establishing the player character's gender can be both simple and complex. While setting the gender variable is relatively straightforward, you should consider how that variable is going to be used in game. What will gender affect and how does it impact the player? Here are some things to think about:

- Does gender impact the choices the player can make and the paths they can pursue? For example: gender-locked romances (ROs that can only be pursued if the player is a certain gender).
- Does it change the language that is used to refer to the player character? For example: characters referring to the player character as a man if they are male, a woman if they are female, or a person or other gender-neutral language if they are nonbinary/agender/bigender, etc.
- Is gender there for aesthetic purposes? For example, a descriptor in the player character's in-game profile referring to them as male/female/nonbinary, etc.

How much you want to utilize gender as a control variable depends on your game's story and setting. A game where gender is not a factor (i.e. a fantasy world without established gender roles) may not need a gender variable at all, whereas a game where the player character's gender actively changes the story (i.e. a historical piece with clearly defined gender norms) will.

Even if your game only ever mentions the player character's gender in their profile, you may still want to include it. Defining the player character's gender is extremely important to a lot of players, especially for marginalized gender identities, and seeing their selected gender on a profile can greatly enhance their experience.

Code Examples

Gender can be defined through a link with a single variable.

```
:: Gender

Select Your Gender

[[1. Male.|Next Passage][$gender = "male"]]

[[2. Female.|Next Passage][$gender = "female"]]

[[3. Nonbinary.|Next Passage][$gender = "nonbinary"]]
```

If you're planning on using gendered language to refer to the player character, you can set that here as well. In this example, assume the game is a medieval fantasy game where the address my lord/my lady/ser is used frequently.

```
:: Gender

Select Your Gender

[[1. Male. |Next Passage][$gender = "male", $person = "man", $ser = "my lord"]]

[[2. Female.|Next Passage][$gender = "female", $person = "woman", $ser = "my lady"]]

[[3. Nonbinary.|Next Passage][$gender = "nonbinary", $person = "person", $ser = "ser"]]
```

Once the variables are set, you use them in a conditional statement to determine different outcomes or print them in the text.

```
:: Sample Gender-Controlled Romance Lock

<<if $gender is "male" or $gender is "nonbinary">>The merchant grins at you. "I thought you were a $person of impeccable taste," they say, smirking suggestively at you.
```


<<else>>The merchant shrugs. "By all means, continuing browsing."</if>>

Selecting Pronouns

Personal pronouns are a little trickier to define than gender. While some games combine pronouns with gender (i.e. choosing to play as a female character sets the player character's pronouns to she/her) and others take gender out of the equation and only use pronouns, many new in development IF games separate gender and pronoun selection. Others take it a step further and allow the player to configure their own pronoun sets, which keeps the game open to neopronouns.

Regardless of how you choose to implement pronouns, you will need to create some sort of code to handle grammar conjugation. The singular "they" is conjugated in the plural, so if you intend to offer they/them pronouns as an option, you will have to account for this.

Each pronoun case needs a separate variable and an appropriate string. For the sake of clarity, I am going to use they/them pronouns for the variables. It doesn't matter what you use here as the player will never see it (for example, instead of \$they you could use \$he, \$she, \$xe, etc.), but you should choose something that is easy for you to write with.

Subjective: \$they

Objective: \$them

Pronominal Possessive: \$their

Predicative Possessive: \$theirs

Reflexive: \$themselves

Using the above in a sentence would then become:

Subjective: I don't know what \$they wants.

Objective: I met \$them today.

Pronominal Possessive: If \$they doesn't get a haircut, \$their hair grows long.

Predicative Possessive: If I need a laptop my friend will let me borrow \$theirs.

Reflexive: River baked this cake \$themselves.

And if the pronouns were set to she/her pronouns, the above would print as:

Subjective: I don't know what she wants.

Objective: I met her today.

Pronominal Possessive: If she doesn't get a haircut, her hair grows long.

Predicative Possessive: If I need a laptop my friend will let me borrow hers.

Reflexive: River baked this cake herself.

This example does leave you with grammatical errors for they/them pronouns. Set that aside for the moment, we'll come back to it in a bit.

Code Samples

You can define your pronoun variables through a link or a button.

```
<<button "He/Him" "Next Passage">><<set $they to "he", $them to "him", $their to "his",  
$theirs to "his", $themselves to "himself", $plural to false>><</button>>
```

```
<<button "She/Her" "Next Passage ">><<set $they to "she", $them to "her", $their to "her",  
$theirs to "hers", $themselves to "herself", $plural to false>><</button>>
```

```
<<button "They/Them" "Next Passage ">><<set $they to "they", $them to "them", $their to  
"their", $theirs to "theirs", $themselves to "themselves", $plural to true>><</button>>
```

Once your pronouns are set, you can handle pronoun capitalization in your game's text by using `<string.>toUpperFirst()` and the print macro. You can add this to your game's widgets to simplify capitalization.

```
<<widget "They">><<print $they.toUpperFirst()>><</widget>>
```

```
<<widget "Them">><<print $them.toUpperFirst()>><</widget>>
```

```
<<widget "Their">><<print $their.toUpperFirst()>><</widget>>
```

```
<<widget "Theirs">><<print $theirs.toUpperFirst()>><</widget>>
```

```
<<widget "Themselves">><<print $themselves.toUpperFirst()>><</widget>>
```

Note: Widgets must be defined in a passaged tagged "widget". See the template for an example.

Alternatively, you can also define a second set of pronoun variables for capitalized pronouns.

```
<<button "He/Him" "Next Passage">>
```

```
<<set $They to "He", $they to "he", $Them to "Him", $them to "him", $Their to "His", $their to  
"his", $Theirs to "His", $theirs to "his", $Themselves to "Himself", $themselves to "himself", $plural to  
false>>
```

```
<</button>>
```

```
<<button "She/Her" "Next Passage ">>
```

```
<<set $They to "She", $they to "she", $Them to "Her", $them to "her", $Their to "Her", $their to  
"her", $Theirs to "Theirs", $theirs to "hers", $Themselves to "Themselves", $themselves to "herself",  
$plural to false>>
```

```
<</button>>
```

```
<<button "They/Them" "Next Passage">>
```

```
<<set $They to "They", $they to "they", $Them to "Them", $them to "them", $Their to "Their",  
$their to "their", $Theirs to "Theirs", $theirs to "theirs", $Themselves to "Themselves", $themselves to  
"themselves", $plural to true>>
```

```
<</button>>
```

Custom Pronouns

If you want to let the player input their own pronouns, you can create a form using textboxes. Whatever they input into the textboxes will print as their pronouns. It's a good idea to be very clear about which pronoun cases are associated with each textbox. You should also provide a way for the player to double-check that their pronouns are printed the way they want before they proceed to the rest of the game.

If you are defining pronoun variables for both capitalized and uncapitalized pronouns, you should provide two textboxes for each pronoun case. Clearly label which one is for capitalized pronouns and which one is for uncapitalized pronouns.

Modifying Grammar

As seen in the earlier example, you will need to modify your grammar for they/them pronouns. The simplest way to do this is to create a widget to handle the common differences between singular and plural grammar.

The first step is to set a variable to control whether the pronouns are pluralized or not. In your pronoun setup, for singular pronouns you can add:

```
$plural to false
```

And the following for they/them pronouns:

```
$plural to true
```

If you have a custom pronoun form, you may want to add a radiobutton check so the player can select whether they want their pronouns conjugated with singular or plural grammar.

In your widgets, add:

```
<<widget "are"><<switch $plural><<case true>>are<<case false>>is<</switch>>  
<</widget>>
```

```
<<widget "were"><<switch $plural><<case true>>were<<case false>>was<</switch>>  
<</widget>>
```

```
<<widget "s"><<switch $plural><<case true>><<case false>>s<</switch>><</widget>>
```

```
<<widget "es">><<switch $plural>><<case true>><<case false>>es<</switch>><</widget>>
```

```
<<widget "re">><<switch $plural>><<case true>>re<<case false>>s<</switch>><</widget>>
```

```
<<widget "ve">><<switch $plural>><<case true>>ve<<case false>>s<</switch>><</widget>>
```

When you write a sentence later in your game, you can call on the widgets like so:

```
$They <<are>> a great person.
```

Depending on the pronouns chosen, this will print as:

```
She is a great person.
```

```
He is a great person.
```

```
They are a great person.
```

Alternatively—or for conditions not covered by the widget—you can also control it with a basic if/else statement.

```
$They <<if $plural is true>>are<<else>>is<</if>> a great person.
```

Pronoun Templates & Changing Gender/Pronouns Post-CC

If you want to let the player change their gender and pronouns whenever they want, you may want to use Chapel's pronoun template. This will open a dialog box that lets the player configure their gender and pronouns at any time from your game's settings. The sample code and instructions can be [found here](#). I have also included it in the downloadable Twine sample below.

Pronoun templates like this can be extremely useful when gender in your game has no concrete effects on the game itself. As you won't be able to easily reference the player character changing their gender/pronouns, this is purely a mechanical option and the continuity of when and where the player changes their gender/pronouns cannot be referenced in-game. Furthermore, if you have gender-locked romances or content, it could be difficult to implement those paths if the player can get around the locks by switching to the required gender to unlock the scene, and then switching back.

If you don't plan to have gender-locked content, the pronoun template is the most straightforward way of configuring the player's gender and pronouns.

NOTE: Templates cannot be used in conjunction with if/else statements. If you intend to use the template but also want to include gender-locked content, you will not be able to close off options like you would with a regular \$variable:

This Works:

```
<<if $person is "woman">>Content gender-locked to women.
```

```
<<else>>Other content.<</if>>
```

This Does Not Work:

```
<<if ?person is "woman">>Content gender-locked to women.
```

```
<<else>>Other content.<</if>>
```

II. NAMES

Naming the player character is possibly the most important part of any CC. Name selection screens can be as simple as a single textbox input or much more complex. Some games have multiple name variables to cover factors such as surnames and nicknames. Some have default names that are determined by other determining factors, such as background or origin. How complicated you get with it will depend on the type of game you're making and the setting (for example, fantasy games sometimes come with default names or name suggestions to familiarize the player with naming conventions).

Simple Textbox Input

The player character has a single name, input by the player through a textbox.

```
<<textbox "$name" "">>
```

```
<<button "Confirm">>
```

```
<<run Engine.play("Next Passage")>>
```

```
<</button>>
```

Complex Textbox Input

The player character has a first and last name, input by the player through a textbox. The textboxes autofill with a default name based on gender and background, and there is an additional name suggestions dialog box that can be opened by the player.

```
<b>GIVEN NAME:</b> <<if
```

```
KaTeX parse error: Expected 'EOF', got '&' at position 17: ...ender is "male"&gt;>&lt;<textbo...
```

```
KaTeX parse error: Expected 'EOF', got '&' at position 17: ...ender is "male"&gt;><<textbo...
```

```
KaTeX parse error: Expected 'EOF', got '&' at position 17: ...ender is "male"&gt;><<textbo...
```

```
KaTeX parse error: Expected 'EOF', got '&' at position 17: ...ender is "male"&gt;><<textbo...
```


KaTeX parse error: Expected 'EOF', got '&' at position 19: ...der is "female">><<textbo...

KaTeX parse error: Expected 'EOF', got '&' at position 19: ...der is "female">><<textbo...

KaTeX parse error: Expected 'EOF', got '&' at position 19: ...der is "female">><<textbo...

KaTeX parse error: Expected 'EOF', got '&' at position 19: ...der is "female">><<textbo...

KaTeX parse error: Expected 'EOF', got '&' at position 19: ...der is "female">><<textbo...

KaTeX parse error: Expected 'EOF', got '&' at position 19: ...der is "female">><<textbo...

KaTeX parse error: Expected 'EOF', got '&' at position 19: ...der is "female">><<textbo...

KaTeX parse error: Expected 'EOF', got '&' at position 19: ...der is "female">><<textbo...

KaTeX parse error: Expected 'EOF', got '&' at position 19: ...der is "female">><<textbo...

KaTeX parse error: Expected 'EOF', got '&' at position 19: ...der is "female">><<textbo...

name" "Isabella">>

<<else>><<textbox "\$name" "River">><</if>>

SURNAME: <<if

KaTeX parse error: Expected 'EOF', got '&' at position 22: ...ound is "thief">><<textbo...

KaTeX parse error: Expected 'EOF', got '&' at position 22: ...ound is "thief">><<textbo...

KaTeX parse error: Expected 'EOF', got '&' at position 22: ...ound is "thief">><<textbo...

KaTeX parse error: Expected 'EOF', got '&' at position 22: ...ound is "thief">><<textbo...

KaTeX parse error: Expected 'EOF', got '&' at position 22: ...ound is "thief">><<textbo...

KaTeX parse error: Expected 'EOF', got '&' at position 22: ...ound is "thief">><<textbo...

KaTeX parse error: Expected 'EOF', got '&' at position 22: ...ound is "thief">><<textbo...

KaTeX parse error: Expected 'EOF', got '&' at position 22: ...ound is "thief">><<textbo...

KaTeX parse error: Expected 'EOF', got '&' at position 22: ...ound is "thief">><<textbo...

KaTeX parse error: Expected 'EOF', got '&' at position 22: ...ound is "thief">><<textbo...

KaTeX parse error: Expected 'EOF', got '&' at position 22: ...ound is "thief">><<textbo...

KaTeX parse error: Expected 'EOF', got '&' at position 22: ...ound is "noble">><<textbo...

KaTeX parse error: Expected 'EOF', got '&' at position 22: ...ound is "noble">><<textbo...

surname" "Percival">><<else>><<textbox "\$surname" "Galavant">><</if>>

<<button "Confirm">>

<<run Engine.play("Next Passage")>>

<</if>><</button>>

<<button "View Given Name Suggestions">>

<<dialog 'Name Suggestions'>>

Masculine Names

* Name 1

* Name 2

* Name 3

Feminine Names

* Name 1

* Name 2

* Name 3

Gender-Neutral

* Name 1

* Name 2

* Name 3

<</dialog>>

<</button>>

<<button "View Surname Suggestions">>

<<dialog 'Name Suggestions'>>

```
* Surname 1
```

```
* Surname 2
```

```
* Surname 3
```

```
<</dialog>>
```

```
<</button>>
```

Anticipating User Error

Due to the textbox input, the examples above will allow the player to progress through the CC even if they leave the textbox blank. Though I'm sure not many players will want to progress through the game without a character name, you can code your name selection to prevent this from happening.

Additionally, you may also want to prevent players from choosing specific names, such as the name of a major character or romance option.

```
<b>Given Name:</b> <<textbox "$name" "">>
```

```
<b>Surname:</b> <<textbox "$surname" "">>
```

```
<<button "Confirm">><<if $name is "" and $surname is "">><<replace "#textbox-error">>
```

```
Please enter a full name.<</replace>>
```

```
<<elseif $name is "">><<replace "#textbox-error">>
```

```
Please enter a given name.<</replace>>
```

```
<<elseif $surname is "">><<replace "#textbox-error">>
```

```
Please enter a surname.<</replace>>
```

```
<<else>>
```

```
<<replace "#textbox-error">><</replace>>
```

```
<<run Engine.play("Next Passage")>>
```

```
<</if>><</button>><span id="textbox-error"></span>
```

If the player character's name is determined by a textbox, their name will display as the exact text the player inputs, including any capitalization errors. While the player can go back and redo the CC to correct their mistake, you can also fix this by using `<<print $name.toUpperFirst()>>` whenever you need to print the player character's name.

III. ADVANCED OPTIONS

Customization can go much farther than gender. Many games offer a wide array of appearance options, backgrounds, and origins that further customize the player character and impact gameplay. Some common appearance options include skin colour, eye colour, and hair colour and texture.

With some options, like backgrounds and origins, it's a chance for you to introduce a little bit of your game's world before the story gets started. You may want to add some kind of descriptor or dialog box that explains what the background/origin is and how it affects gameplay mechanics such as stat increases, unique dialogue options, and/or unique abilities (examples are including in the Twine guidebook).

Every game is different and has different needs. While it may be tempting to put in as much customization as possible, always consider how you intend to use those variables. If they have no impact on the game (i.e. you never reference these variables outside the player character's profile and they never show up in the game's text or affect gameplay in any significant way), you risk unnecessarily bloating your game.

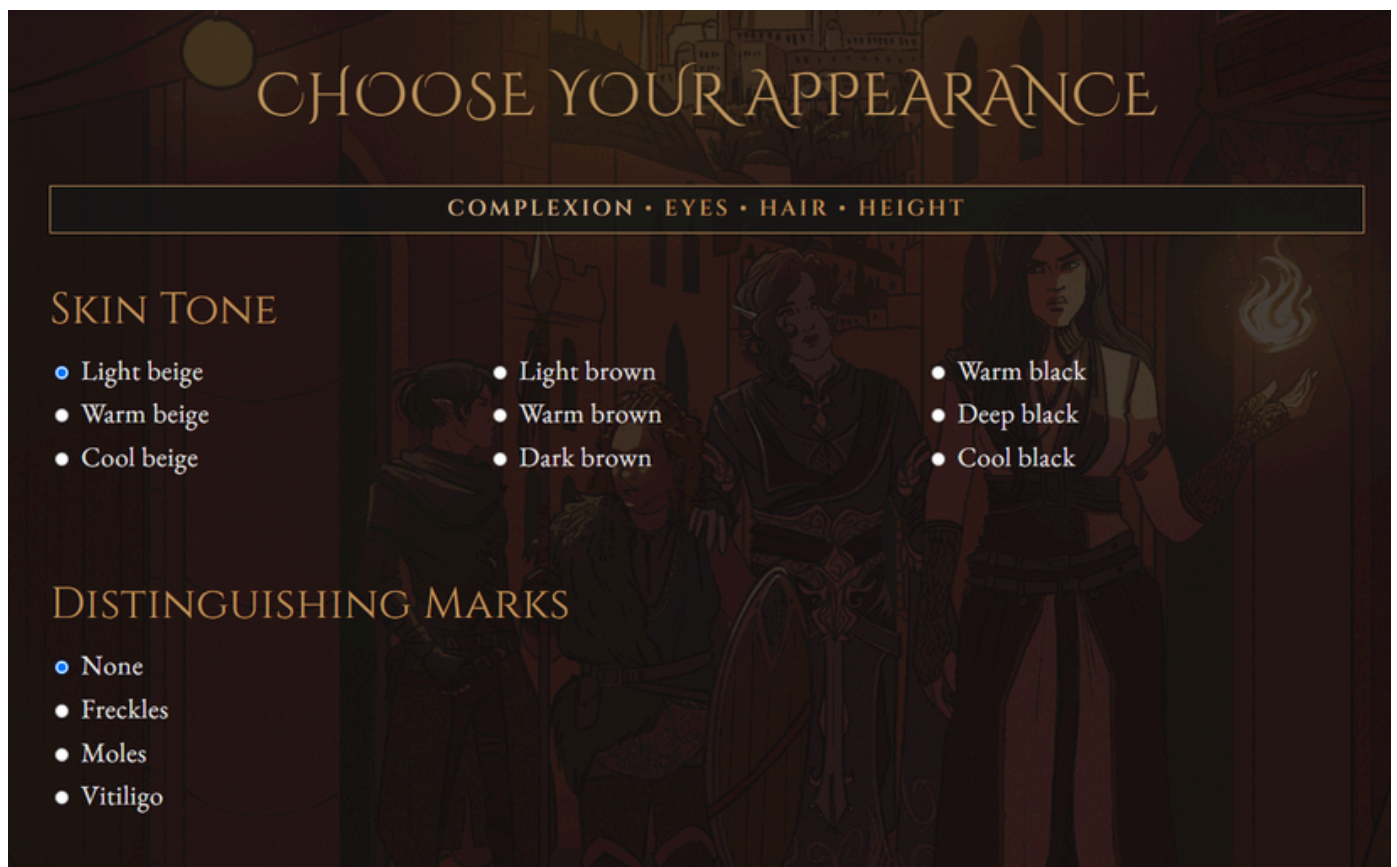
This is particularly true for appearance options. IF games are different from other gaming because everything within them is communicated via prose and prose is fundamentally different from visual media. Because there are no 3D models or character art to look at, the player has much more flexibility to imagine what their character looks like. In some cases, they may not be necessary at all.

When deciding what additional options you're going to put into your CC, consider how you are going to use that data in the future. A rule of thumb here is to avoid bloating your game's data with idle variables. If you put a variable in the game, use it. Don't let CC options become surface level.

Setting Multiple Options

In SugarCube, the simplest way of setting multiple additional options without forcing the player to click through many, many passages is to use radiobuttons on a single page. This allows the player to select multiple CC elements on the same page and set them with a single link.

Here is a visual example from *Wayfarer*:



Radiobuttons can be set up with something like this:

```
<h2>Skin Tone</h2>
```

```
<label><<radiobutton "$skintone" "black" checked>> Black</label>
```

```
<label><<radiobutton "$skintone" "brown">> Brown</label>
```

```
<label><<radiobutton "$skintone" "beige">> Beige</label></div>
```

```
<h2>Eye Colour</h2>
```

```
<label><<radiobutton "$eye_colour" "black" checked>> Black</label>
```

```
<label><<radiobutton "$eye_colour" "brown">> Brown</label>
```

```
<label><<radiobutton "$eye_colour" "green">> Green</label>
```

```
<label><<radiobutton "$eye_colour" "blue">> Blue</label>
```

```
<h2>Hair Colour</h2>
```

```
<label><<radiobutton "$hair_colour" "black" checked>> Black</label>
```

```
<label><<radiobutton "$hair_colour" "brown">> Brown</label>
```

```
<label><<radiobutton "$hair_colour" "auburn">> Auburn</label>
```

```
<label><<radiobutton "$hair_colour" "red">> Red</label>
```

```
<label><<radiobutton "$hair_colour" "blonde">> Blonde</label></div>
```

```
<h2>Hair Length</h2><label><<radiobutton "$hair_length" "shaved" checked>>  
Shaved</label>
```

```
<label><<radiobutton "$hair_length" "short">> Short</label>
```

```
<label><<radiobutton "$hair_length" "shoulder-length">> Shoulder-length</label>
```

```
<label><<radiobutton "$hair_length" "long">> Long</label>
```

```
<label><<radiobutton "$hair_length" "waist-length">> Waist-length</label>
```

Assign each option its own variable. Use “checked” to set a default value (this prevents user error in case the player clicks through to the next passage without selecting an option). To improve accessibility, wrap each option with the `<label>` wrapper to allow the player to click on the radiobutton text (otherwise they will have to click on the little button).

In your Story Stylesheet, add the following CSS:

```
label {
```

```
  cursor: pointer;
```

```
}
```

This will turn the player's cursor into a pointer when they hover over the radiobutton's text, indicating that they can interact with it.

You can also achieve a similar thing with dropdown menus (listboxes) and cycling links.

Listboxes

```
<b>SKIN TONE:</b> <<listbox "$skintone" autoselect>>
```

```
<<option "black">>
```

```
<<option "brown">>
```

```
<<option "beige">>
```

```
<</listbox>>
```

```
<b>EYE COLOUR:</b> <<listbox "$eye_colour" autoselect>>
```

<<option "black">>

<<option "brown">>

<<option "green">>

<<option "blue">>

<</listbox>>

HAIR COLOUR: <<listbox "\$hair_colour" autoselect>>

<<option "black">>

<<option "brown">>

<<option "auburn">>

<<option "red">>

<<option "blonde">>

<</listbox>>

HAIR LENGTH: <<listbox "\$hair_length" autoselect>>

<<option "shaved">>

<<option "short">>

<<option "shoulder-length">>

<<option "long">>

<<option "waist-length">>

<</listbox>>

Cycling Links

SKIN TONE: <<cycle "\$skintone" autoselect>>

<<option "black">>

<<option "brown">>

<<option "beige">>

<</cycle>>

EYE COLOUR: <<cycle "\$eye_colour" autoselect>>

<<option "black">>

<<option "brown">>

<<option "green">>

<<option "blue">>

<</cycle>>

HAIR LENGTH: <<cycle "\$hair_length" autoselect>>

<<option "shaved">>

<<option "short">>

<<option "shoulder-length">>

<<option "long">>

<<option "waist-length">>

<</cycle>>

HAIR COLOUR: <<cycle "\$hair_colour" autoselect>>

<<option "black">>

<<option "brown">>

<<option "auburn">>

<<option "red">>

<<option "blonde">>

<</cycle>>

NOTE: Cycling links are links the player clicks on multiple times to cycle through their options until they find one they like. Use cycling links with caution. Despite the interactivity they bring, they have a few major disadvantages.

1. There's no differentiation between a cycling link that changes variables and values, and a normal link that forwards the player to the next passage.

This can cause confusion for the player, particularly in segments where the passage ends with an interactive text link to forward them to the next passage.

If you have add in unique CSS to differentiate your navigational links, then this isn't much of a concern. However, you should always consider how your game design can be misinterpreted and fail to communicate what you intended.

In the template, I have added a cycle icon in front of the cycling link macro.

2. Cycling links make it difficult for the player to see all of their options in one go.

This can harm player experience if you have multiple cycles setting multiple variables with many, many options. Players have to continually click on the cycle to see what all the options are, then click through again to get back to the option they want. This is, in my opinion, a pretty frustrating experience, especially for in-depth character creators with many, many options. I don't think the seamlessness of an embedded character creator is worth it when balanced against poor user experience.

If your character creator is small and doesn't have a lot of options, then it's most likely fine. But I would reconsider using the <<cycle>> macro if character customization is a significant part of your game.

3. Screen readers cannot read the <<cycle>> macro.

This is a major accessibility issue for players who need a screen reader to play your game. HiEv has provided a workaround which requires some additional JavaScript and CSS which I have included in the template. However, this has not been fully tested and it may not work with all screen readers.

Setting Character Backgrounds

If you want to incorporate character backgrounds into your game, you should first decide how those backgrounds are going to affect gameplay. A common way to make a background relevant beyond changing flavour text is to make it adjust character stats or to give the player a unique ability.

It's a good idea to provide some kind of description of the background so the player has all the information they need before they make their choice. You can do this using the <<message>> macro, a dialogue box, or simply providing the description below the setter link. I've provided a couple different examples in the template.

If you want to have the character background adjust stats, you can do that when you set the background. For example:

 :: Background Selection

```
* [[Thief|Next Passage]][$background to "thief", $sneaking +=2]]
```

```
* [[Noble|Next Passage]][$background to "noble", $diplomacy +=2]]
```

```
* [[Knight|Next Passage]][$background to "knight", $combat +=2]]
```

Clicking on these links will set the \$background variable as well as give +2 to the relative stat (sneaking, diplomacy, or combat).

You should set your player character stats to 0 in your StoryInit passage (or whatever your base number happens to be). Otherwise, there a number won't exist for the game to adjust.

PRACTICE TEMPLATE

If you want to see examples of some of the code shown here in action, download the Twine Guidebook Version 1.1 HTML file. You can either run it in your browser or pop it into the Twine editor and view the code.

I haven't designed the template's UI yet, so this version uses the default SugarCube UI.

If you work in Visual Studio Code, you will have to decompile the HTML file its TW file, CSS and JavaScript components and then open it in VSC. I won't be providing these separate files until this project is done.

[Twine Guidebook Version 1.1.html](#)

[Episode 2, Scene 4 Sneak Peek #7](#)

[Mar 30, 2022](#)

"They may not be able to interfere with you while you are inside, but the moment you leave, they will apprehend you. I would like to avoid that at all costs. It would not do for you to retrieve the Astrial from its chamber only for it to fall into unwanted hands upon your exit."

Veyer clicks their tongue. "I'm assuming you have a solution, then?"

"Of course," she says, smiling faintly. "And it involves you and Ashani. Considering you voted for my proposal, you should have no objections being involved, Savant Krellion. Quinn, if you would..."

The young, freckled woman adjusts her bun and nudges her large, leather-bound book to the side. She raises a hand, cupping her palm in front of her, and gestures with her fingers. A bright yellow light emerges from her palm, fracturing into a network of lines as it sweeps across the table. It hits the centre and curves upwards, forming a globe. Within it, hundreds of yellow lines weaves back and forth, quickly crafting a miniature replica of Diradan Tower and its surrounding area.

The complex is large, much larger than you thought. Clinging to the edge of a cliff, it overlooks the deep waters of Lake Messeida. Within its gated walls several large, interconnected buildings are grouped around a central garden. One appears to be an observatory, another a Meissandic temple, another must be dormitories and a communal dining hall... You ignore them all in favour of focusing on the building closest to the lakeside wall: a massive stone citadel unlike anything else in the complex, its intricate, sharp turrets looming over the grounds.

Your gut twists. This is *the* tower. The original Diradan. Even in this simple replica, it looks uncannily like the Spire.

[Progress Report 2022.04.03: March Wrap Up & Spring Development Plans](#)

[Apr 3, 2022](#)

Hi friends,

Happy April!

The last two weeks have been frighteningly busy and challenging, to say the least. Aside from some personal stuff (family members in the hospital, my partner's family contracting Covid—everyone's fine, but it was a little stressful for a time), I've been crunching pretty hard to get Episode 2 finished. Last progress report I mentioned doing a reassessment of how far away I am from an update and with the new batch of material I've finished, I think I have a much better idea of how things are going.

April & May Development

As of right now, Scene 4 is (mostly) complete. The main dialogue branches are finished, along with the 5 possible endings that lead into Scene 5. The document still needs to be fully edited and proofread, and the drunk!MC continuity needs to be added in, but the bulk of it and the most complex parts to write are finished.

Scene 5 (the last scene!) has been started and broken down into its different components. There are essentially one major section and four choice-dependent branches within this scene:

- Common section with Aeran that all players will encounter
- Branch A with Phaedora
- Branch B with Melchior
- Branch C with [Redacted Character]
- Branch D with Aeran

If everything goes according to plan and I actually take my weekends where I should, April's development will look like this:

- **April 4-8:** Draft common section, finished Scene 4 edits and send to editor
- **April 11-15:** Phaedora branch and Melchior branch
- **April 18-22:** [Redacted Character] branch and Aeran branch, write monthly bonus content
- **April 25-29:** Finish Scene 5 edits, add in drunk!MC continuity and send to editor

This will leave the first week of May for final edits and coding. Typically transferring content into the game and coding it does not take a lot of time. Unlike the January update (which had multiple locations for the player to visit and the interactive map to handle), there isn't a lot of complex coding that needs to happen. It's mostly copy/pasting text into the editor and handling continuity flags.

I want to have Episode 2 finished and the alpha build updated by May 7, if not sooner.

Once the update is out, I'll be working on finalizing Episode 2 concurrently with developing Episode 3.

Episode 2 Finalization

The episode needs to be fully playtested before it can go for public release. I also need to finish writing all of the codex entries that are triggered in this episode.

Episode 3 Development

Episode 3 used to be the final scene of Episode 2 until I broke it off to have it be its own thing. This was a structural decision that will probably make a lot of sense once the rest of Episode 2's material is available. Episode 3 is short and action-heavy, and I am redoing the outline to streamline its content as I really don't want it to push much more than 50k words of cumulative content.

Because I can't release Episode 2 publicly until Episode 3's alpha is finished, drafting its material is really important in May and June. Ideally, I would like to finish Episode 3 by the end of June so I can launch Episode 2 before I go on my July hiatus. Depending on how work progresses, I may need to take a break from making bonus content during May and June so I can get the episode finished.

July Hiatus

As mentioned on my 2022 roadmap, I am taking a month-long break during July. Because I won't be working actively on the game, I am planning on releasing bonus posts throughout the month. Because I won't have internet access for most of the month, these will have to be prepped in advance and queued

for release. I'm not entirely sure what I'm going to create yet, but I'm brainstorming post ideas that will be alternatives to anything writing intensive (short stories are, unfortunately, out of the picture).

I want to get Episode 1's full walkthrough out in July (right now only one third of it is available), but I'm not entirely sure when I'll have time to work more on that.

Other Updates

I opened a new round of playtester applications for the month of April. If you're interested, there's more details on my public development blog [here](#).

I am also working on my Twine template and guidebook and I've started posting tutorials as bonus content on Patreon. In all likelihood, this will become a year-long project since I won't be able to finish everything I want to do for it by the end of the summer.

Spring's going to be exceptionally busy, but fingers-crossed that everything will work out on time! As always, thank you all so much for your support! 💕

[Episode 2, Scene 5 Sneak Peek #1](#)

[Apr 6, 2022](#)

There's a very important scene with Aeran here with a very important conversation about the Spire... But there's also going to be a lot of pain. 😊 I removed contextual flags, so the text reflects a world state where the MC has triggered Aeran's romance flags, has high approval, and Varyn is their mentor.



A furious look crosses his face. "Get out of the way, \$firstname," he grunts.

"No."

Aeran curses again and turns away, pacing back and forth. Suddenly, he stops and stands still, as if all his pent-up anger and frustration has been wrenched out of him at once. He tilts his head back, his hands held loosely at his sides, and exhales a long breath.

"You're so damn impossible sometimes," he says quietly.

You smile faintly. "Are you thanking me or criticizing me?"

He lowers his head and meets your eyes. “There’s only one thing you need to understand, \$firstname,” he says. “You weren’t there. You didn’t survive the Spire, you escaped it altogether.”

Hurt blooms in your chest. Is he somehow blaming you for your absence? “That’s not my fault,” you say. “If I had been at the summit, I—”

“Would be gone, like the others,” he says bitterly. “Varyn and I carry the weight of all their deaths on our shoulders. Why do you think she’s disappeared? Why she can’t bear to face you again? She saw half her former apprentices slaughtered like animals. It can never go back to the way it was. The Wayfarer Order is dead. It’s time to let go.”

You swallow hard, rooted to the spot, any words of resistance dying in your mouth. You feel smothered, suffocated, as if he’s thrown you overboard during a storm and you’ve sunk below the waves, with no one to help.

“Let me through, \$nickname,” he says. “I’m tired.”

[Episode 2, Scene 5 Sneak Peek #2](#)

[Apr 13, 2022](#)

Scene 5 is moving along! The text in this preview assumes that the player punched Quirinus after the gala and also selects option #3 at the end.



“There was a wager, you know,” he says after a moment, keeping his back to you.

You pause. “About what?”

“Whether you would return or not. After that delightful display with the Grand Archsage, some were certain you had left to hang your head in shame... or the archon had ordered your execution.”

“My head’s fine. Firmly on my shoulders.”

He glances over his shoulder, an amused smile on his lips. “As it should be. I’d hate to see anything else.” A pause. His eyes flicker over you. “You certainly know how to make an impression, \$firstname. Mahanin won’t soon forget you.”

"I doubt that," you reply, drawing up beside him and resting your hands on the balustrade. The pavilions are still. Quiet. Dark. It's strange to see them like this, after the raucous revelry you witnessed only a few hours ago. "Give it a week and some new scandal is bound to draw their attention."

"You underestimate Velantian nobility. Give it a week and some poor playwright will be contracted into putting your exploits to the stage, immortalized forever."

1. "I seriously doubt it's worth the effort."

2. "...what? They really do that?"

[CHOICE] 3. "Noted. Always wanted to be immortal."

Melchior chuckles, an unrestrained grin spreading across his face. "Careful. Such wishes should be handled with care."

You raise an eyebrow. "Speaking from experience?"

The smile disappears. He turns, the angular features of his face stark in the terrace lights, and regards you with a calculating look. "Needless to say, I won the wager, of course," he says. "Your night has not gone as expected—has it?"

[Twine Guide: SugarCube Basics \(Part 1\)](#)

[Apr 18, 2022](#)

A new SugarCube tutorial is here! As per the bonus content vote this month, this one is about the fundamentals of SugarCube and all the basic building blocks of a Twine game. Because there was more to cover here than I anticipated, this tutorial only deals the mechanical side of SC. It does not go into design elements or using HTML/CSS in your game.

Included in Part 1:

- Switching formats and keeping SugarCube up-to-date
- Useful things to know before you start coding (important if you've never coded before!)
- Introduction to variables and variable types
- How to set variables
- How to use links, buttons and image links
- Conditional statements
- Special passages, including StoryInit

- Tag and tag-based passages
- Dialog boxes
- Using and populating the UI Bar (the game menu)
- How game history works
- How to remove the forward/backward buttons
- How to change the amount of saves, let players name their own saves, and add autosave
- Brief overview of the Settings API
- Widgets
- Useful macros and functions like `hasVisited`, `<<include>>`, `<<nobr>>` and `<<linkreplace>>`
- How to make return links for game menus so you don't get stuck in a loop
- How to use the SugarCube debug tool
- The SugarCube validator tool

Due to its length, this tutorial is available as a downloadable PDF. There's 40 pages of guides, examples, and sample code (and there is a table of contents!). I've also updated the Twine Guidebook HTML file to include some demos and sample code of the elements discussed in the tutorial. You can download the HTML file and open it in your browser, or pop it into the Twine editor and poke around.

Happy coding! 💕

[SugarCube Primer - Part 1 - Variables Links and Macros.pdf](#)[Twine Guidebook Version 1.2.html](#)

[Episode 2 Scene 5, Sneak Peek #3](#)

[Apr 20, 2022](#)

Digging around in the document to find sneak peak material this late in the episode is like playing Minesweeper with spoilers. Anyway, here's more Melchior stuff from the draft (and a slightly intoxicated MC).



You hold out the bottle, thrusting it towards him. “Drink?”

His eyes—those absurdly attractive eyes—flicker over you. Then he shrugs and takes the bottle from your hands, tilting his head back as he raises it to his lips and drinks.

He lowers it quickly, coughing. “Gods damn it, Sabriel,” he chokes, glaring at the bottle. “Where did you *find* that?”

You chortle, a grinning from ear-to-ear, and take the bottle back. “So,” you say, kicking a foot upward and watching the wave ripple across the water. “When Theo said you’re always up to something, it’s not actually about accounts and ledgers, is it?”

“Oh, it is,” he replies, leaning back on his elbows. “An actors’ company cannot subsist without a certain amount of intolerable work. Companies greater than ours have failed because they could not keep their records straight. Thankfully, I have more than enough time—and the disposition—for it.”

You swallow a mouthful of wine. Though he’s saying words, they don’t quite make sense to you. “Awww. So you *do* do more than scam aristocrats. Boring.”

He throws back his head and laughs. “What can I say? I’m a person of many talents.”

You kick your feet vigorously. The sloshing water is oddly enjoyable. “Can anyone see you?” you ask. “Your company, I mean. Or are you guising yourself for them, too?”

He holds out a hand and gestures with his fingers, beckoning you to give back the bottle. Knowing he won’t answer until you follow suit, you sigh dramatically, roll your eyes, and pass it to him.

He takes a drink. It’s the longest drink in the world.

“Never,” he says finally, lowering the bottle. “I may lie extravagantly to those who deserve it, but never to my people. Besides... Theo and Vesepia have always been exceptionally perceptive. I may be able to trick their minds, but they always know when I’ve masked myself.”

“But they can’t see through you illusions, can they?”

He smirks. “No. Only you can do that.”

You take the wine back. “So, what you’re saying is... *I’m special.*”

“You and every other magiani.”

“Shit! I forgot about them.”

[Progress Report 2022-04-24: Crunch So Crunchy!](#)

[Apr 25, 2022](#)

Hi friends,

As you may have noticed last week, I missed posting a progress report last week. I didn't intend to skip a week, but because Scene 5 was progressing so well, I decided at the last minute to keep my focus where it was so I could do a more complete update later.

So, without further ado: **Some News.**

Game Updates

Scene 5 is finished! Wooooo! 🥳

And as things came together a lot faster than I expected, I'm actually a few days ahead of schedule now. I don't think that has ever been the case in the entire history of this project, so I'll enjoy it while it lasts. Scene 4 has also been to and from my proofreader and is currently waiting for me to review changes.

Here are the remaining things to do before I can start coding the new material:

- Edit Scene 5 for continuity and other little bits and fixes
- Send Scene 5 to my proofreader
- Create drunk!MC route. This will use pre-existing material from Scene 4 with major changes in how events are described because the MC is inebriated. There's a different version of the end of the scene that needs to be created specifically for this route.
- Review non-drunk!MC Scenes 4 and 5
- Review drunk!MC route when it's back from proofreading

Everything is coming together quite quickly, so I am quite confident that I will be able to finish drafting in a week or so. Once I'm good with all the drafted material, I can start the coding process, which typically doesn't take too long.

I will likely be releasing the new build to the playtester team first to check for obvious errors and bugs that could mess with the continuity of your playthroughs. While they're looking at that, I'll be creating any unfinished codex entries so that side of things is finished when the Patreon build updates.

With all that in mind, I'm fairly confident that we'll be looking at **the second week of May** as a release window for the next alpha update!

With Episode 2 complete, I'll be able to (finally) move onto Episode 3. I've redone my outlines several times to keep the pace short and to the point. Because Episode 2 can end in multiple ways, Episode 3

will be more about handling the consequences of your choices in the previous episode as you progress through the next stage rather than creating multiple varied consequences itself.

At some point, I will need to set writing aside to do some UI design work. It's becoming pretty apparent pretty quickly that I need to redo the Journal, Codex, Inventory, Tutorial and Codex pages ASAP. Right now they redirect to their own pages, but to avoid an issue with game history bloat, I need them to open as separate windows overlaid on top of the game's "main" window. I've known about this for a while, but just hadn't decided on the best course of action. I have a few design ideas sketched out, it's just a matter of sitting down and doing them.

I also want to redesign the companion and faction profiles. I've never been happy with how they display and I want to find something that is a little more appealing visually while still containing all the information the player needs.

Patreon Bonus Content

I released my second formal Twine tutorial as this month's bonus content. It covers SugarCube basics, which I discovered (after making my list of things to talk about) needed to be a lot more in-depth than I had originally thought. Because I split the tutorial in two, I will likely be doing the second half of it next month. This means there may not be a bonus content vote in May (for those in a tier with voting privileges).

I will also be changing how I do tutorials. Patreon's post editor is unfortunately pretty atrocious for anything long form. You also can't add code blocks to it, which makes showing sample code difficult. The post editor broke when I tried to post the original tutorial (lesson learned: don't try to post 40 pages of material here... 😅) and I got temporarily kicked out of my account because it thought I was a bot (... fun!!). To make things easier, all tutorials will be available as downloadable PDFs from here on out.

July Hiatus Update

I'm still brainstorming ideas for bonus content posts, but I have decided on a few post ideas/topics I really want to create. I haven't decided how many of these posts I'm going to do yet as I will need to prep them in June at the same time I'm finishing Episode 3. I want to at least do two so there's one bonus post for all tiers and one for tiers with bonus content access.

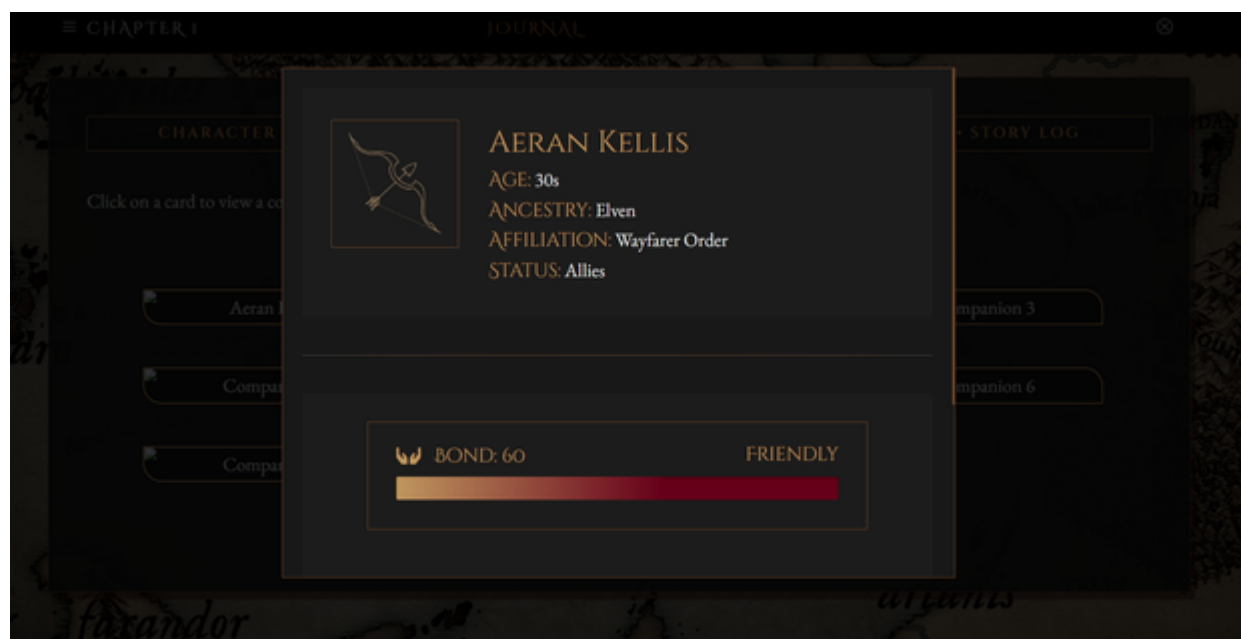
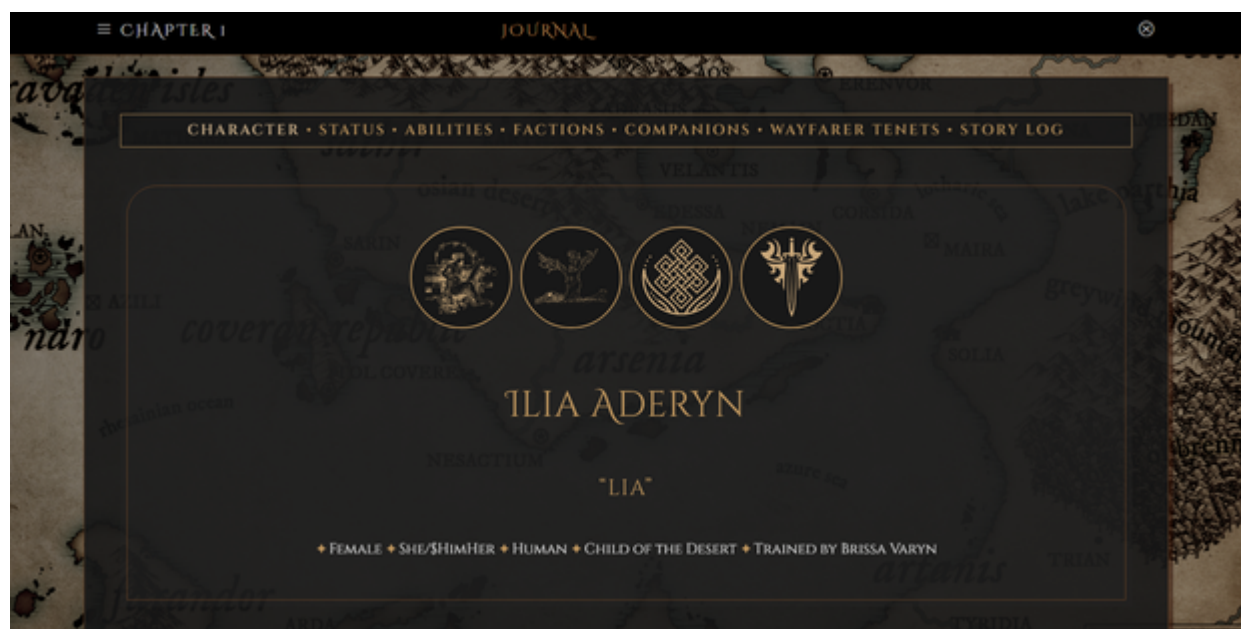
Other Updates

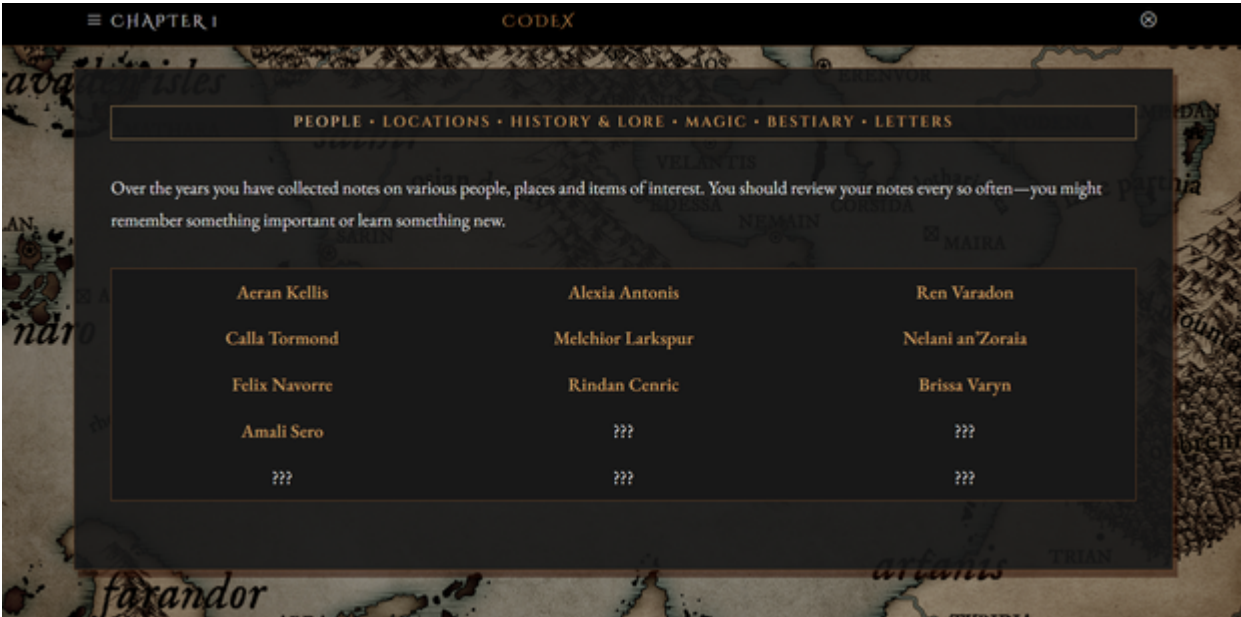
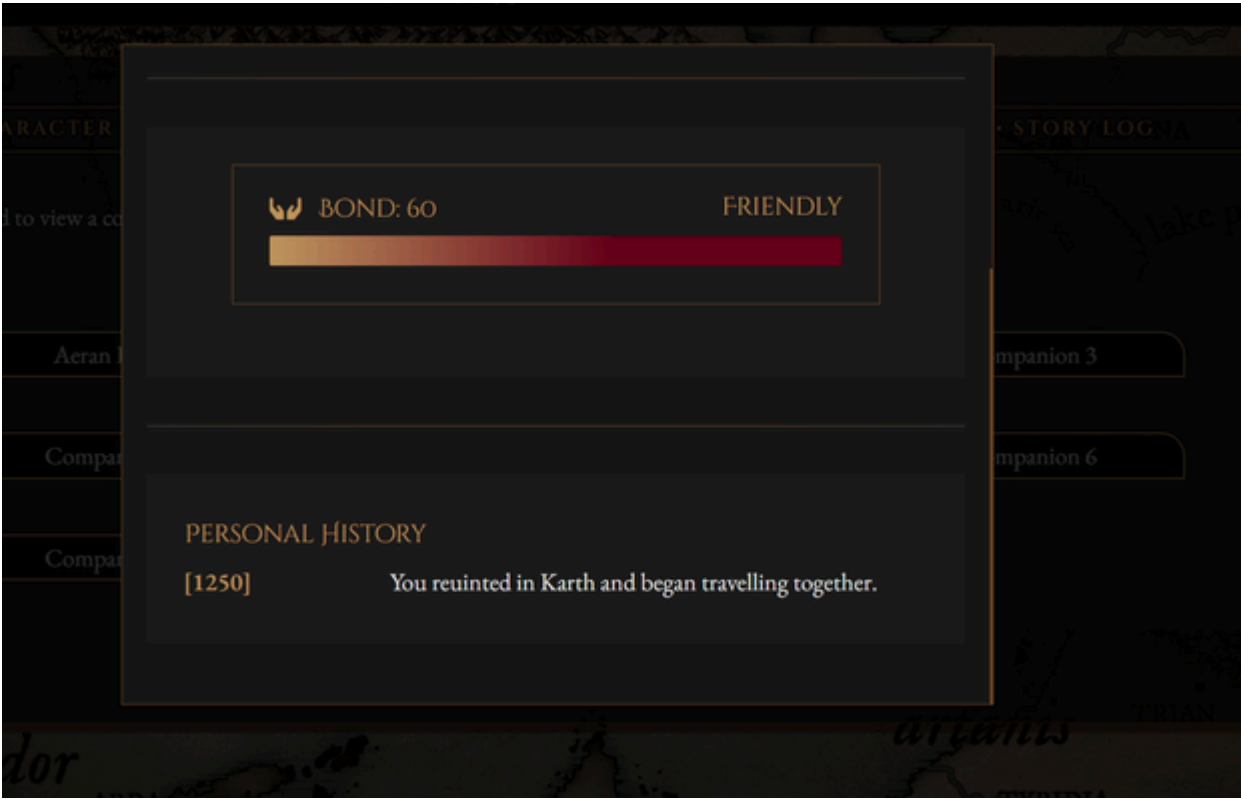
I have been crunching pretty hard to get Episode 2 done. This has been the "crunchiest" month I've had since July last year (when I was prepping the last of Episode 1's material before doing the full UI overhaul... in the middle of a record-breaking heatwave, no air conditioning, and construction blasting happening outside my window. It's a miracle Episode 1 even exists). The end of an episode is always tough since you reach a point where you just want to be done, but it takes a phenomenal amount of time and effort to get there.

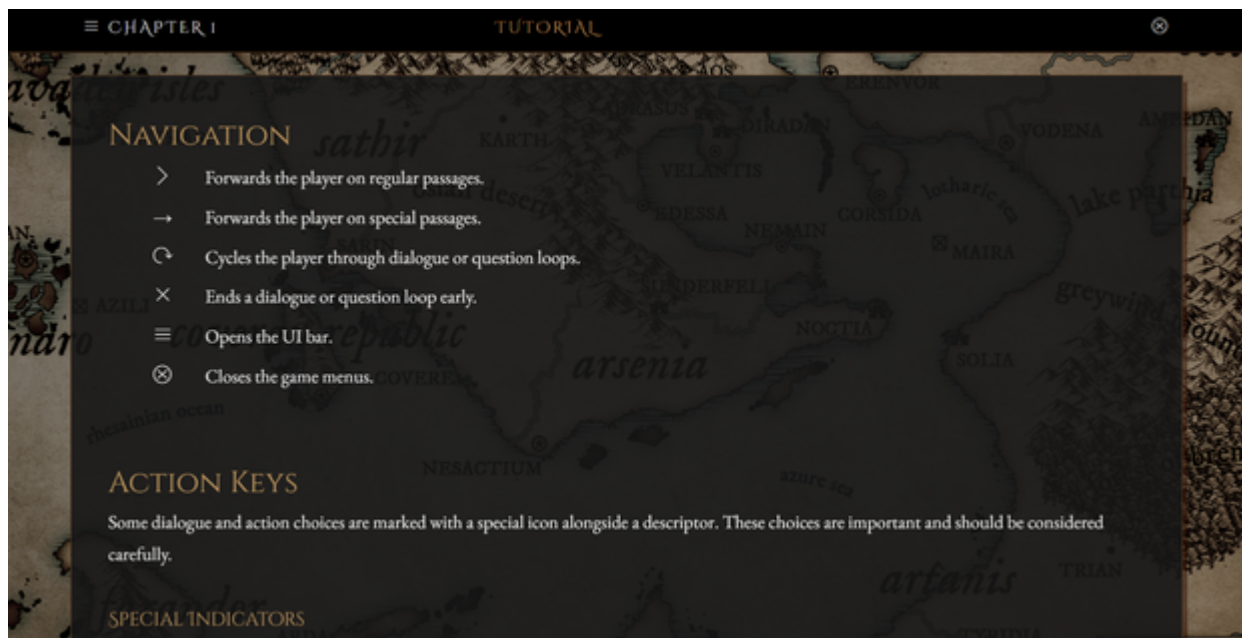
I've been feeling the "I just want to be done" frustration since March and, if I'm honest, it's been a slog to get to this point. There's been times where I have completely questioned the design of Episode 2's end

and whether certain decisions I made were necessary (after hearing the feedback from my proofreader, I can say that even these decisions made writing extremely painful at times, these were the right choices and will greatly enhance player experience and the story as a whole). However, looking back as I edit, I am very happy with the material I've created. I'm really excited for the gameplay elements that will come in with the political intrigue side of things.

And I am looking forward to having the full episode released and in your hands! 💕







[Episode 2 UI Update Sneak Peek](#)

[May 4, 2022](#)

As part of the next update, I've been working on a few UI changes. This is primarily to resolve a background issue with the game menus and the way the game stores game history. Previously, if you clicked through the game menus and codex without returning to the game, you would eventually hit a point where you would exceed the max history state and the return button would remove itself and you'd get permanently stuck in the menu. The game menus are now modal windows that slide over the main game screen, which stops this from happening (and I can finally set the max history state to 1, which resolves history issues on large Twine games).

I've done a little bit of redesign work on the companion and faction profiles. Codex entries are now opened in dialog boxes instead of going to a separate page. And I've stripped the tutorial from the game and replaced it with a single page that lists the different navigation and special indicator icons.

Because I changed some variables that control the game menus, when the update comes out you'll need to start over either with a new save file OR from the beginning of Episode 2, otherwise the companion and faction profiles won't display correctly.

[Progress Report 2022.05.09: There's a Finish Line Somewhere](#)

[May 9, 2022](#)

Hi friends,

Happy May! The first week of the month has been hectic as I work towards getting the alpha update out. Since the last progress report, I've finished a UI update (you can see screenshots in the sneak peaks!) and coding all of the new material. The build is currently being playtested and I am aiming to release it on **Thursday or Friday this week.**

About the UI Update

The UI update changes how the game menus look and function. It has been necessary for a long time, so I made time to sit down and do it. While there wasn't anything wrong with how the game menus looked before, there was a problem with how they were opened and triggered. Previously, the game menus (Journal, Codex, Tutorial, etc) were separate passages that the player navigated to, same as going to a regular story passage. The Return to Game button then returned the player to the spot they left by deleting the navigation history back to the point where the game menus were first triggered. This caused an issue where if you navigated between multiple "menu" passages (like opening all the codex entries, and then going through the journal menu), you would eventually hit the game's history limit and you wouldn't be able to get back to the game.

An additional problem comes from how Twine stores its game history. The higher your game history limit is, the slower your game will become when it starts to hit certain size limitations. This is fixed by setting the max history state limit to 1 (the default is 100 or 40 passages, depending on which version of SugarCube you're using). However, if there's only 1 passage being saved to the game history at a time, then the previous game menu navigation no longer works because the passage you were on when you opened a menu will delete itself out of the history once you leave it.

To prevent both these issues, I had to stop using passage navigation for game menus. Instead, I'm using a game menu overlay that slides over top of the game passage. It makes the game menus look a little different, but they are much more functional behind-the-scenes.

About the Episode 2 Update

As mentioned, Episode 2 is currently being playtested. There is a lot of material and, accordingly, there are a lot of bugs and errors. While I am trying to catch all the major ones, I can't guarantee all of them will be gone by the time I release the update.

You will need to start Episode 2 over from the beginning of the episode (ideally from the Save Your Game prompt that comes up before Episode 2 begins) or you will encounter errors. I would download a copy of that save to your device. **This release is unstable**, meaning that you may need to start over from the beginning of Episode 2 later down the line as I fix more bugs.

Some fun things in the update:

- Re-designed character profile page in the Journal
- Re-designed companion and faction profiles
- Updated Codex look with menu navigation and [+] icons that indicate unread codex entries
- New & condensed Tutorial page
- Episode 2's total cumulative content is 348,000 words. An average playthrough is 81,000.

Once the update is out, I am taking a short break before I start work on Episode 3.

As always, thank you all so much for your support! 💕

[Wayfarer \(Alpha Build\) by Idrelle Games](#)

[A browser game made in HTML5](#)

<https://idrellegames.itch.io/wayfarer-alpha-build>

[Wayfarer Alpha Build Version 1.1.2.3. Patch 2.0.](#)

[May 12, 2022](#)

Hi friends,

The next alpha build update is here and Episode 2 is now complete! This is another massive update and sees you through to the conclusion of the episode. This is also a UI update that adds a new game menu

system for the Journal, Inventory, Codex, Map, and Tutorial screens.

Because of variable changes in Episode 2, you MUST start Episode 2 over from the beginning or you will run into continuity errors and some issues with companion/faction profiles. It's best if you start from the Save Your Game prompt between Episode 1 and Episode 2.

What This Update Includes:

- Scenes 4 and 5
- An additional +175,000 words of total content from the last alpha update
- New codex entries (previous ones with placeholders have now been filled out)
- New UI designs
- The option to toggle notifications for skill checks and approval changes off (accessible from the Settings)
- Various bugs fixes for Episodes 1 and 2

The total word count for Episode 2 is 348,000 words. An average playthrough of the episode from start to finish is 81,000 words (though some paths may be shorter and others may be longer).

What You Can Do

- Have a meeting with the Order of Lethalis
- Investigate a TON of lore
- Try to impress Lethalis or fail utterly
- Have an entanglement of a certain nature...
- See more ripple effects of your past choices and consequences for your actions, both positive and negative

Access and Password

LINK: <https://idrellegames.itch.io/wayfarer-alpha-build>

SEPTEMBER PASSWORD: Q4U59o2jXjN3tDVq

❌DO NOT SHARE THIS PASSWORD! ❌

- Please report any bugs or errors to the #bug-report channel in the Patreon-only part of the Wayfarer Discord server and include a screenshot.
- If you do not have Discord, bugs and errors can be reported to [the bug report form here](#).
- If you encounter bugs and errors that have been fixed, close your browser and restart the game.

Thank you so much to you all for your support! This game wouldn't exist without you. 💕 I hope you enjoy the episode! ✨

Patch 1.6.4. Notes [Released May 12]

UI

- Updated the game menus. They now open as an overlay on top of the game rather than navigating through different passages.
- Updated the companion and faction profile designs.
- Updated the post-episode Level Up Screens
- Added new icons for various choices (cycles for dialogue loops, X for leaving dialogue or a scene early, etc)
- Removed the tutorial pages and replaced it with a condensed page that lists the various icon/symbol meanings
- Added a name confirmation popup when selecting your name to help players ensure that they didn't make any errors before they proceed

Systems

- Added a toggle for skill check and approval/romance/rapport notifications. Toggling the setting off means you will no longer see these notifications (you will still pass/fail your skill checks, you just won't be notified!)
- Expanded the letterscript toggle to include all additional text decorations (i.e. blurred text for drunk scenes)

Gameplay

- Fixed a major bug in Episode 1 Route B where, after being injured and waking up on the ship, the player hit a dead passage that prevented them from progressing to the end of the episode
- Minor spelling/grammar fixes
- Continuity fixes in Episodes 1 and 2
- If Aeran's romance was flagged in Episode 1, the romance bar will now show up in his profile

Patch 1.6.6 [Released May 16]

- Continuity bug fixes
- Typo fixes
- Added an [END FRIENDSHIP] indicator for breaking off your friendship with Aeran at the end of Episode 2 (matches the END ROMANCE indicator in the romance version)
- Added a notification explaining how a sober playthrough works during the first time the MC drinks/uses dreamweed
- Adjusted some of Aeran's flavour text romance triggers

Patch 1.7. [Released June 7]

UI:

- You can now change your pronouns whenever you want to from the Journal. On the character page, click the [+] symbol next to your pronouns. This will open a menu with the presets and the custom pronoun form. You must select a preset or confirm custom pronouns to close the menu. Your pronoun selection will be updated immediately in the Journal, but you will need to navigate to the next passage for them to take effect in the game text itself.
- Updated the dialog X Close buttons for mobile. They should only be visible on mobile now.
- Removed the ability to close the game menu pages with ESC (this caused an error with closing dialog boxes and the close button in the header).

Systems:

- Fixed an error with the xe/xem and ze/zir pronoun presets. If you are playing with either pronoun set, you must either restart your game from the beginning OR use the pronoun selection in the Journal to update your pronouns. Otherwise, your reflexive pronoun will print as “emself” rather than “xyrslef” or “zirself” respectively.
- Re-coded the Story Logs from scratch to fix continuity errors. There may be additional UI errors with spacing or improperly closed tags. The story log is incredibly difficult to test because it uses the hasVisited function rather than variables; hopefully any further issues will be caught by the playtesting team, but if you notice something odd, please drop a screenshot in the bug report channel on Discord.

Gameplay & Narrative:

- Fixed wrong dialogue triggers in Melchior’s gallery scene, Veyer’s gallery scene, and at the beginning of Aeran’s romance scene.
- Made Melchior’s intimacy scenes easier to trigger.
- Added new dialogue content to the Aeran fight. Conditional to getting shot by Aeran in Episode 1 and being on a high approval run (+60 approval).
- The Intoxicated status effect will now be **turned off** when you reach the Level Up screen.

Lore & Worldbuilding Fixes

- There’s something new in the Prologue (it’s very very very small)...
- Switched out “Kingsway” and “Queensway” month names for “Sovereign” and “Ivernian” respectively. Should be updated in the letters and codex (hopefully I didn’t miss anything!)
- Added a proper Eleneid codex entry with updated lore (disregard the old one)

Patch 2.0. [Released June 27]

This is the last patch before the public build launch.

General Note:

Due to variable changes, you **MUST** start Episode 2 from the beginning of the episode. Previous in-progress save files will not work with future chapters.

Systems:

- Added a relationship tracking system for companion approval and romance states at the end of each episode (this will be used for continuity references later)
- Aeran's romance now must be flagged from the beginning of Episode 1 to gain romance points with him.
- Fixed an error where MC names that end with s had a grammatical error with the possessive 's (the \$lastname variable will now appears Ess' rather than Ess's, for example)
- REMOVED the detailed point-by-point overview in the Story Log

Gameplay & Narrative:

- Added additional text to the drunk fight scene to reference the continuity where Aeran (accidentally) shoots the MC in Episode 1.
- Fixed some dialogue in Mel's gallery scene.

Lore & Worldbuilding Fixes

- Fixed some timeline issues with the Varyn info
- Added some additional stuff to the Eleneid codex to match what was being said in the Magianis codex
- Adjusted the MC's timeline. The game now takes place 21 years after the prologue (the MC is canonically in their 30s).

[Progress Report 2022.05.17: Updates, Patches & Downtime](#)

[May 17, 2022](#)

Hi friends,

What a week! The Episode 2 alpha update is FINALLY out. I've spent the past few days doing patches and fixing bugs and errors as they crop up. It will likely be some time before the episode's build is declared stable, so keep an eye on the patch notes or the Patreon Discord in case you need to restart from the beginning. I am also still fiddling with approval triggers, so you may notice some changes in flavour text between playthroughs.

The public build patch was uploaded yesterday, so the new UI is now accessible to everyone.

General Game Updates

While I took some downtime on the weekend, this week is going to be more relaxed in terms of work. I want to stay on top of any reported issues that come through and get patches out. I am also working on some documents for the playtesting team, bonus content for May and June, and the Episode 3 outline draft. I am hoping to get all this prep and alternative work done this week so I can have the rest of the month and all of June to focus on Episode 3.

Because there is no Episode 3 content yet, weekly sneak peaks will be on hold until I start the drafting process.

While I am working on Episode 3, I am going to look into some more UI elements. I know, I know, I *just* updated the UI, why make more changes? Basically, I am not 100% committed to the icons I am using (which are from Font Awesome and Linear Icons). I'm currently using them because they are free and easy to access, but I do eventually want to have icons that are a little more personalized to the game. Now that I know how to make custom icon fonts and upload them into the game, I've started researching SVG and vector icon asset packs. There's quite a few available that are fantasy oriented. While I've found some I like, I haven't moved forward with licenses yet, so this is still very much up in the air.

I am also considering refining the act break down. I've known for a while that while Wayfarer is currently divided into three acts, it actually has a five act structure. I am thinking about adding more act breaks and potentially commissioning full artwork spreads for each act that will display on the chapter summary screens. The game will still be 15 episodes (that hasn't changed). This is not something that's going to be implemented any time soon, just an idea I'm toying with.

Patreon Updates

I also wanted say a big welcome to everyone who has recently pledged! Thank you so much for supporting the game and I hope you're enjoying the alpha build. 💕

I will be doing a Creator Q&A in June. If you'd like to submit a question for it, [check out this post here!](#) Question submissions close on May 31 and the Q&A will be posted during the first week of June.

As always, thank you all so much for your support! 💕

[Progress Report 2022.05.25: Episode 3 Is in Development!](#)

[May 25, 2022](#)

Hi friends,

Just a quick update to close out the end of the month! May has been filled with bug reports, patches, and community outreach. While I haven't been writing as much as I typically do this month, I have more than enough to work on to keep on my toes.

Game Progress

I am currently taking a break from patches. The last alpha build patch was released on May 17. I'm waiting to accumulate a few more bug reports before I release the next one, so you will unfortunately still encounter some errors. There are also sections where I am considering changing the flags (primarily Melchior and Aeran's romance scenes). I may also need to add in some additional specific flags that will control how Episode 3 starts, but I need to sort that out in writing before I go into the game and mess with the code.

So, all that said, please keep in mind that the current alpha build is not stable! Because the game can't change your save data after the fact, there's a very high likelihood that your current Episode 2 saves will need to be replayed from the beginning of the episode in order to catch all the right flags before proceeding to Episode 3. I'm hoping to get a "stable" version of the build patched sometime in June, but it will depend on what other bugs are caught in the mean time.

Speaking of Episode 3, I have finished the episode's outline and I'm starting drafting today. The goal is to get the full episode drafted in a month. This is an extremely tight deadline, so I am decreasing my social media activity both on tumblr and Discord while I try to get this finished. Episode 3 only has three scenes, all of which are fairly linear (no activity points system in this one).

The goal is to get Episode 3 finished, coded, and added to the alpha build by June 28 so I can release Episode 2 publicly sometime between June 30 and July 1.

July Hiatus & Content

As I've mentioned in earlier progress reports, I am going on hiatus in July. From July 2 to August 2, I will have very limited internet access, with one week where I will be disconnected entirely. I will not be working on the game during this time so it can be a true break. I may not even bring a laptop with me.



I spent last week drafting a backlog of bonus content. Throughout July, my Patreon page will be posting queued lore posts about Episode 2 characters. These will be accessible to all tiers and will go into lore and history details that are not in the game. Apprentice+ tiers will still have their regular separate bonus content post, too!

Creator Q&A Reminder

If you want to participate in the Episode 2 Creator Q&A, [please check out this post here!](#) Question submissions will end on May 31. The Q&A will be recorded and released during the first week of June.

As always, thank you all so much for your support! 💕



[A Map of Wayfarer's World](#)

[May 26, 2022](#)

This is a first draft of Wayfarer's global map. I always struggle with full world maps because it's hard not to compare continent placement to the real world. There is also a lot of information that needs to go on a full map and it can start to look very crowded, very quickly. I decided to focus only on the continent names and the names of major seas, forests, mountains, and other landmarks. I also wanted to avoid country and capital names simply because most of the countries outside Rhesainia are not named yet.

There are five continents on this planet:

- Sivalen, a small self-contained continent in the north-west
- Vergelnar, a larger but self-contained continent in the south-west
- Istaran, a large western continent bordered by the Istaran Ocean in the west, the northern ice flats in the north, Rhesainia in the south, and the Vannon Forest in the east.
- Rhesainia, a central continent that bordered by the Frostmark Mountains in the south, the Calanth Plains in the north, and the Varfalen Sea in the east
- Erethar, an eastern continent separated from the rest by the Varfalen Sea

Wayfarer's world is fully explored and settled. Travel between continents is fairly common, usually with the assistance of magic (though the Pallaedrion system cannot extend to moving people between cities or countries). Goods from Eretharian nations are highly prized in Rhesainia, namely because of their scarcity. Erethar is difficult to travel to due to the Astran wastelands to the south and to the north of the Varfalen Sea. The only options are to sail across the sea to the Kalranth Desert or take the long road south of the Forest of Brennath and up the coast.

A few points of interest:

- The Kalranth Mountains are some of the tallest in the world
- Rainforest occur primarily in the Maribian Basin, on the (currently unnamed) islands west of Calantha, and in the Erethar Forest.
- The grey patches on the map represent Astran wastelands, barren wastes saturated with dangerous levels of uncontrolled magic. They are considered exclusion zones and are extremely dangerous and difficult to cross. They are thought to be the result of a natural disaster that occurred several millennia ago.
- Some Astran wastelands occur underwater.
- The Calanth Plains stretch from the coast of the Istaran Ocean to the Varfalen Sea. It is highly strategic territory and the Arathian Empire is currently at war with several nations on its northern border, fighting for control of the plains.

These details are heavily WIP as there hasn't been much need to flesh them out fully in the game yet. I will likely redo the map at some point as I'm not entirely happy with the shape. Many of the place names outside Rhesainia are WIP as well.

[Episode 3 Sneak Peek #1](#)

[Jun 1, 2022](#)

Sneak peaks are back! If you haven't finished your Episode 2 playthrough yet, I would steer clear of these as they will include spoilers (for obvious reasons).

This sneak peak is from Scene 1's Veyer branch. For context, this uses flavour text from a high Aeran friendship run (though the romance version uses something very similar).



"Fuck," you breathe.

You were trying so hard not to think of him. After everything he said last night, there's a part of you that would be happy never to see his face again. But from the twist in your gut, you know it's not that easy... no matter how desperately you wish it were.

You press your face into your hands. "Fucking *fuck*," you groan.

Footsteps pad across the floor and a warm pressure presses against your skin. When you crack open an eye and peer through your fingers, you find Veyer kneeling before you. They brace their tawny hands braced softly against your knees as they gaze up at you, all sense of mischievousness vanished from their dark eyes.

"It's not my place to say this, \$firstname," they say gravely. "If you find this in poor taste, I will leave and never broach the topic again. I will treat last night as if nothing happened between us, if that is your preference—"

You lower your hands and let them fall to your sides.

"Friendships with people like Kellis never end well. The hurt of losing a friend is oftentimes more grievous than that of a lover. Either choose to stand with him—for good or ill—or let him go. I know what I would do, but I am not you. I have found myself in such situations more than once. I do not wish for you to do the same."

You pause, that familiar ugly feeling twisting deeper.

[Wayfarer's Story Log](#)

[Jun 7, 2022](#)

Hi folks,

As I've been patching Episode 2, it's becoming clearer that maintaining the Story Log's specifics is extremely time consuming and tedious. While I really want the player to be able to reflect on the major/important events and choices of their playthrough, coding the Story Log and making sure it is free of mistakes is an absolute nightmare. This doesn't have to do with continuity tracking, but rather making sure multiple conditional statements are written in the right order, in the right way, with the correct passage titles being referenced. This doesn't even include the hassle of formatting conditional bullet points lists that gets me pretty close to tearing out my hair every time I look at it.

I'm leaning more and more towards ditching the "Your Journey So Far..." portion of the Story Log. You would still get an episode summary with the major events referenced, but you would not get the detailed break down.

Please let me know your thoughts! If the "Your Journey So Far..." section falls into a "nice to have, but not necessary" category for most folks, then I will get rid of it and call it a day. But if most folks want to see it stay, then I will work out a different system for recording those conditional choices without inflating the game history.

I'd like a detailed break down of game choices

27%

I don't want/need a detailed break down of game choices

73%

Poll ended Jun 30, 2022 · 95 votes total

[Episode 3 Sneak Peek #2](#)

[Jun 8, 2022](#)

Spoilers ahead! A little bit of a conversation between Zenaida and Veyer. (Hopefully by next week I'll be out of their scene and we can catch up with one of the other paths. ;))



Zenaida's nostrils flare.

Sensing an oncoming quarrel, you turn your back on them and cross the courtyard to assist Malsara with the boat. The assassin barely acknowledges you when you arrive and reluctantly passes you the rope. You take it and begin pulling at the knots, keeping a careful eye on the arguing mages.

"...and here I'd hoped you'd be amenable to the idea," Zenaida says. "You voted for my proposal, after all."

Veyer wags a finger at a her. "Ah, but you forget. I accepted that loss with good grace—"

“Loss,” she interrupts bitterly. “You’ve lost very little, tucked away in the safety of the Imperial court. What did you risk for Lethalis in thirty years while your brethren sacrificed their work, their reputations, and their very lives—?”

“My autonomy, Your Grace.” Veyer stands straight, their hands stiff at their sides, all trace of their usual impish humour gone. “Do not speak to me of the Imperial court. I have bent to the whims of House Nesarian longer than you have been alive.”

She recoils as if stung. “You know what we’re up against,” she says after a moment, regaining her composure. “I welcome the aid of an ally.”

“Ally?” They arch an eyebrow. “How fanciful. I’ve never been described that way.”

She smiles hollowly and turns, keeping to the shadows as she moves briskly towards the anchorage.

“But I want something in return, Your Grace,” Veyer calls, dogging her heels. “For my services, of course.”

“Alliances are not transactional, Savant Krellion,” she says. “We either accomplish this together or not at all—”

They catch up and slip by, keeping an even pace as they walk backwards before her. “Oh, but they are! I do something for you, you do something for me. It’s called being a *giving* person, Your Grace. You should ask \$firstname about it sometime.”

[Progress Report 2022.06.14: Am I Once Again Asking Myself to Figure Out How to Estimate Deadlines](#)

[Jun 14, 2022](#)

Hi friends,

Happy June! The month is flying by and I am running out of time to finish all the things I planned before my hiatus. Because development is shaping up in a different way than I had originally planned, I have made some adjustments to my original 2022 roadmap.

Episode 3 is moving along steadily, but it will not be finished by the end of the month. Though I have been trying to make up for the month and a half I lost to writer’s block earlier this year, it is now time that can’t be made up as I can’t work on the game at all during July.

Originally I planned to launch Episode 2 when Episode 3 was finished so the alpha build could stay one chapter ahead of the public. Since Episode 3 likely won't be finished until the end of August or early September, sticking to this plan would push Episode 2's public release back *much* farther than I want. While I could delay the public launch until September, I don't really want to do this because it would mean there is a whole year's gap between public releases.

With all that in mind, my new goal is to get Episode 3 Scene 1 drafted and added to the alpha build by the end of June, then launch Episode 2 publicly before I leave on my trip. This is still a lot of work and I am taking things day by day, but my fingers crossed for this plan working out!

Game Updates

Patch 1.7. released on June 7. This was a small but important patch that fixed a lot of continuity errors and a major bug with pronouns. The patch notes go over in more detail (see the alpha build post pinned to the top of my Patreon), but here are the most important bits:

- You can now change your pronouns at any time from the Journal. You need to click the [+] icon next to your pronouns to open the menu. Once you've selected your new pronouns, they will change in the Journal. You need to progress to the next passage for the update to take effect in the actual game text.
- If you were playing with xe/xem or ze/zir pronouns, you will need to start over from the beginning OR use the journal to update your pronouns. There was a bug with the reflexive pronoun, meaning it printed as "emself" rather than "xyrself" and "zirself" respectively.

I will likely do another patch in the next week or so to fix additional issues. Thank you to everyone who voiced their opinion in the poll about the [Wayfarer story logs](#)! I am likely going to be cutting the detailed break down and keep the episode summaries to save myself from many, many coding headaches.

Episode 3 Scene 1 is currently at 41,000 words. I still have multiple branches to work through (the consequences of all those possible ending in Episode 2 🌀). As mentioned earlier, I am going to try my best to finish drafting in the next couple of weeks, get the material through the editing/proofreading process, and add it to the alpha.

July Hiatus

I will be on hiatus from July 2 to August 2. I will have little to no internet connection for most of my trip and I will not be actively working on the game. During this time:

- The alpha build link and password will still function as normal.
- I will not be doing patches. Any bug reports will be collected and processed when I return in August.
- I will be slow to respond to any messages in my inbox. I will also not be active on the Discord server.
- Sneak peaks will be on hold for the duration of the month.
- There will be a special content extravaganza! Episode 2 character lore posts will be posted throughout the month for patrons of all tier.

- For the Wayfarer tier and up, there will be a bonus content vote, as per usual.
- For the Apprentice tier and up, whichever topic wins the bonus content vote will be posted later in the month when I have internet access.

Other Updates

Episode 2's Creator Q&A is on its way! I unfortunately have not had time to sit down and record it yet, but that will hopefully happen sometime this week. A transcript will be available shortly after it goes up.

I did an interview with Interact-IF for Pride Month! In it, I talked a little bit about queer interactive fiction, game mechanics, and how asexuality has influenced Wayfarer's romance structure. [You can read it here.](#)

And finally, Wayfarer's public build has reached 100,000 browser plays! 🎉 I was going to do something special to celebrate, but I think my June is stuffed a little too full at the moment.

I can't thank you all enough for all the support you've shown me and my game over the past year. Thank you so much! 💕

[Episode 3 Sneak Peek #3](#)

[Jun 15, 2022](#)

This is a part of the Aeran x MC romance branch that continues where Episode 2 leaves off. I've chosen to include specific flavour text conditional statements, so if you see text that doesn't reference your particular MC's set up, don't worry, it will be there!

Spoilers ahead.

"\$nickname..."

"I mean it. No one knows what will happen to them in the future. Expecting the worst is not a way to live. Our work is dangerous, yes, but there's more to it than that. Cenric would never have let me get away thinking like that. I doubt Varyn would either."

He pauses, weighing his words. "Then maybe it's time for the work to end."

"We've talked about this, haven't we? Once this contract is over, we'll have enough to catch our breath. Maybe settle down for a few years before we take another contract—"

“That’s not what I meant.”

You fall silent, caught off-guard by the insistence in his voice.

“\$nickname... have you ever thought what you would do if you weren’t a Wayfarer?”

A hollow feeling gnaws at your gut. Of course you’ve imagined what your life would be if you weren’t a Wayfarer—every member of the order, from apprentice to grand master, has at one time or another.

1. It’s a comforting fantasy, one you’d gladly pursue if you could. You’d gladly give up \$blade to know another life.

[CHOICE] 2. The fantasy is far from the reality you face every day. Ever since your inauguration, the journey and the fight is all you know. It’s naïve to think you’ll be free from it completely.

3. A Wayfarer is what you are. Ever since Cenric took you from Vodena, you have wanted nothing else.

CHOICE #2

“Yeah, of course,” you say with a shrug. “Haven’t we all? But it doesn’t change anything and I’m not going to waste time fretting over it. This is what I am now, whether I like it or not.”

His silence is hollow, as if he were hoping for a different response. “There’s no running from what we are, \$firstname. Someone will always find a reason to use people like us, to one end or another. Lethalis and the Astrial, the Count and the chalice... They’re all the same. Even the Wayfarer Order itself wasn’t innocent of it.”

You push yourself up, curls cascading over your shoulders. The bitterness in his words is tangible.

“What do you mean?”

He meets your eyes. “Haven’t you ever wondered what gave them the right to take us away? Damn it, \$firstname, we were *kids*. And they brought us into this.”

[Thick Skin: 8 Things I Learned About Constructive Criticism and How to Handle It](#)

[Jun 16, 2022](#)

It was a blustery early September afternoon. Despite the wind, the air was hot and still smelled faintly of forest fire, as it usually does in the summer. Work was busier than usual. Though the store typically

didn't have much foot traffic, many customers that day were eager to trade the uncomfortable dry heat of the outside for the slightly less uncomfortable damp mugginess of a basement bookstore.

And I was hiding in the bookstacks bawling my eyes out.

I had come back from my lunch break and could not stop crying. After about ten minutes of increasingly uncomfortable silence, an older gentleman approached me and asked if I was all right. I responded with a shaky voice and smile, asked him if he needed help finding anything, and then started crying again as soon as he was gone. My supervisor emerged from their office not long after, took one look at me, and promptly sent me home, no questions asked.

It's not quite the most embarrassing moment of my life, but it's a strong contender for the top ten. And the thing that had made me so upset I had to be literally sent home from work?

Two bad reviews of my play at an ongoing fringe festival.

I find this moment a funny to look back on now. I've been writing in various amateur and professional capacities for more than ten years. I've been on the receiving end of more criticism than I can count. I made it through my graduate degree thesis play, where I was still receiving revision notes during the play's staged reading's performance run. I had always considered myself to have "thick skin", that constructive criticism was something I could handle gracefully. It didn't matter how harsh it was, I could "take it", as if I was some writerly punching bag enduring pain and punishment for some future benefit.

I made a mistake looking at those reviews that day. But I was a self-produced theatre artist at the time and I was in charge of my show's social media. Fringe festivals move very quickly and you need to be on top of your outreach, particularly on Twitter and Instagram. I was waiting for reviews to come in so I could snag a line or two, put them on a promotion post, and get it out there. My show only had one review so far (a generic one that couldn't be used for promotion), so I was nearly ecstatic with anticipation when I checked my socials that day and found two more. Those feelings came crashing down very quickly when I saw what was written about me, my play, and my actors, and turned me into a blubbering mess hiding behind a stack of books.

I knew the play had issues (what creative work doesn't?), but I did think it was a well-told story with compelling characters. The reviews were harsh (2 and 2.5 stars, respectively). One called the play boring, then spent a couple paragraphs criticizing how my dialogue sounded like it was ripped from an episode of Game of Thrones because my French noblewoman character said "fuck" one too many times. The other said the play was "badly in need of revisions" and something about it *could* be good in the future, but wasn't worth the time now. I remember feeling completely crushed. No one would want to come see the play now. My future as a playwright in my local theatre was forever ruined now I was the person who wrote "that boring play about the lesbian opera singer!"

The irony is those comments never mattered. Two bad reviews didn't stop folks from showing up and—judging from the post-show chatter as they were leaving the theatre—loving it. The local queer community (who were the target audience in the first place) saw it multiple times. I can't even find those reviews now; they are scrubbed from the Internet, alongside their inactive creators.

Since then, I've thought a lot about reviews, criticism, and what it means to have "thick skin." It's an adage often heard by writers. Criticism—whether it is constructive or not—is part of being a creative. No matter what kind of project you're working on, someone, somewhere, will always have a negative opinion. I think there is an expectation, particularly when a work exists online, that all forms of criticism are justified, and the creator is supposed to grow that thick skin and accept it for the betterment of their project. But, as with most things to do with writing, there is a balance. There's a time to listen and a time to disengage.

Because I'm talking about artistic work in general, I'm going to refer to readers, game players, theatre-goers, movie watchers, etc. generally as "the audience".

1. Your Feelings Are Valid

Criticism hurts. The initial sting that hits when you receive criticism is natural. Telling writers to simply "grow a thick skin and deal with it" invalidates the very real emotions that come when someone picks your work apart. It's a very specific person who can shrug it off without a care, and, to be honest, most creative people are *not* that.

Feeling hurt about your work means that you care. You care about the time and effort it took to create it. You are invested in its creation and where you can take it. The important thing here is to accept those hurt feelings and process them in a healthy way. Breaking down crying in your workplace and getting sent home is probably not a healthy way of processing that creative hurt. Biting back at negative reviewers or fighting with them on social media is also not healthy.

Once the initial sting is gone, it is much easier to process the negative criticism and figure out what the reviewer or critic was really trying to say. Sometimes there might be worthwhile points or opinions in that criticism that will be useful for you in the future.

Because my work is now centred online, I receive a significantly larger amount of criticism than I did when I was only doing theatre. Pretty much every week I have something critical in my DMs, in my itch reviews or comments, or in my public bug report form. I'd be lying if I said it didn't sting every time I get a negative comment. But instead of handling it immediately, I wait a few days for the sting to subside. Sometimes I share the negative message with a close friend so I can vent about it and move on. I can allow myself to feel as affronted and upset as I want to in the moment, but I shouldn't make any responses—if at all—until those feelings subside. Most of the time I don't respond; there's little point in fighting with complete strangers on the internet about my game's story, characters, or mechanics.

2. Criticism Is Not Always Personal...

Criticism often feels like an attack. While some critics are genuinely trying to be helpful, it's easy to read their criticism as a personal affront. It can feel like they're calling you a bad writer or creative, and that you don't have the talent or the skill to create the project you're working on.

But this is often not the case. Art is subjective and nothing is perfect. Every creative project has something to improve upon, even past the point where it's finished and the creator will not be working

on it anymore*. When someone gives you criticism, it doesn't automatically mean they think you are a bad writer, but rather that they caught an oversight or a mistake. This kind of good faith criticism is offered because the audience is invested in the work and they want to see it become the best version of itself.

I deal with this type of criticism almost every day in my bug reports. Sometimes when I'm handling upwards of +20 bug reports, it can be difficult to not interpret all these errors as if I've made a complete mess of my game. I worry sometimes that bugs have ruined player experience. But when I'm handling almost a million words of content, there will always be mistakes. No matter how careful I am, there is always a margin for human error. If I took every bug report personally, I would not be able to make a game at all.

On a related note, you might be interested in my article from 2021, [Perfectionism and the Feedback Cycle](#). There will always come a point when you need to put aside the critical feedback and finish your story. While there may always be something to improve, it doesn't mean that you will always have the time, means, or energy to make that improvement. At a certain point, you have to say no to the criticism and let the work stand as it is.

3. ...Except When It Is.

Some criticism is critical simply for the sake of being critical. Critics who publicly hate on you and your work may do so for a number of reasons:

- They genuinely hated it and they're upset that they spent their time on it
- They thought they were getting into one thing and they got something completely different. (I get this every so often when folks think they're playing a visual novel and then they're upset that they have to "read too much")
- They're angry about something completely unrelated and they're looking for someone or something to yell at
- They're the type of person who finds ripping creative works apart is fun

Bad faith criticism will always happen, particularly if you're sharing your work online. When people can hide behind the anonymity of a username, it allows them to say whatever they want, however they want, to whomever they want.

There's nothing you can do about bad faith criticism. I deal with it by sharing the bad faith comments with close friends, venting about it, and then letting it go. I'm not always great at this. It's hard to avoid the impulse to snap back when someone is attacking you personally online. But while it's hurtful and frustrating to receive, the worst thing you can do is engage with it. The moment you snap back at someone who wants to get a reaction out of you, you will only escalate the situation.

4. Not All Criticism Is Valid...

An important part of the creative process is learning to separate helpful criticism from unhelpful criticism. Even when someone isn't going out of their way to attack you personally and they genuinely want to

help you improve your work, their opinions may not be useful.

Writing is a tricky artform. Not everyone who knows how to write knows how to tell a story. I used to be an actor and a musician and I received far less criticism for my work there than I do as a writer. If I did a somewhat mediocre concert, my peers would have critiques for me, but most of the audience wouldn't know what was off. But writing is different. I think a lot of people believe that because they know what *they* like in the stories they consume, they have the skill and knowledge to offer useful criticism to a writer. There have been times where the person giving me criticism is extremely passionate about the story and characters, but if I implemented their feedback, it would only make the storyline messier or sacrifice another element in the narrative.

Critical feedback is complicated for in-development works, particularly when those works are shared online. When a work is "in development", it's sometimes taken as a sign that the creator is always open for critical feedback and will accept it from anyone. But a single creator cannot filter and parse every single piece of feedback or constructive criticism they receive from their audience—especially when that audience numbers in the hundreds or thousands. At some point, Stranger #601's opinion *cannot* and *will not* matter to you because you do not have time or the energy to dissect their feedback and decide whether to implement it or not.

This is the main reason why there is no bug report channel in Wayfarer's public Discord and I do not accept public feedback. The game has almost reached 100,000 browser plays. It is impossible for me to consider the opinion of every single person who has played the game, valid or not.

I personally find that public forums make it harder for a writer or developer to create a good story because they are balancing far too many contrasting opinions. When you're looking for critical feedback, narrow it down to a single group of trusted individuals who know you, your writing style, and the direction you want to take the story. Ten informed opinions will be infinitely more useful to you than 120 unreliable ones.

5. ...But Some of It Is.

Deciding which criticism is useful and which is not is not a free pass to avoid ALL criticism. Constructive criticism is still a good—and necessary—thing to improve your creative skill. Sometimes there are useful notes within a bad reaction or a critical response. It can take time to filter it out and you can only really consider it once the initial sting is dampened. However, in general I find paying attention to *all* types of responses the audience has to your work can give you beneficial insights.

A few months ago, I received a particularly nasty review on itch.io. The review was several paragraphs long, criticized the setting as being too "dark" and "dismal", the dice roll mechanics for being too difficult, and a note I had left on the level up system about how reloading the page may give you a different result.

I was ready to write this review off because the person who left seemed determined to be overly critical. Every public comment they had left on other games was critical, and they were only interested in pointing out all the things they hated or found "wrong". But once the critical sting wore off, I did think about what

they had said about the level up system. I had originally added the note because another player was confused why they had a different number of skill points when they reloaded a save to redo their point allotment (the level ups was inspired by Fire Emblem games and used to have dice rolls, with the % chance of getting 0 to 3 skill points based on what your character's health status was when you finished the episode). I realized that this was needlessly complicated, and while some players did get a kick out of finishing an episode and getting hit with 0 or 1 skill point, it was going to cause more frustration to a greater number of players in the long run. I ended up getting rid of the level up dice rolls entirely.

While it may be the last thing you want to do, it is important not to ignore all negative feedback. Sometimes a person's negative response is what you needed to hear to make a change that improves your work.

6. Reviews Are Not For You

No matter how much you want to know what people are saying about your creative work, sometimes it's better not to know. Reviews are for the audience, not the creator. They exist to inform other people about what they're getting into. The folks who write them don't expect the creator to ever see them—and the same is true for comments on forums or other social media.

If you track down every review and comment made about your work, you are bound to encounter something you don't like. There is little point in setting yourself up to feel hurt or attacked when you discover criticism that the critic never intended you to see in the first place.

It's a different situation when a review/comment system is set up with a direct line to the creator. Itch.io's system is like this: reviews are semi-private, accessible only to the creator and the reviewers' followers. Ratings and comments are public, and always show up in your notifications. When someone leaves a comment on Wayfarer's page, I feel like that is directed to me the same way as asks on Tumblr or messages in the public Discord.

7. The Audience is Allowed to Feel Whatever They Want About Your Work

You cannot control how the audience reacts to your work.

I'm sure everyone has been in this situation: you sit down to watch a movie, finish it, and feel like you wasted the last two hours of your life. Not every piece of media is going to be everyone's cup of tea. There will be people who encounter your work, get part way into it, and then decide, "No thanks, it's not for me." They might be angry or upset about it. They may want to critique it. They may want to write fix-it fanfiction where they change everything about the initial story and characters to fit the vision they have.

Those reactions are valid. Attempting to control them and rid yourself of all negative reactions is not.

While creators should find ways to process negative constructive criticism in a healthy way, this does not mean they should censor their audience. Removing public comments, ratings, and other tools that the audience uses to communicate whether or not they liked a work makes it solely about you and your feelings*. And while your feelings as a creator are valid, censoring audience opinion is not a healthy way of managing negative feedback. It's not up to you to determine how someone reacts to your work.

This is specifically about comments, ratings, and reviews in public spaces, not private ones. In private spaces, the creator should be allowed to handle things however they see fit.

For example, itch.io gives creators a certain level of control over their public pages. Alongside moderating comments, you can also remove the dislike button from your comments page and disable ratings and reviews. There are plenty of reasons why you may want to disable these features (for example: your game isn't ready for ratings or reviews, your game is a hobby project, you're getting review-bombed, you've had issues with homophobic, transphobic, racist, sexist, etc. comments in the past).

However, I do find it a little strange when games (either in development or fully released) disable the dislike button and regularly censor or remove negative comments. Even if your game is free, players are allowed to feel however they want about it. Trying to control negative responses or reactions only puts you in an echo chamber of positive feedback and blinds you to issues you may need to address.

8. There's a Time and a Place for Feedback

This article wouldn't be complete without mentioning hobby and fan projects. I've written a lot of fan fiction in my life and I firmly believe constructive criticism does not have a place in the fan work sphere. If you're creating for fun or as a hobby, constructive criticism is the last thing you should be worrying about unless you have specifically asked for it.

Something that is intended to be casual should be a safe space for the creator to experiment, practice their craft, and have fun—without the stress of managing constructive criticism.

[Episode 2 Creator Q&A](#)

[Jun 18, 2022](#)

Note: Sorry for the low quality, I changed part of my setup and was sitting too close to the microphone and my voice pops quite a bit. I would lower the volume before listening!

TRANSCRIPT

AM = Anna / Idrelle Games

CG = Josiah / Chilled Glasses

CG: Hi friends, welcome to another question and answer session with the writer of Wayfarer, Anna. We've got a bunch of questions here that have been submitted by you, the fans, and we're going to be

covering a few different topics today—everything from Writing & Process, to Worldbuilding, and Story & Characters.

The first few questions are going to be a bit more general. So, even if you haven't played the new content that's out for Episode 2, still feel free to give this a listen. We will give you a warning when we start delving into spoiler territory.

AM: Yeah, it's been a while since we've done one of these. The last one we did was in September, and that was for Episode 1. So, this is going to be a lot more Episode 2 focused. *(laughs)*

CG: Exactly. And as is always the case when you start diving into bits of the main story of any piece of fiction, there are a lot of questions about specific plans for the future that we're not going to be able to give a ton of detail about.

AM: Yeah.

CG: So, we will try to drop some nuggets where we can

AM: Yeah, I've been dodging spoilers for two years, I'm not about to stop doing that now.

CG: Exactly. So, this will be more so answers that are based on the text as it exists currently, instead of "here is the plan for the next couple of years, and who is going to die, who is going to fall in love... etc."

But without further ado, we're going to start with a few questions on Writing & Process.

AM: Yeah.

WRITING & PROCESS

CG: First question: The game is planned to be pretty long and complex. What's your strategy for keeping track of early game choices and how they impact the ending?

AM: So, it's lists and an excel sheet. *(laughs)* Basically, it comes down to my outlining process, which I've gone over in a couple different places. I'll try to link some of the articles when I do the transcript. (Outlining process posts [here](#) and [here](#))

I have my beat chart, which is the full structure of the entire game. And then my beat chart is broken down into individual outlines for each act. And then when I get around to doing the chapter outlines, I break it down further.

So, it's just kind of like... you do your outline, and then you do another outline, and another outline. And you're slowly going from the really broad scope and narrowing it down into the specifics.

And then as I'm writing, I'm cross-referencing it with my Excel sheet that has all of the variables that I need to track in it—what needs to pop up where, what needs to reference something else or a different choice that happened... Also, implementing a catch-all flavour text thing for circumstances where if the

player did Choice A, and then there's Choice B and Choice C, and then everything else falls under the additional "else" statement for when any of those conditions are not met.

It's a lot of making lists and checking things off and cross-referencing with what needs to continue to be tracked. A lot of the choices that might feel super important, they all have a deadline where they will *stop* being important. I actually unset those in the game's code, so they stopped being tracked and that's what prevents the game from getting super bloated. Like, after a certain point, it doesn't matter how you addressed Luthais in Episode 1. It affects certain things *in* Episode 1, but by the time you reach Episode 2, that's so long ago it doesn't matter anymore.

CG: So, basically, from my understanding, in terms of keeping track of these early game choices, the main thing for you is that with all of your outlining, you *know* as you're writing what choices are going to be important and which ones you need to keep track of for later.

AM: Yeah.

CG: And I know there's been occasions where something has come up in writing, with a discovery that you wanted to have accounted for later. But it's a lot less of a time consuming process to factor in one or two extra choices that may come up, instead of writing the chapter and then you have to go back in and figure out everything that needs to be accounted for. You're writing the chapter knowing what is already important and how that's going to impact things two, three, or four episodes down the line.

AM: Yeah, because in terms of how choices impact the game... For small and medium choices, it's more about how those choices work towards a bottleneck. The choice you make *in* the bottleneck is what's important for impacting things later on. But the path you took to get to the bottleneck won't matter later on, but it may affect what choice you make.

CG: And a follow up to that question is: do you know how many endings you want?

AM: Yes.

CG: Read and find out.

AM: Yes.

(Laughter)

AM: Well, to expand on that a little bit... I don't want to say too much about this, but there's kind of two main branches for how the story can end. It's not "good" ending and "bad" ending, it's... you choose to do a thing or you choose not to do a thing. And they're both equally good or bad, depending on what you do within those branches. There *will* be little variations within those two major branches, right, to account for all of the romances, character relationships, and faction relationships and how those went... So, it's like there are two endings, but there's multiple versions, if you really want to get into the nitty gritty.

CG: Speaking of the nitty gritty, dealing with all the side characters that you have: How do you come up with all your side characters? They're all so memorable! Were they all planned from the beginning of the story or do you add some as you go?

AM: It's half and half. Some are planned in the beginning, some are not. What I tend to do most of the time is that I know the narrative function that a character needs to fulfill, but I won't decide what that character looks like, what their name is, or what their personality is like until I'm actually in the scene and all the pieces fall into place. So, I know what this Void needs to do eventually, but I allow myself a lot of flexibility depending on what's going on.

A lot of things change when you're in the act of writing. No matter how much you plan and outline, you always end up going... Things never end up going exactly according to plan. The outline is a guideline, not something you follow super strictly.

CG: Next question is: What degree of mental imagery do you have and how does it affect your writing? For example, on a scale of 1-10, where 1 is aphantasia and 10 is hyperphantasia? Do you need to find lots of reference images before you describe a location or character?

Aphantasia: being unable to visualize imagery

Hyperphantasia: having extremely vivid mental imagery

AM: I have an extremely vivid mental imagery. I'm probably like a 9 or a 9.5? Because I can picture what we have in our fridge very, very clearly. If you ask me to picture an apple, I can picture an apple, and manoeuvre it around in a mental space.

In terms of looking for reference images, I don't tend to do that very often. If I'm drawing on specific inspiration, then I might go do a little bit of research, but I don't often need to go back through that research once it's done because the image is already in my head.

When it comes to people, I never look up references. I can imagine what they look like and then go from there. So, when it comes to finding references—say, for sending to an artist for a commission—I always really struggle with that because I don't work with people references. I always struggle to find something. You can never get it to live up to what you see in your head when you have a vivid imagination. When I'm describing certain characters, the way I'm picturing them in my head... there is no reference for that. It doesn't not exist because they're an imaginary person in my head.

CG: It's also the beauty of text descriptions as well. Everyone's going to interpret something differently. If I say someone has an "angular" face, everyone's going to come up with a different image in their head.

AM: Yeah, like... what does that mean? *(laughing again because I use this description all the time :))*

WORLDBUILDING

CG: Moving onto the next section now, we're going to have a few questions about worldbuilding. To begin with: What was your favorite part of designing the Wayfarer world?

AM: That's a good question. I don't know... Kind of like... all of it? It's just really satisfying to start from a small seed of an idea and build on it. So, you don't do everything at once—or, at least, I can't do everything at once. Because then you just fall down a worldbuilding hole, and you never get any writing done if you try to flesh everything out.

I really like the small discoveries I make along the way. Because if I don't know something... If I reach a point when I'm writing and I *need* to know this thing I didn't plan for, then it's fun to see the direction everything is going in and then flesh that out. I don't know if that makes any sense...

CG: It sounds like the favourite part is really the evolution of the worldbuilding.

AM: Mhm.

CG: So, not necessarily... It wasn't creating the map or the magic system, it wasn't creating the all the different political factions, it was having the seed and building from there.

AM: Yeah.

CG: The next question in terms of worldbuilding is: How outnumbered are Wayfarers in terms of numbers?

AM: Pretty outnumbered. Very, very outnumbered. I can't get into percentages or anything like that, but the best comparison would be both the witchers from The Witcher and also Star Wars after Order 66 when there are supposed to be no more Jedi, but they keep cropping up. We started with like... there was only supposed to be like two left and now there's like... twenty of them.

CG: Which is fitting for the Wayfarer world because there's no more Wayfarers, but there's Kellis and the protagonist, and there's also maybe a few other people...

AM: Yeah—did you just call Aeran by his last name?

CG: Yeah.

AM: Yeah?

CG: Yeah.

AM: Okay.

(Laughter)

CG: Too many people call him by his last name in the text.

AM: Hmm, okay.

CG: It just sort of has that nice way of rolling off the tongue, just saying *Kellis*.

AM: (*unimpressed*) Yep. Hm.

STORY & CHARACTERS

CG: But this is where we're going to start running into some spoilers for Episode 2. So, we're going to be having a few questions on story and character, and discussing some events that did happen in Episode 2. If you either haven't played it or you haven't played all the routes that you want to play and you don't want to be spoiled for some things that may happen, then I would say: proceed with caution.

AM: Yes. Listen with care.

CG: To begin with, though: What scene or scenes have been the most fun to write so far?

AM: Ohhhh... I think... Oh, it's a funny thing to ask because I *know* very clearly which scenes were not fun to write.

CG: I was going to say, I could probably tell you which scenes were the least fun to write.

AM: Yeah. I know which scenes were the least fun to write, but in terms of the ones that were the most fun to write... It's kind of like *everything* else? (*laughs*) Because the Lethalis meeting scene was atrocious. That was so difficult. And it took me two months... Didn't help that I had writer's block during it, so that was just absolutely not fun. I kept getting confused about what part of the conversation I was at because there were so many different branches in it depending on how you approached it. I felt like I was stuck the entire time because I was writing all the branches, I was having the same conversation again and again and again, and I felt like I was making no progress.

But I think if I had to pick something, though... I think the end of Episode 2. So, I'm calling Scene 5, which only happens if you're not drunk (you can't get hammered at the party, otherwise you can't access any of this). But all the gallery scenes with Phaedra and Melchior and Veyer... Those were a lot of fun. The dynamics and all of the romance scenes and the intimacy scenes, and the friendship stuff with Aeran if you go back to the apartment and you try to figure out where your relationship is at regardless of whether you're romancing him or not... If you're at high approval, that whole mess.

I think that dynamic was a lot of fun to write because I was finally free of the Lethalis stuff. So, I was just excited to write *anything* that was not a meeting scene.

(*Laughter*)

CG: And it's also fun to have those really vastly different scenes you can have.

AM: Yeah. There were a lot of things that surprised me that were unplanned to a certain extent. It was like "this is an idea and I'm going to run with it." Like meeting—

CG: Like everything with Veyer?

AM: *(laughing)* “Everything with Veyer”, yeah... That wasn’t supposed to happen.

CG: Literally *everything with Veyer*.

AM: Everything with Veyer—that was not on the menu originally. It just kind of happened because I wrote this one-off comment that they can have on one of your dialogue branches in the Lethalis scene. They make some kind of comment about how they wouldn’t have an affair with the main character because it would draw too much attention... I can’t remember what the actual line is, but they’re being super sarcastic. And as soon as I wrote that, I was like, “Oh, *you* are a problem. You are going to be a problem, I know what kind of character you are now.”

CG: And thus everyone became compromised.

AM: Yes. The other thing that was surprising that was unplanned was introducing Mel’s theatre company this early. It was unplanned, but I ended up pushing the scene in that direction because originally he wasn’t supposed to invite you to a party, he was supposed to invite you back to his quarters. And I found that the dynamic was a little off... Because he’s so mysterious and so otherworldly that the power dynamic was a little bit off, and it didn’t feel right for him to invite the main character back to a place where they would be alone. That wasn’t the right vibe.

So, I was thinking: who else is here? Oh, well, the theatre company is here, let’s take the chance to introduce them. So, you have an early introduction if you end up going down that path, and then it branches into a couple different spots based on player choice. Because once you introduce the theatre company, it becomes “Okay, this is about more than Mel now...” *(tired laughter)*

CG: There were just so many scenes within that section.

AM: Mhm.

CG: As we’re talking a lot about characters, though, the next question is somewhat related: Now that you’ve written so much and have gotten a chance to introduce more characters, do you have a favourite character to write?

AM: Veyer.

(Laughter.)

CG: I had a feeling.

AM: In terms of Episode 2 characters, the ones who are pretty much always fun to write are Veyer, Mel, Phaedra to a certain extent, but her vibe is different. Her dialogue’s a lot of fun because she has that... She’s just really in control. She’s in a power position.

CG: Her words are calculated.

AM: Yeah, yeah, calculated is the right word.

CG: But they're not calculated in terms of she is directly trying to manipulate you or sway you in some great direction, it's more that they're calculated because that's who she *is*.

AM: Yeah, she's really, really in control of the situation, She has fingers in many pots, and is super aware and super observant, and I think some of my most favourite dialogue from the entire episode comes from a scene where you punch Sabien (are aren't drunk) and then talk to Phaedra during your gallery scene, she's *not* happy about it. And that has some of my favourite dialogue.

(Laughter)

CG: Oh, my goodness. That's going to be a branch some people will have to chase down.

CG: So, next question. We've already answered part of it (what was your favourite part of writing Episode 2), but the second part continues that: What are you most looking forward to in upcoming episodes?

AM: I think right now... The end of Episode 3, definitely, because that answers some questions that have been burning for a very, very long time. And everything is kind of working towards a specific point that will occur at the end of that episode.

And then I'm really excited to get to the beginning of Episode 4 because that's when you actually *finally* start to meet the rest of the main cast.

CG: A lot of this entire process has been building up to the end of Episode 3 and immediately diving into Episode 4.

AM: Yeah, I think the combination of Episodes 1, 2 and 3 are kind of like... It's all part of Act 1, but it could really be considered its own act. Because the end of Episode 3 will be a very distinct moment.

CG: Now we get into some questions where there may not be incredibly detailed answers.

AM: Yeah, we're going to be dodging spoilers for future stuff quite a bit.

CG: For instance, to start with: Is there a way to reconcile with Aeran after the big fight?

AM: There is. If you haven't found it yet, it does depend on a few different factors. So, you need to have either high approval or high romance, with some extra conditions. And by high approval or high romance, I mean you need to have 60 romance or 60 approval.

The only way you can get 60 romance with Aeran is if you flagged his romance from the beginning and then are knocked unconscious in Episode 1. So, if you're at 10+ romance, this isn't going to work.

For the friendship version, you have to have 0 romance. So, none at all, it has to be strictly platonic. And you need 60 friendship in order to access the scene, plus you can't kill Rhodarth in Episode 1... which I don't think a lot of people have done. *(laughs)* That's a pretty rare thing. And also if you find the letters, you can't tell him about the letters because otherwise he will be very upset.

If you don't know about the letters, I will leave you... to go find that...

(Laughter)

CG: Realistically, after the fight is a very, very tense moment with Aeran. He has a lot of stuff going on in his brain. You have a lot of stuff going on in your brain. If you are going to reconcile immediately after that, you guys have to be very close.

AM: Yeah. You have to be very close and you also have to go back to the apartment. So, you can't go to Mel's party and you can't sleep with Veyer. You can talk to Phaedra, though.

CG: Speaking of that: Does sleeping with Veyer end your friendship with Aeran?

AM: Not necessarily.

CG: What about if the MC and Aeran have feelings for each other?

AM: Not necessarily.

(Laughter)

This is going into Episode 3 territory, so I don't want to say too much—

CG: Future choices have matter.

AM: Future choices matter. But unless you take a choice that specifically says "End Friendship" or "End Romance" (with the romance there's a little broken heart icon)... If you don't specifically do that, then you haven't ended anything. But there might be complications down the line. Also: he might not find out about it. It depends on what you do. So...

CG: To be determined.

AM: To be determined!

CG: So, next question. Moving off of Veyer, but not off of Aeran: Why was Zenaida searching for Aeran? He has a clear distaste of Velantis and the Guild of Mages. What about his past and reputation justified her searching for him, as opposed to the MC?

AM: Yes, so this is in the subtext of the game. Zenaida was looking for Aeran... She talks about this a little bit in one of the conversations you have with her in Episode 1. She knew where he was and she

knew about him because she has a source who told her. She wasn't looking for the main character because she didn't know about them.

CG: The main character was a surprise.

AM: The main character was a surprise. The main character has been... not intentionally on their part (though I guess it depends on how you imagine it and how you roleplay it), but they're completely off the radar. No one knows about them. No one really knows that they made it through the civil war in Vestra and that they survived the Spire because they weren't present, they are just kind of like... off the record.

CG: Not for long.

AM: Not for long. Aeran, on the other hand, has a huge reputation in the Empire. And, also, someone pointed Zenaida in his direction.

CG: Somebody...

AM: Somebody did.

(Suspicious laughter.)

CG: By the end of Episode 2, the dynamic between Aeran and the MC feels really messy and nuanced, and the MC has to walk on eggshells around him. Is this intentional and will there be some kind of satisfying payoff or resolution? Will the MC have the option to grow past their feelings?

AM: Yes and yes and yes. So, yes, it is intentional—

CG: Very much intentional.

AM: Very much intentional. I'm not having him get angry and blow up at the main character for no reason. His behaviour will make sense when you know what's going on. Because he's acting in this way for some very, very specific reasons. And yes, it is working towards a very specific conclusion. You will get part of that at the end of Episode 3. You will have some answers by then. Not at all of them, but most of them.

I can't really say much more than that other than yes, it is very intentional.

CG: And also just to add onto this whole Aeran thing... It has been brought up a bunch of times that the main character has to walk on eggshells around him, that Aeran's very easy to upset in Episode 2. It really is one of the moments in the game where the signs are there that Aeran is feeling extremely anxious, he has a lot on his mind, he is clearly bothered by something. And just like in real life, if someone is incredibly bothered by something and you are being short with them, pushy towards them, or just not letting them have their space or vent when they need to, it will go poorly.

AM: Yeah. Because you had an interesting reaction to the end of the episode.

CG: Because I know things about the future of the game, I intentionally played the episode with the least inquisitive main character ever in terms of Aeran. Never pushed him on anything, never questioned anything, gave him his space as needed. And that was one of the things I really thought about... When you are playing this less like an RPG trying to make sure you go through every single conversation branch and think of it more like a regular conversation, you don't have to get all of your information right now.

AM: Yeah.

CG: In fact, with the mental state of your friend here, trying to push him for details is probably not a good thing. This person is clearly telling you he does not want to talk about this, he does not want to deal with these issues right now. And, in fact, there's some conversations on the branch where he tells you "I *can't* tell you right now." He doesn't lie to you.

AM: Yeah, no, he never lies to you.

CG: He just is not willing to talk about this at the moment. Whereas if you think about this, once again, like real life and not a game... My player character's view on that was: All right. We'll finish this job, and then we'll talk. Let's get out of Velantis. Let's get out of this place that's clearly stressing you out. But I'm going to need to know about this Wayfarer stuff at some point. It doesn't have to be now—because why would it have to be now?

AM: Yeah. And it was maybe a little too forceful on my part to shove the player into a position where they don't have a choice but to set him off. Because the thing that bothers him... The thing that causes the fight to happen in the first place is the main character asking about the Spire, which is a question I force you to select. There is no other option, you must click on the question to order to proceed.

And I did consider that really carefully. Because in a game where your gameplay is choice, you do need to consider your bottlenecks carefully. And this is a bottleneck you can't escape. What happens during the fight scene is setting up for something else, and if you skip that entirely... if I had written another path... it is going to make that alternative path not feel satisfying in terms of narrative pacing.

CG: And that's sort of where the fact that it is very intentional comes in. This is not something that happened because you had a whim about Aeran and the main character having a big fight. You'll read and find out.

AM: Yeah.

(Laughter)

CG: Will we have the chance to restore or rebuild the Wayfarer Order? One that can once again rival the Guild of Mages?

AM: No. Well, that's the short answer. The long answer is: your main character will be able to think about it and consider their feelings about that. It could be a goal that they have in the long term. But the game itself is not about rebuilding the order. So, no.

(Laughter)

CG: It's a little beyond the scope of the main character.

AM: Yeah, they're going to have other things that they are doing.

CG: Any predictions on who you think might be a fan favourite character in future episodes?

AM: Okay. I have some thoughts. Well... I think the character who has surprised me the most is obviously Veyer, because everyone loves them and I did not expect that. **(laughter)** So, I'm kind of guessing that when Episode 2 releases publicly, that trend will continue.

But in terms of future characters who haven't shown up yet, I think Ren's going to be pretty popular. But he fits certain character tropes that are pretty popular—

CG: Also, the characters within Ren's storyline.

AM: Yeah. And you'll be spending a lot of time with them in Act 1, too, so they'll be very present. And the more a character is present, the more time you'll have to get attached to them, and that kind of thing.

CG: I think sort of depending on the choices somebody makes and depending on what their particular playthrough looks like, I feel like after a few episodes from now, there's going to be fairly big fights between the Mel crowd, the Calla crowd, the Ren crowd, the Alexia crowd...

AM: Yeah.

CG: With the Aeran stan still standing strong.

(Laughter)

AM: Yeah, I think the clown car might get pushed off a cliff... but they'll survive.

CG: Exactly.

AM: Maybe they need to get pushed off the cliff. Maybe, you know, there's not a gigantic void at the bottom. The car will just keep rolling... I think this metaphor is getting away from us.

(Laughter)

CG: But yeah, I think we're quickly heading into the place where the fan favourite characters are going to be wide and varied.

AM: Yeah, especially because of the way I write side characters and minor characters. This kind of reaches back to a question we answered at the beginning with how I do my characters... But characterization for side characters and minor characters... With it not really being pre-planned in advance, I just feel it out as I'm writing. I make a lot of decisions very, very quickly about that character when I introduce them. And that usually goes back to what is their motivation, what is their goal, and then I imagine a couple different character traits. There's usually a defining one that I latch onto.

So, for example, with Veyer, it's like... They cannot *not* lean on something. And their physicality became a huge part of how they approached the scene. And with the type of physicality I gave them, they ended up being very sarcastic and snarky, and that informed a bunch of other things. So, I think—

CG: So, the real answer to this question is that the fan favourite character is going to be the librarian in Episode 6 but you have no idea who they are yet.

AM: Yeah, exactly, the fan favourite character doesn't exist yet, but they're coming.

(Laughter)

CG: Some librarian, some courier, some merchant, whatever, that just gets thought about five minutes before you write them and suddenly there's a ton of fan art of them specifically.

AM: Yeah.

(Laughter)

CG: But that is all the questions that we have today. And so, thank you once again for answering these questions, Anna.

AM: Thank you. Thank you, friends, for submitting them.

CG: And definitely keep an eye out for future Q&A sessions if you have any more questions.

AM: If you're new to my Patreon, I usually do these Q&As after I release an episode. I do have a stretch goal where after I reach a certain amount I can hopefully do shorter versions of them monthly. But there's always a major one after I release an episode, so there will be another one when Episode 3 comes out.

CG: And don't forget to check out the Discord, if any of you haven't yet. Because if there's one thing this fanbase loves more than anything else... All these fan favourite characters, all these questions, and all these theories, oh my goodness does the Discord love talking about them.

AM: Yeah, if you're not familiar with Discord, but you would like a community to chat about alpha build stuff with, then the Patreon Discord is a really chill place to come and chat with people about how your playthroughs are going and any theories you might have and all that kind of stuff... And it is accessible for everyone, regardless of what tier you're at.

CG: That is all for us. Have a wonderful day or night, wherever you are, and we will see you another time.

Thanks for listening! 💕💕

[Episode 3 Sneak Peek #4](#)

[Jun 22, 2022](#)

Spoilers ahead! If you wanted to know what happened to the money Zenaida owes you... here's one answer.



Malsara strides across the room. "Here."

Thunk.

Two heavy leather pouches drop between the full teapot and the cheese, the sudden weight rattling the brass cups.

"Your payment," she announces.

You exchange looks with Aeran. As one, you lean forward and snatch your individual pouches from the table. When you pry the strings open, you find it bursting with crowns of all sizes, from the small, oblong half-crowns to the thin, rectangular coins denoting five hundred. You comb through it, rapidly calculating the full amount. They look freshly minted, sporting an unfamiliar design of the Arathian phoenix.

"Three thousand crowns each, as promised," Malsara continues, observing you closely as you sort through the money. "Paid upfront in its entirety as thanks for your cooperation."

"Cooperation," Aeran repeats. "Who exactly does she think we're cooperating with? Lethalis discharged us last night."

Malsara fixes him with a cold look and, for the first time, you note the change in her appearance. With her serithan exchanged for practical gear, her ash blonde hair pulled into a sensible braid, and her hands gloved in leather, she looks prepared for battle. You can just make out the faint impression of

concealed daggers on her body and she carries a sword strapped to her back, the hilt and scabbard cocooned in thick, protective leather. A large sack rests at her feet, its contents unknown.

“Her Grace may have hired you in Lethalis’ name, but the order no longer cares for a pair of Wayfarers,” she says, sliding the wrapped sword from her back. “They may have made their decision. And as Umbria and the rest refuse to acknowledge the threat Solarath poses, *she* will.”

She unwraps the leather carefully and the blade rolls out, falling easily into her hand. “Consider yourselves free agents,” she continues, resting it respectfully on a nearby divan. She reaches into the sack, withdrawing Aeran’s bow and quiver, and your remaining weapons. “You are paid in full, a feat not easily managed considering the current situation with the archon. Do you find this acceptable?”

[Progress Report 2022.06.27: Too Hot to Function](#)

[Jun 27, 2022](#)

Hi friends,

This will be my last progress report for a month. My hiatus is coming up pretty quickly and I have officially run out of time to work on the game. We are also in the middle of a heat wave and it is quite literally too hot to function. 🌡️ Needless to say, my overachiever plan to finish Episode 3 in a month was wildly miscalculated.

Game Updates

Episode 2 releases publicly on July 1st. After this day, **the public build will be caught up to the alpha**. There will be no new alpha content until August (more on that below).

I am working on a patch that should be out later today or tomorrow.

- This will be the final patch for Episode 2 before its public release.
- Because I am adding additional variables, you **must** replay Episode 2 from the beginning of the episode. If you don’t, your save files will not work correctly later in the game.
- This is (hopefully) the last time an Episode 2 restart is required.
- The build should be stable after this patch.

Alpha Build Updates

Because of my hiatus, **there will not be an update to the alpha build until August**. Episode 3 Scene 1 is currently about 65,000 words and I still have several branches to finish. Because of the Episode 2

endings, the beginning of Episode 3 is quite complex. I am finished most of Aeran and Veyer's content, but still have to tackle Melchior's and a couple other spots.

I am hoping that I will be able to finish drafting it in August, then edit, code, and get it added to the alpha build.

July Hiatus

I am gone from July 2 to August 2. Since I haven't taken any form of vacation since I started working seriously on Wayfarer, this is a much needed break. I have no plans to write while I'm away, but I may get a little bit done here and there.

I have very limited internet access while I'm gone. I will be checking in occasionally, so if you send me a message, it will take a while for me to respond. Since I'm not actively working on the game, I have a whole month of additional content posts planned instead! These are queued to post every Monday and Friday throughout July. Because I am not updating the alpha build before I leave, I am also queueing Episode 3 sneak peaks to post every Wednesday. So, though I won't be active online, my Patreon will be posting a lot more regularly than it normally does.

I will post a July overview on July 1st that will go over what you can expect. It will be pinned to the top of my Patreon page for easy access.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to reach out. As always, thank you all so much for your support! 💕💕

[Episode 3 Sneak Peek #5](#)

[Jun 29, 2022](#)

Back to Veyer and Zenaida for this one! This occurs on a branch after pursuing Veyer during the gallery scene. Spoilers ahead!



"You look surprisingly at home, \$firstname dear."

"Keep the comments to yourself, Veyer. The last time I got into a boat with a Guild mage I was ready to throw him overboard."

They smirk, their eyes dancing. “That would have been a delightful sight. I’d love to see how Quirinus fares, but alas... another time, perhaps—”

“*Quiet*,” Zenaida commands, gripping your shoulder. The pads of her fingers dig sharply into your collarbone, warm against your skin.

The boat lurches, picking up speed as it hurtles for the gate. In the stern, Malsara rises to her feet and raises a hand high in the air. A silver cuff glints on her wrist, throbbing with imbued energy.

She taps it.

The glimmering lights ahead shudder and wink out, deactivating just as the bow crosses the threshold. It slips through the arch with ease and out the other side, traversing into a wide waterway shaded with overgrown trees and foliage. Curious, you crane your neck and look behind you, watching as the wards shimmer and spring to life, returning to their former state as if nothing had happened.

An unsettled feeling twists in your gut as you watch the great walls slowly shrink in the distance. While you suspected Malsara had a her ways of avoiding detection, you didn’t think leaving the palace would be as straightforward as finding a boat and sailing out—particularly with your current company in tow.

“Malsara?” Zenaida murmurs, watching her with unease.

Malsara meets her eyes and nods.

“Thank Lyrana,” Zenaida breathes, closing her eyes.

“What was that about?” you ask, rubbing your collarbone. She gripped you hard enough her fingertips left a mark.

“My mother has placed certain... restraints on me,” she explains. “Magically enforced house arrest. The device Malsara wears can momentarily deactivate Mahanin’s wards, but we were not certain whether I could physically leave the grounds. I hypothesized physical contact with you would disrupt my bonds long enough for me to pass beyond their boundary.”

Your jaw clenches. “What do you mean, you *hypothesized? What would have happened if it didn’t work?”

She sighs wearily. “I don’t know. The restraints placed on me are new, an invention of House Anaxas’ engineers within the Arcanists’ Lodge. They could have prevented me from leaving physically, like running into a wall that only exists for me. Or they could have transported me back to my chambers... or torn me apart. Protection and spatial magic often have unexpected consequences when synergized.”

[CHOICE] 1. “Could have told me in advance. I don’t appreciate being used like some...

*****talisman.”**

*****2. “You could have died? And you still risked it?”**

3. You have to admit, you're impressed. Compared to the rest of Lethalis, Zenaida seems to be the only one willing to go to any lengths to achieve their goals.

Zenaida bows her head, folding her hands shamefully in her lap. "I apologize, Wayfarer \$lastname," she says. "It... slipped my mind. My mother's interference was never supposed to be a factor. But unfortunately last night did not go as I hoped and it has fallen to me to see this through."

Veyer sprawls back in their seat, sticking a hand over the edge. Water gurgles around their trailing fingers, creating a ripple in the channel. "Oh, Your Grace," they say, *tsking* lightly. "So young! So burdened! The weight of the world only falls on your shoulders if you put it there yourself."

She presses her lips together, her gaze going ice cold. "I won't apologize for my conscience. Lethalis has fallen far in these past years, our mission compromised time and again by fear and inaction. Sometimes I wonder whether we are no better than Solarath. Still, I will not sit idly by while Quirinus—"

They flick the rippling surface, splashing water across the gunwale. You recoil, making a face as it sprays your arm.

"Consciences are only for those who can afford them," they say grimly. "Be grateful you're in a position to have one."

[July Bonus Content Extravaganza!](#)

[Jul 1, 2022](#)

Hi folks,

Happy July!

If you're new to my Patreon, welcome! There's a lot going on this month, so I'm leaving this as the pinned post until August.

Hiatus

I am on hiatus from July 2 to August 2. I will not be working on the game during my trip, and I will also not have regular internet access. If you send me a message, it will take several days (or more) for me to get back to you.

There will be no progress reports while I'm away.

Alpha Build & Episode 3

Now that Episode 2 has released publicly, the alpha build does not contain any new content. Episode 3 is in development and Scene 1 is about 60% complete. The alpha build will not be updated until August, when I'm back from my trip and can finish, edit, and code Scene 1. As Scene 1 deals with resolving multiple branches from the end of Episode 2, it is the most complex part of the episode. My goal now is to hopefully complete Episode 3 by the end of September.

If you prefer playing on the alpha build instead of the public one, here is the link and current password:

LINK: <https://idrellegames.itch.io/wayfarer-alpha-build>

JULY PASSWORD: V6exMLudFY8oJJ3

✗ DO NOT SHARE THIS PASSWORD! ✗

- Please report any bugs or errors to the #bug-report channel in the Patreon-only part of the Wayfarer Discord server and include a screenshot.
- If you do not have Discord, bugs and errors can be reported to [the bug report form here](#).
- If you encounter bugs and errors that have been fixed, close your browser and restart the game.

[For Episode 2 patch notes, see the last alpha build post here.](#)

Bonus Content Extravaganza!

While I'm gone, my Patreon will be posting extra bonus content (alongside the regular monthly content for the Apprentice tier+).

Here's the schedule:

- **July 2** – Monthly bonus content vote opens [Wayfarer tier+]
- **July 4** – Wayfarer Character sheet template [all tiers]
- **July 6** – Episode 3 Sneak Peek #6 [all tiers]
- **July 8** – Sabien Quirinus lore post [all tiers]
- **July 11** – Allegra Arantir lore post [all tiers]
- **July 13** – Episode 3 Sneak Peek #7 [all tiers]
- **July 15** – Umbria Bellaris lore post [all tiers]
- **July 18** – Veyer Krellion lore post [all tiers]
- **July 20** – Episode 3 Sneak Peek #8 [all tiers]
- **July 22** – Zenaida Anaxas lore post [all tiers]
- **July 24** – Winner of the bonus content vote posted [Apprentice tier+]
- **July 25** – Sophia Anaxas lore post [all tiers]
- **July 27** – Episode 3 Sneak Peek #9 [all tiers]

- **July 29** – Phaedra Amestris lore post [all tiers]
- **August 1** – Lilac Company lore post [all tiers]

Thank you! 💕



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SKILLS

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CHARACTER NAME

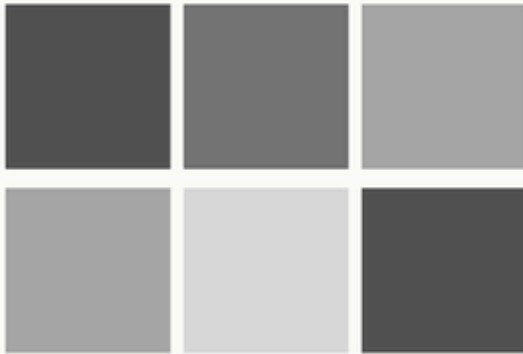


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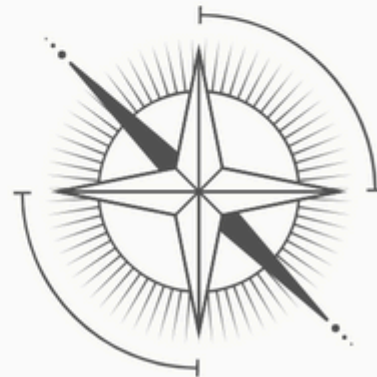
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SKILLS



CHARACTER NAME

[Wayfarer Character Sheet](#)[Jul 4, 2022](#)

Do you like making character sheets? I do!

This is a template for your Wayfarer MC that can be edited and downloaded easily in Canva. You will need to make a Canva account to use the template (it's free!).

[Template Link Here](#) ✨

Editing Tips

- To add your character's profile image at the top, click on the decorative border and move it back one layer with Position. Then drag and drop your MC's portrait into the box. Click on the box and move that back one layer and the decorative border will be spaced on top of it again.
- To edit the stat bars, click on the stat name, go to Position and move it back one layer. Click and drag the bar to be as long or as short as you want. When that's done, use Position to move each layer back one until everything's back to the order it's supposed to be in.

[Episode 3 Sneak Peek #6](#)

[Jul 6, 2022](#)

A bit from an Aeran branch. Spoilers ahead!

“...how you managed to get them back is beyond me.”

“I am not stopping you from using your head. That lack of imagination is your problem, not mine.”

“Fine. Here I thought there were no weapons allowed in Oriath District, but I guess there’s always a loophole. I wonder—is that because you’re Zenaida’s retainer or because you’re an Erebian operative?”

You enter the room to find Malsara and Aeran staring daggers at each other. The assassin stands impatiently on the edge of the foyer, her arms crossed, one foot resting on the lower step. Aeran leans against the back of a nearby couch, dressed and prepared, Alassar steel glinting in his hands as he sorts his arrows.

It is part of his regimen to sort his arrows, a habit he learned from Varyn / Brissa Varyn all those years ago. Archers have always been rare among Wayfarers. It is not the bow itself that cuts through magic, but the arrowheads. As Alassar steel can no longer be forged, there are very few Alassar arrows left in existence and caring for them is tedious and time consuming. You’ve seen Aeran scout the battlefield after a fight, retrieving used arrows from his fallen targets only to set them aside to remake later. He often separates his arrows before heading out on a mission, organizing them so he knows by touch which are Alassar and which are ordinary steel.

In some ways, you’re grateful you inherited an easier Alassar weapon to care for. While \$master taught you the basics of archery, there’s a simplicity about your sword that you appreciate. After all these years, \$blade is as much an extension of yourself as the hand that wields it.

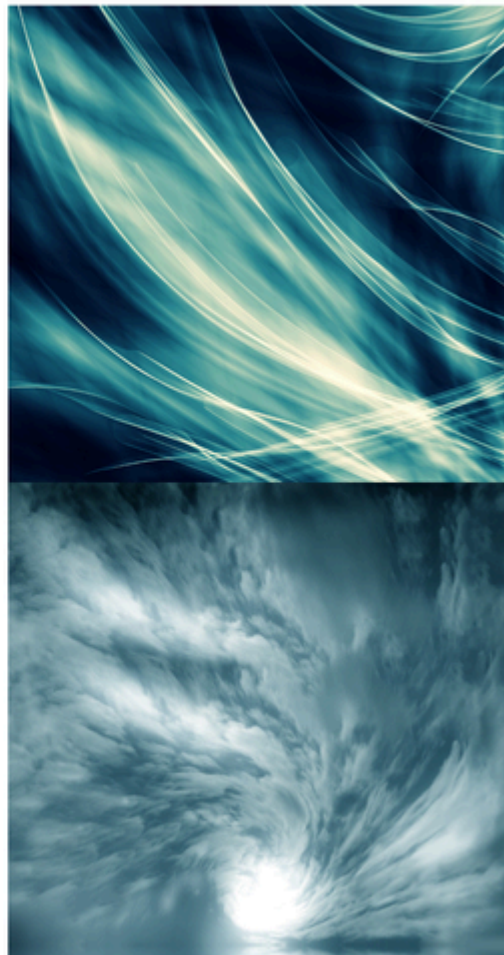
“Not all in this house place their loyalty to the archon first,” Malsara says, eyeing the arrows with clear discomfort. “There are those who answer to Her Grace first and foremost.”

Several realizations click into place. “Rasmira and Venka,” you say, crossing the room to join them. Out of the corner of your eye, you spot the remnants of your meal. It won’t keep, but perhaps it wouldn’t be a bad idea to take some of it with you...

You divert your route and squeeze by the divans. Malsara’s eyes bore into your back as you kneel next to the table and pick over the leftover food. “If Rasmira was just going to hand them back, why bother disarming us yesterday?” you ask.

“Appearances, Wayfarer \$lastname,” Malsara replies irritably. “You were a pair of Wayfarers arriving on palace grounds the day of an important gala. Even though you masqueraded as Her Grace’s bodyguards, to give you preferential treatment would have further raised the archon’s suspicions.”

She pauses, a slight frown on her lips as she watches you fold the food into a cloth and stuff it into your pack. “Trust is important within any Imperial house,” she continues. “Rasmira could very well have barred you from the palace, but they love Her Grace like a daughter. They may not approve, but they trust her implicitly.”



[Jul 8, 2022](#)

Sabien Quirinus is the Grand Archsage of the Guild of Mages and the current head of the Council of Mages. Active in the Guild for over a century, his rise to power was slow and steady, a game of patience and persistence over an outright show of strength and control. He began his career feigning little interest in the politics that governed the Guild and its Council, choosing instead to prioritize his research. He expressed great interest in the biology of magical creatures and his work took him to many remote and unique locations. During the early years of his career, he visited the Astran wastelands east of Rhesainia, the Maribian Basin in Calantha, the aeda city Aos in the Gairloch Mountains, the Faran villages on the coast of the shattered sea, and the melusine city Maira beneath the Lotharic Sea.

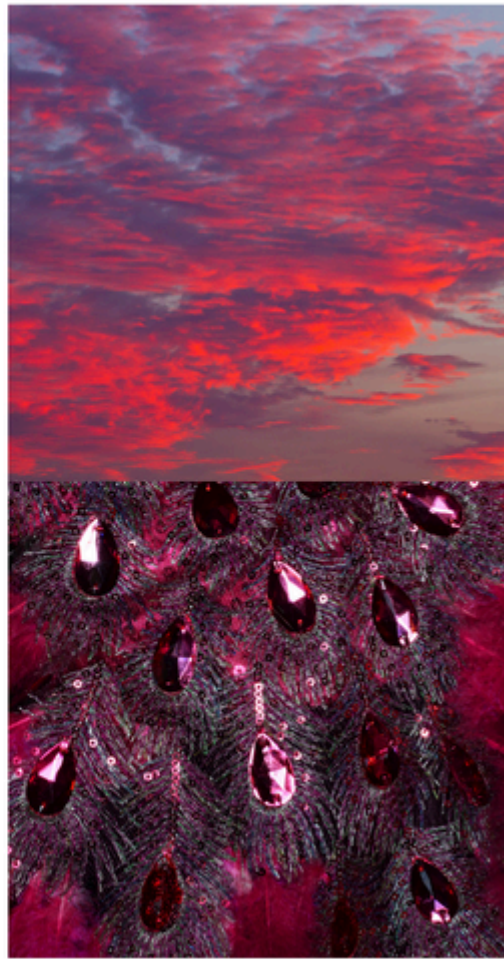
Forty years ago, he returned to Velantis and worked his way up the hierarchy. Though his magical philosophies were unorthodox, he eventually manipulated his way onto the Council of Mages. When the previous Grand Archsage passed, he was elected to the position in an unanimous vote.

Quirinus is considered the most powerful mage in Guild history. He is the only person known to be born attuned to three spheres. The combination of his powers often manifest in unique and interesting ways unattainable by others.

Additional Information:

- **Age:** 120s
- **Gender:** Male (he/him)
- **Ancestry:** Elven
- **Appearance:** Should-length blonde hair, bearded, blue-grey eyes, pale complexion
- **Birthplace:** Erenvor, Arathia
- **Magic:** Spheres of Transformation, Conjuraton & Preservation
- **Faction Associations:** Order of Solarath

Character references shouldn't be considered exact representations of what the character looks like, these are about vibes/mood more than anything else



[Allegra Arantir \[Character Lore\]](#)

[Jul 11, 2022](#)

Allegra Arantir is an archsage of the Guild of Mages and an Imperial battlemage. Her duties to the Arathian Empire have kept her away from Velantis in the past, overseeing the empire's military mage battalions. She has fought in various border clashes over the years and has become one of the most decorated Imperial generals. Currently, she is on an extended leave from the front lines and has intentions to retire permanently from the Imperial army.

As a young mage, she was present in the capital during the Marcian Conspiracy and was part of the Guild battalion that faced off against Marcus and Nesarian, Darius Avennor, and their Wayfarers. She is personally familiar with the current emperor, Ariston and Nesarian. It is rumoured her agents are responsible for tracking down and removing Imperial citizens who voice displeasure with their emperor's reign.

For the past fifteen years, she has acted as Sabien Quirinus' right hand and confidant. Her Imperial connections have allowed Solarath to infiltrate many parts of the empire, expanding their ranks to fulfill their goals.

Additional Information:

- **Age:** Mid-40s
- **Gender:** Female (she/her)
- **Ancestry:** Human
- **Appearance:** Long red hair, green eyes, olive complexion, dark mole below her left eye
- **Birthplace:** Nesactium, Arsenia
- **Magic:** Sphere of Disruption.
- **Faction Associations:** Order of Solarath, Arathian Empire

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[Episode 3 Sneak Peek #7](#)

[Jul 13, 2022](#)

Spoilers ahead! From a Zenaida branch.



Her hands stop twisting. “I see. I suppose I cannot ask anything more of you. If you need assistance chartering a ship, I can—”

“No. You got me out of Rona, you’ve paid me for this job. That’s more than enough of your help.”

She pauses. “And Wayfarer Kellis? Will he be joining you?”

You look away, jaw clenched. You’re not sure where you and Aeran stand after last night. You’ve always known his tendency to lash out when he feels trapped, but his words were needlessly cruel. You feel sick to your stomach just thinking about it...

And how Aeran will respond when you show up with Veyer in tow.

“I don’t know,” you say finally. “Why does it matter to you?”

She clasps her hands in her lap. "I have a vested interest in you and Wayfarer Kellis," she says. "There will likely come a time when I will call on you again. If you have opportunities elsewhere, I would like to know."

Irritation twists in your gut. "That, frankly, isn't your business. It's not like you have a monopoly on Wayfarer contracts."

Zenaida averts her eyes, her fingers tugging at her hood. Veyer chuckles at her discomfort, a sly smirk on their face.

"No," she says after a moment. "But I have admired your order for a long time. Too many in the Guild use their prejudices to disregard your innate talents and abilities. If there ever was a time for Wayfarers, it is now. Now the Astrials have awoken, now that malevolent forces seek to destabilize everything we hold dear—"

1. "You have another Wayfarer. Why do you need me when you have Aeran?"

[CHOICE] 2. "I'm only here for the money. Save your end of the world speech for someone who believes it."

3. Shrug it off and ignore her. She can make all the speeches she likes, they will only fall on deaf ears.

"Believe what you will, Wayfarer \$lastname," she says. "The truth remains that you are skilled and I trust your capabilities. I would pay you thrice what you received today to have your continued support. Why else would I have chosen you to be here now, at my side?"

You turn your head, craning your neck as you stare at the boat's wake. The breeze picks up, sending a sudden chill rolling down your spine. The water laps rhythmically against the boat, beating in your ears as the vessel continues its steady journey westward.

Zenaida waits, calm and collected, her hands folded neatly in her lap. You can feel her eyes boring into you.

There's something about such overt flattery that gives you pause. Zenaida does not share the same sensibilities as her colleagues in the Guild. Veyer doesn't either, but unlike them, her interest you feels calculated.

Sophia called her daughter's interest in Wayfarers an obsession... Why such intense interest in the first place? It seems her goal has always been to recruit a Wayfarer and that goal eventually led her to Aeran.

But you spent years searching for surviving Wayfarers to no avail. With the exception of Varyn's letter, you only found rumours and whispers until Aeran discovered you in Karth. How was it that Zenaida was able to find him with relative ease? Of course being a Guild mage and an Imperial noble expanded her resources far beyond anything available to you, but the more you think about it, the more unsettled you become.

You know she had an informant. When did they give her Aeran's name and location? Who pointed her to Rona?

And if she was so engrossed in a such a search, why were you never part of the equation?



[Umbria Bellaris \[Character Lore\]](#)

[Jul 15, 2022](#)

Umbria Bellaris is an archsage of the Guild of Mages. Despite her quiet and reserved demeanour, she has been considered unusual by her colleagues due to her unorthodox approach to magic and research. As one of Diradan Tower's most skilled graduates, she rapidly climbed through the ranks and made a name of herself. She caught the eye of Sabien Quirinus and studied under him for a time. They had a falling out shortly after she became an archsage. She is relatively untested as a teacher, having taught only two apprentices prior to the explosion at Diradan Tower.

Umbria is aggressively opposed to Quirinus' methods and ideologies, a stance that eventually led her to take command of the Order of Lethalis in an attempt to counter him. She has an ongoing rivalry with Allegra Arantir, who believes she is undeserving of the archsage position.

Before the tower explosion, Umbria's research investigated new forms of curative magic and ways to resuscitate the clinically dead. She began this research while studying under Quirinus, as their abilities had much in common.

Additional Information:

- **Age:** Late 30s
- **Gender/Pronouns:** Female (she/her)
- **Ancestry:** Human
- **Appearance:** Dark brown, curly hair, brown eyes, brown complexion
- **Birthplace:** Edessa, Arathian Empire
- **Magic:** Spheres of Transformation & Preservation
- **Faction Associations:** Order of Lethalis

Character references shouldn't be considered exact representations of what the character looks like, these are about vibes/mood more than anything else



[Veyer Krellion \[Character Lore\]](#)

[Jul 18, 2022](#)

Veyer Krellion is a savant of the Guild of Mages. They were born to Arathian merchants who traded primarily with the nations east of the Empire and spent much of their youth travelling the central and eastern parts of the continent. When their magic manifested and they proved to be adept with it, their parents saw an unique opportunity to improve their station. They spent every crown they had to prepare their child to pass the rigorous exams necessary to enroll in a Guild academy. Despite having no interest in becoming a Guild mage, Veyer passed with flying colours and entered the prestigious academy at Oseiran Tower in Erenvor.

Much to their parents' horror, Veyer resisted any attempt to turn them into an Imperial Guild mage. After their graduation, they travelled the world, including journeys to Calantha and Farandor. They picked up many of their eccentricities during this time, including a penchant for mixing clothing from different regions and their elaborate, vibrant tattoos.

Concern about Quirinus and a request from Ashani led them to return to Rhesainia and the Guild. When Lethalis discovered Quirinus' interest in the Astrials, Veyer volunteered for an unenviable position:

infiltrating the Imperial court to keep watch over the Astrial housed there. However, an Imperial court mage's position is for life and they were subsequently tied to Erenvor forever. Veyer would later come to regret this decision.

They have watched over the Astrial for three decades with little reprieve beyond sanctioned visits to Velantis.

Additional Information:

- **Age:** 60s
- **Gender/Pronouns:** Nonbinary (they/them)
- **Ancestry:** Elven
- **Appearance:** Shoulder-length dark hair, dark brown eyes, tawny complexion
- **Birthplace:** Beyond the eastern Arathian border
- **Magic:** Sphere of Illumination
- **Faction Associations:** Order of Lethalis

Character references shouldn't be considered exact representations of what the character looks like, these are about vibes/mood more than anything else

[Episode 3 Sneak Peek #8](#)

[Jul 20, 2022](#)

Spoilers ahead! From an Aeran friend branch.



You approach him, bare feet treading on the stone, and he stiffens at the sound. Hastily, he grabs the robe and slips it about his shoulders, wrapping it around himself. He looks tired and worn, his sandy-brown hair tousled and tangled by a night of restless sleep. Despite the deep tan from your month at sea, his features are pale and pallid. How long has he been out here, lost in thought, brooding about Mahanin, Velantis, and everything this city represents?

“Bad night?” you ask, joining him.

He pauses. “I’m fine.”

[CHOICE] 1. "Liar."

2. Leave him be.

Your tone is playful, a light-hearted attempt to slip into that banter that comes so easily to you. Aeran casts you a sideways look and falls silent. You wait, wondering whether he's going to refuse the bait. Considering how wretched he looks, you wouldn't be surprised if he sunk further into whatever brooding thoughts he's festering in this morning—

He laughs.

"What?" you ask, surprised.

"Can't hide anything from you, can I?" he replies. His elbows dig into the balustrade, the sleeves of his robe fanning out across the rough stone. "Rhodarth would say that's good for me, if he were here."

He hasn't mentioned the mercenary since you left Rona and you can't help but wonder what became of him. With the Crimson Count's death, the melusine is a free agent once more. You can't imagine someone like him would stay in Rona for long.

"Smart man, that Rhodarth," you say finally. "Glad someone kept you in check before I came along."

He looks away, staring out across the grounds to the lake and the palace's great red walls. Fog clouds the mountains above, their snow-capped summits grey in the early morning. A golden glow blooms in the east, the promise of a sun soon to rise above the peaks. Mahanin's elaborate gardens and lustrous lawns shine with dew, shimmering in the grey light. Like the rest of the palace, they are calm and quiet, without a soul in sight. Compared to the bustling liveliness of last night, they might as well be a completely different area of the palace. The pavilions have already been dismantled and the grounds returned to a pristine condition. Considering the sun hasn't even fully risen, the archon's staff are considerably efficient.

You suspect Rasmira has something to do with it.

"I can't stop thinking about what comes next, \$firstname," he says.



[Zenaida Anaxas \[Character Lore\]](#)

[Jul 22, 2022](#)

Zenaida Anaxas is the only child of Sophia Anaxas, the Archon of Velantis, and her consort, Sandro. Born into a life of privilege, Zenaida had the world at her fingertips. As she had no siblings, she was her mother's sole heir and she began training to inherit her mother's duties at a young age. However, she had no interest in politics and quickly began to resent the pressure placed on her by her mother and her House.

Her powerful capacity for Preservation magic made her desirable recruit for the Guild of Mages. Seeking an alternative to the life she was born into, she accepted an offer to train and study at Diradan Tower, much to her mother's horror. She excelled in her studies and rapidly climbed through the ranks, eventually obtaining the position of savant.

As a member of the Guild of Mages, Zenaida's loyalty to her House and position as the Velantian heir is compromised. Another heir has not yet been named and she fears her mother seeks to separate her from the life she built for herself.

She maintains a close bond with the Markal twins, Nova (a fellow savant) and Malsara (her bodyguard). She has never supported Quirinus's ideologies; her fears of where he could lead the Guild eventually led her to the Order of Lethalis.

Though her relationship with her mother is strained, she is close to her father, Sandro, and Rasmira, the steward of House Anaxas. As Sophia was often busy with her work, Rasmira partially raised Zenaida. She sees them as something like a parent.

Additional Information:

- **Age:** Early 30s
- **Gender/Pronouns:** Female (she/her)
- **Ancestry:** Human
- **Appearance:** Long, dark hair, dark brown eyes, brown complexion
- **Birthplace:** Velantis, Arathian Empire
- **Magic:** Sphere of Preservation
- **Faction Associations:** Order of Lethalis

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[The Making of Episode 2](#)

[Jul 24, 2022](#)

Wayfarer Episode 2 was a production, to say the least. While it's not as long as Episode 1 (in terms of overall content), it is significantly more intricate: more variables, more paths, more lasting consequences.

When I began work on the episode in September 2021, I was fresh off Episode 1 and all the things I had learned from creating it. I had a much better understanding of the Twine/SugarCube engine and how to structure and code my most commonly used features (such as skill checks, dialogue loops, and choice/action/dialogue dependent outcomes within self-contained branches). I had been thinking about Episode 2 for months. Following the game's beat chart, I drafted the overall episode outline so I could get a sense of the episode's pace and trajectory.

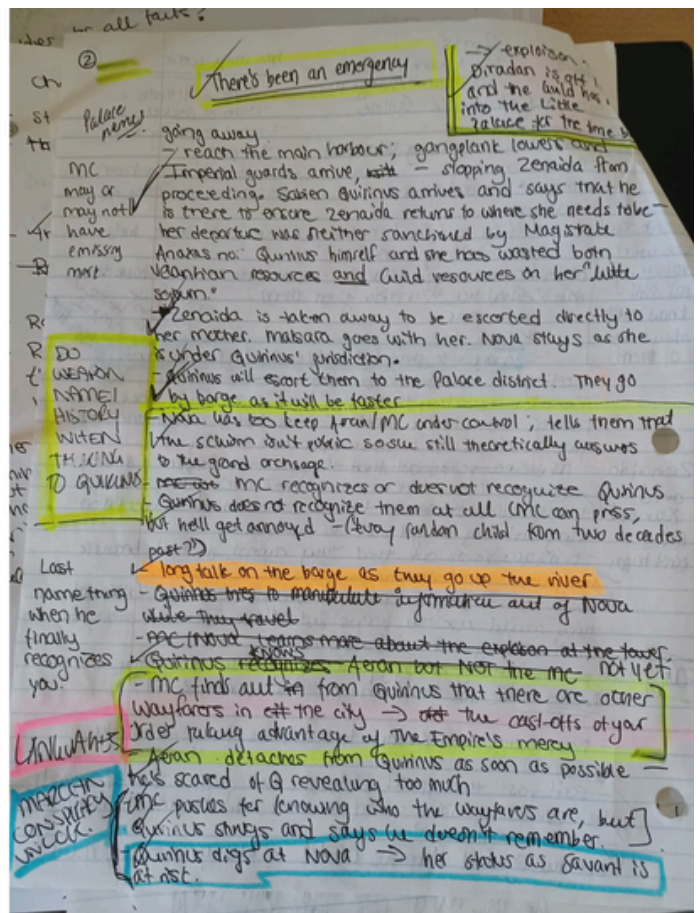
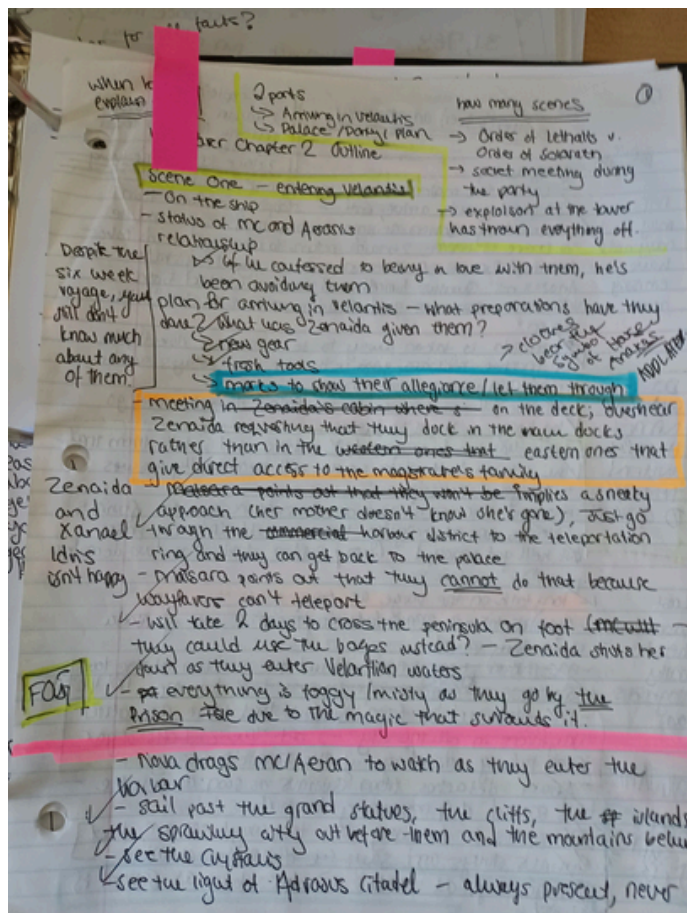
I knew Episode 2 would be more complicated than Episode 1, albeit in different ways. Whereas Episode 1 was a self-contained prototype for the game as a whole, Episode 2 is when the main plot arrives.

Major characters are introduced, important worldbuilding lore is dropped—*this* was the player's true introduction to the world and their place in it.

Wayfarer's opening three episodes are based on Dragon Age: Origin's design: first, a self-contained story that explains *how* the main character had no choice but to accept their current circumstances; second, an introductory sequence that lays the groundwork for the main character's role in the universe, the foundation for the main plot, and hints at future subplots; third, a sequence where everything falls and apart and nothing goes according to plan, springing the main plot into action.

The Original Outline

I originally only wanted to spend 3-4 months working on Episode 2, but as tends to be the trend with interactive fiction, I significantly underestimated how much time it would take. My constant struggle with IF outlines is that when I look them over, I still think of them in terms of regular novel or play outlines. I'm always underestimating how much time it actually takes because I never factor how long it takes to do dialogue tree branches or other little bits of variation that ensures the player always feels like they're making a choice. Though novel is in the name, writing an *interactive* novel is fundamentally different from writing a *novel*. Even a couple years into this, I still have difficulty acknowledging that within my process.



The original outline consisted of five scenes:

- Scene 1: the MC and Aeran's arrival in Velantis, Quirinus waylaying them at the port, and the journey to Mahanin Palace
- Scene 2: the gala scene, broken into five locations
- Scene 3: the Order of Lethalis scene
- Scene 4: the fight with Aeran and its aftermath (including sleeping with either Aeran or Mel)
- Scene 5: the Diradan Tower sequence

Scene 1 was written in a little over a month, between the end of September and the start of November. I remember being a little stressed when the content started taking me a long time to create as I wanted to get new material updated on the alpha build as soon as possible. The first 10,000 words had a whole scene with the captain of the *Dareia* that ended up going nowhere and getting scrapped (shame, because I liked what I was doing with Xanael, but oh well). Because this was the player's first look at the game's actual setting, I felt a lot of pressure to make it "right": it needed the right imagery, the right descriptions, the right character interactions. There was a delicate balance between Zenaida and Quirinus—I didn't want her to look stupid, but I also needed Quirinus to outmaneuver her.

EPISODE SECRET: Blade Names

I originally hadn't planned for the player to name their MC's sword. I can't remember when exactly I got the idea (I think it was when I was working on Episode 1), but it felt like a natural extension of Alassar weapons being unique objects passed down to different Wayfarers through the years. Additionally, it was becoming more and more important to the plot that Aeran inherited his bow from Darius Avennor, so I wanted the MC to have something of similar significance. How do you make an inherited weapon your own? What's its history? I really like this mechanic and while it won't affect much outside of flavour text, I like the personalization it brings to each player's MC.

At one point, I had planned for each history to give the player a different skill boost, but then I realized it didn't make sense within the context of the game. How does a *weapon* increase a person's skill, exactly—especially for something like Persuasion or Perception? While this is a

super common mechanic in fantasy RPGs, it didn't fit the continuity of my worldbuilding, so I axed it.

I began Scene 2 in November and it took me a month to write the lead-up to the gala. I knew I wanted the player to have some fun getting dressed up and I really wanted to have all those little personal details you would never achieve in a traditional video game (such as their hair getting longer, choosing to cut it, etc.). When I play games with a lot of character customization, I usually find myself going back to the CC after major story events to update or change my character's appearance and I wanted to bring some of that energy into Scene 2.

Because the "party preparations" sequence took so long, I ended up splitting Scene 2 in half: Scene 2 was now the conversation with Aeran in the apartment and the preparations for the gala; Scene 3 would be the gala itself.

After reviewing the episode outline some more and discussing it with my partner and my editor, I realized I needed to cut "Scene 5" out of Episode 2 and make it its own thing. There were a few reasons for this, namely:

- Ending the episode on the night of the gala (regardless of who the MC ends up with or where they are) felt like a definitive *end*. An extra scene would make the episode feel like it was overstaying its welcome.
- I needed to get through the (slow and painful) era of getting the alpha build 1 chapter ahead of the public build as soon as possible. Episode 3 (which is now Episode 4) is a long episode with three separate paths. It was becoming more and more obvious that I needed a "breather" episode in-between so I could keep my public release schedule on track.

At this point, Scene 5 from the original outline (which deals with Diradan Tower) became Episode 3. Once I began writing the gala scene, I heavily revised the original outline, abandoning the old one in favour of the new.

EPISODE SECRET: Architectural Inspirations

Episode 2 was when I decided much of what Velantis looks like, especially in terms of architecture. Arathian architecture is primarily based on Byzantine architecture (specifically the Hagia Sophia in Istanbul), but there are also influences from Islamic art and architecture with the use of domes, arches, mosaic tiling, and outdoor elements. Mahanin Palace is from a completely different era of history from the rest of Velantis, so I wanted it to look and feel different. Lal Qila in Delhi was the main visual reference, although I also referenced the

buildings in Meridian from *Horizon: Zero Dawn*. The inner courtyard gardens—especially those with pools—are inspired by Moroccan riads.



The Gala Scene

The original outline had sketched out a number of locations and events, but I had made it too complicated. My initial idea centered around using the action points to allow the player to visit different areas of the gala and get different bits and piece of information. I was conscious of some players roleplaying shy, stoic, or reserved characters and had previously been asked if there would be the option to not participate in the gala.

However, this made the sequence far too complicated. By letting the player opt *out* of content, I would later have to account for the player not getting certain information or meeting certain characters. This made the introduction of mandatory characters (Melchior, Phaedra, Sophia, and Sandro) far too complicated as I would have to write two different versions of their introduction based on whether the player did the gala events or not. Eventually, I had to ditch the idea entirely. Instead of opting out, players could “refuse” to go during their conversation with Rasmira in return for a “reluctant” flag that would change some flavour text. I also rearranged several of the planned areas:

- the “dining room” (where you would meet Phaedora) and “ballroom” (where you would meet Melchior) became the Pavilions.
- The “lake” became the Temple of Lyrana. Originally, this was an optional area where the player would overhear a covert conversation between Sabien Quirinus and Allegra Arantir. Skill checks would determine whether the player got caught. This became too complex in how it factored into the MC’s meeting with Allegra in the pavilions, so it was cut in favour of introducing Sophia.

EPISODE SECRET: Rasmira

Rasmira was originally referred to as “steward” or “Rep” (representative) in the outline. They have a name variable, \$Ras, which controls whether the player refers to them by a nickname or not. This variable was created because of an unplanned line of dialogue where the MC could jokingly call them Ras. I like this so much, I ended up making it an actual *choice* for the sake of continuity. (If the player does not select this option, the variable is set to “Rasmira”).

Melchior’s Introduction

The Pavilions were the first location I wrote and by far the most complicated. Originally, I wanted the player to select which area of the pavilions they went to first (there’s three options: the western pavilions, the eastern pavilions, and the marquee). Because the player can encounter Allegra, Phaedora, and Mel, as well as potentially be looking for OR have potentially found Zenaida, I was struggling with the continuity here quite a bit. I axed the choice and forced the player to go western pavilions à eastern pavilions à marquee.

Melchior’s initial meeting with the MC happens outside the pavilions by a fountain because I drafted it when the pavilion location choice was in play. I removed him from the pavilions and made him the “exit” option so the player would always encounter him at the same time, on all paths. This eventually wasn’t necessary after I got rid of the pavilion location choice, but I like the sense of mystery and drama it creates with Phaedora. Most players *know* Melchior is a companion character, so I wanted to build the suspense of meeting him for a little bit after the player spots someone who suspiciously matches his description in the marquee.

Mel’s introduction scene was by far the most stressful gala scene to write. I felt a lot of pressure to make it “right” and I was worried I was going to mess it up. He was already a fan favourite character before he even made it into the game and I felt like there was a lot riding on this scene. I didn’t want to mess it up and have it be a disappointment.

The Status Effect System

When I finished Episode 1, I felt that all the systems were in place and I wasn't going to fiddle with or add anything. And then I got to the end of the gala scene and the Drunk Route happened.

Drunk Route was originally not on the outline. I was tracking whether the MC was drinking or not with the intention of changing flavour text, but when I followed that through line, I felt I *had* to give the player the option to become drunk. Once I did that, I wanted some kind of notification to inform the player that they were inebriated. That got me thinking about status effects... and I felt that if I was going to make one for being drunk, I might as well make a full system.

It took me a while to design and implement it. The system had to be thoroughly tested before it was added to the game to ensure everything was working correctly. Because status effects increase or decrease player stats, I needed to make sure turning an effect *on* increase/decreased the right stat by the right amount, and turning it *off* returned the player to their original stats. A bug or error here would permanently ruin players' skills and they would have to start over from the beginning after the bug was fixed.

I then had to design the status effect symbols for the Abilities page. I spent a lot of time researching different games and checking out their UIs for this kind of thing as I tried to get different design and naming inspirations (I think I primarily ended up looking at Pillars of Eternity and Wasteland 3—the former is a solid fantasy RPG and my partner was playing the latter at the time). The icons took a while to create. I wanted to design them purely through CSS, the same way the skill icons are (it makes it easier to change colours in the long run). I tried several different tutorials for making triangle-shaped badges through CSS and eventually ended up using a very simple triangle tutorial combined with the hexagon tutorial I used for the skill icon badges.

- [Triangle Tutorial](#)
- [Hexagon Icons](#)

The Lethalis Scene

The meeting with the Order of Lethalis is by far the most complex section of Wayfarer so far. The initial dialogue tree (from the start of the meeting to the bottleneck where the MC gets the background lore on the Astrials, Solarath, and Diradan Tower) is over 50,000 words. An average playthrough of that dialogue tree is around 4,000 words. This is by far the most varied section of the game.

There are a few reasons why it ended up like this:

- After finishing the gala scene, I had a major case of writer's block/creative slump. I was throwing ideas at the wall to see what stuck and... the ideas kept sticking.
- I wanted the scene to feel like a *negotiation*. It would have been much simpler to have the player walk into the meeting, receive all their nice, shiny lore, and then send them on their merry way. But to make the section so linear did not feel right. Everyone is suspicious of each other, everyone has ulterior motives and goals... A linear path like that did not serve the overall story or the gameplay.
- There needed to be consequences for the player's previous actions. To have Quirinus give them a message for Umbria and not give the player the option to deliver it did not feel like it was within the spirit of the game. To have the player punch Quirinus and *not* have Lethalis comment on it was also not in the spirit of the game.
- I needed to set up Aeran's through line for the fight scene and show him getting worse the longer you spend with Lethalis.
- I wanted there to be tangible consequences for how the player interacts with Lethalis, both positive and negative.

EPISODE SECRET: LEDA

Leda originally did not have a connection to Pava Kydilla (the woman you can optionally threaten when you bump into her in the pavilions). I had to go back and edit the text to say that the woman you threaten is accompanied by a dwarf. Because I wanted seven Lethalis members but did not have all of them fleshed out, I needed an easy reason for Leda to dislike the MC. I liked the idea of her being connected to Pava as a blink-and-you-miss-it consequence for a near forgettable action. On paths where you don't threaten Pava, she is ambivalent to you.

The concept of "impression points" was also developed for this scene. I used a mechanic similar to it in the Viridian Lady's villa (she has a hidden approval meter and the responses you get out of her depend on how much she approves of you) and in the Count's opening scene in Episode 1 Route B, but this is a much more fleshed out version. I like using hidden approval meters for dialogue scenes with important characters because it fleshes out the dialogue and allows more flexibility to portray faction in-fighting and relations. If I only used Lethalis approval in this scene, it would treat all seven Lethalis members as

a hive mind. With the impression points, it's possible for your Lethalis approval to drop, but for you to still unlock "favour" with one of three key members. The reward is additional lore and plot hooks to significant events.

EPISODE SECRET: Veyer Krellion

Veyer did not exist as a character until I did the outline for the Lethalis scene. I knew how many Lethalis members I needed and roughly what the dynamic would be, but I didn't know details. When I did the outline, I made a list of the Lethalis members and filled them in with filler names, descriptions, status, and motivations. "Veyer Krellion" is a placeholder name that stuck around. I steal a lot of my placeholder names from the Heroes of Might and Magic series. "Veyer" and "Krellion" are two different heroes from the fifth and third installments respectively (Veyer is a demon lord, Krellion is an ogre, and please *do not* look up Krellion's portrait, [once you See It you cannot Unsee It](#)).

I don't know how exactly Veyer ended up with the personality they did, they just... appeared on the page Like That. A couple lines of dialogue and I knew exactly who they were and what they were about.

Post-Lethalis Scenes

Since splitting the last scene of the original outline off, I knew Episode 2 would end with the Aeran fight and whatever romantic entanglements the player wanted to engage in. Originally, I had only planned for Aeran and Melchior to have intimacy scenes. Aeran's was intended to be significantly more difficult to unlock (it originally needed the love confession from Episode 1), but I found that too limiting. At one point, I had considered adding an intimacy scene for Phaedra, but I got rid of that idea pretty quickly as it was not in character for her at all. I thought about creating a "friend" scene with her similar to Mel's, but at this point in the story, she does not have enough of a reason to spend extra time with the player character, so her interaction was cut down to a short dialogue sequence.

Veyer's intimacy was not on the original outline, but I planned for it while I was in the early stages of the Lethalis meeting scene. Their intimacy scene exists because of a single line of dialogue:

"You certainly have ingratiated yourself seamlessly into Velantian high society," they say, twisting their ring around their index finger. "All you need is an inadvisable affair to close out the night and the archon might as well grant you a title. I'd offer, but I can do without the rumours."

The more I thought about it, the more I liked the concept. I had always intended to allow the player to engage in casual sexual relationships if they wanted to, with characters that are divorced from the approval/romance point system. There's a simplicity to the Veyer/MC scene that felt right for the moment.

Melchior's scenes were not nearly as complex on the outline and the moments with the Lilac Company did not exist. However, I revised them after I realized that I didn't like him taking the MC away to a private place. Because of the distance they travel and the clear power position Melchior is in, it felt strangely predatory in a way that wasn't in character and that I didn't like. I also knew I had to balance a friendship version and an asexual romance version of those scenes. The scene felt significantly better when I turned Mel's invitation into an invite to a *party* rather than a invite to spend time alone. It meant I could also use this moment to introduce the Lilac Company early and use it to define an aspect of Mel's personality that would otherwise be missing.

EPISODE SECRET: Mel's Romance Scenes

There is no asexual version of Melchior's romance scene in Episode 2. I tried drafting one, but the more I wrote, the more it didn't feel right. Casual sex is important to him and at this point, he doesn't know the player character well enough to broach that conversation. If Melchior has romance points and the player did not pursue the "friend" option of the scene, then he had ulterior motives in inviting the player character to the party. Selecting the ace romance options here will end in the player getting rejected and returning to their apartment.

Aeran's apartment scenes, in contrast, had very little revision. I knew there were several versions of tackle:

- Allosexual romance
- Asexual romance
- Friend
- MC returns to the apartment too late
- Low approval

Some of these branches share material with others (for example, the MC returning to the apartment late shares the same starting passage as the low approval branch). I also knew I wanted to be specific about the locks for each branch so it was consistent with Aeran's internal struggle and characterization.

- The romance branches need 60+ approval and 60+ romance, which is only possible if you get knocked unconscious in Episode 1. The logic here is that Aeran doesn't know he is in love with the MC until they almost die. You also cannot have told Aeran about the letters (if you found them).
- The friendship branch requires 60+ approval and 0 romance. You also cannot have killed Rhodarth personally or told Aeran about the letters.
- Everything else gets routed down the late/low approval branch.

So, what happens if you have +60 approval and under 60 romance? The idea here is that *some* romantic feelings (but not enough) complicate the situation too much for the friendship branch. If you return to the apartment early and have +10 romance points, you will unlock an alt romance scene with Aeran if you choose to check on him. It does not cover the same material as the +60 romance branches, but there is a unique conversation that does not occur anywhere else.

EPISODE SECRET: Endings

There are 14 tracked endings for Episode 2, depending on where (or with whom) the player character ends up. They are, in order from my Excel spreadsheet:

1 – Slept with Veyer

2 – Got high with Kit

3 – Drank by yourself and passed out at Melchior's party

4 – Drank with Mel and passed out

5 – Spent the night talking with Mel

6 – Slept with Mel

7 – Slept with Aeran

8 – Romanced Aeran (this is the asexual version)

9 – Forgave Aeran (this is the friend version)

10 – Discovered Aeran has disappeared from the apartment

11 – Went to bed restless (in your apartment)

12 – Went to bed well rested (in your apartment)

13 – Passed out drunk (drunk route)

14 – Passed out alone at Mel's

All of these endings bottleneck at the start of Episode 3. They will change some conversations and dialogue options, but as the episode is a major bottleneck, everything will connect together on the same path.

My Personal Favourite Parts of Episode 2

- Quirinus showing up on the docks and throwing Zenaida's plans completely off-course
- Rasmira being perpetually Too Old For This Shit
- The character creation options for the gala
- The conversation with Allegra in the pavilions
- The two councillors you can meet in the pavilions when you're looking for Phaedra and the connection to Marshwall
- The impression point system in the Lethalis scene
- The fight with Aeran (and how much fun that was to write knowing his motivations and history)
- Veyer's gallery scene
- Kythera and the Lilac Company
- All of the romance scenes



[Sophia Anaxas \[Character Lore\]](#)

[Jul 25, 2022](#)

Sophia Anaxas is the archon of Velantis. After the Velantian annexation, House Anaxas was granted governance of Velantis and the surrounding region by Emperor Calas and Nesarian as reward for their services in the war. In the ninety or so years since the annexation, House Anaxas' favour with the Imperial family has fallen and Sophia now treads a dangerous line, balancing increasing demands from Erenvor and a strong dislike from Velantis' middle and lower classes.

She became archon at a young age upon the death of her father. Her marriage to Sandro Emerion (now Anaxas) had been arranged many years prior and was swiftly enacted. The marriage was purely political, resulting in a reserved and cold relationship, and the birth of a single child: Zenaida.

Sophia has recently caused a stir in Velantian political circles after a scandalous relationship with her former Faran bodyguard was revealed. The scandal has put strain on her relationship with her family. She has a tenuous relationship with her daughter and publicly disapproves of Zenaida's position within the Guild of Mages.

Additional Information:

- **Age:** 50s
- **Gender/Pronouns:** Female (she/her)
- **Ancestry:** Human
- **Appearance:** Black hair, brown eyes, brown complexion
- **Birthplace:** Velantis, Arathian Empire
- **Magic:** Sphere of Preservation
- **Faction Associations:** Arathian Empire

Character references shouldn't be considered exact representations of what the character looks like, these are about vibes/mood more than anything else

[Episode 3 Sneak Peek #9](#)

[Jul 27, 2022](#)

Spoilers ahead! From a Zenaida branch.



“And me? For someone so interested in the Wayfarer Order, how is it—in all of your searching—you never found a trace of me?”

Zenaida pauses, undaunted by the hostility in your tone. “Perhaps that’s a question *you* can answer, Wayfarer \$lastname. You hid yourself well in the years following your order’s fall.”

“I didn’t *hide*, I went where the work took me—”

“Are you admitting it was sheer coincidence, and not skill, that kept your location and activities unknown?”

Your jaw clenches, an uncomfortable knot twisting in your gut.

She raises an eyebrow and folds her hands neatly on her lap, waiting patiently for your anger to cool.

“By Belennor, what I told you in Rona is the truth, Wayfarer \$lastname. I did not know of you prior to our arrival in Rona. When my agents traced Wayfarer Kellis and discovered you in his company, your

presence gave us pause. Malsara quickly assembled a profile on you; once she had your name, it was easily enough done. However, she did not discover much of your recent history beyond your involvement in the Vestran Civil War and some minor deeds in Sathir. Whether it was your intention to mask your activities or not, you have slipped past the notice of many interested parties.”

“Interested parties,” you repeat hollowly. “What does that mean?”

“I fear I cannot say more. But I am far from the only one searching for Wayfarer aid.”

The knot twists tighter. “And Aeran? Who was your informant? Who gave you his location?”

She pauses, the name dancing on the tip of her tongue. You can feel her wavering, fighting between the desire to be forthright and the desire to keep it hidden.

“Zenaida.”



[Phaedra Amestris \[Character Lore\]](#)

[Jul 29, 2022](#)

Phaedra Amestris is a Velantian councillor. Her family fled to Velantis shortly after the Imperial annexation of Nemain, using their connections to ensnare a position of wealth and power in their new home. House Amestris eventually became the governors of Ithyria District, which is home to both the Velantian arts and entertainment boroughs and Eidranian City. House Amestris is notoriously devout, following the practices of the Meissandic faith and regularly commissioning religious artworks across the city.

After becoming the head of House Amestris several decades ago, Phaedra used her influence to gain favour with the Meissandium. She manipulated events to ensure her nephew was elected to the position of Ithyria's meissant and a contender for the position of High Meissant. She is also a staunch patron of the arts and regularly hosts salons to display the talents of her favourite performers, entertainers, musicians and artists to the wealthy elite.

Though outwardly she presents herself as the perfect Arathian aristocrat, she does not hold the Arathian Empire in high regard. She remembers the Lotharic city-states as they were before their Imperial annexation and knows the toll the war took on the region.

Additional Information:

- **Age:** 120s
- **Gender/Pronouns:** Female (she/her)
- **Ancestry:** Elven
- **Appearance:** Black coily hair, dark brown eyes, dark complexion
- **Birthplace:** Nemain (pre-Arathian annexation)
- **Magic:** Sphere of Illumination.
- **Faction Associations:** Velantian Loyalists, The Meissandium

Character references shouldn't be considered exact representations of what the character looks like, these are about vibes/mood more than anything else



[Lilac Company](#) [[Character Lore](#)]

[Aug 1, 2022](#)

The Lilac Company is a Velantian theatre troupe. Formed over forty years ago by Melchior Larkspur, Vesepia Halon, and Lyrian Blushrose, the company is now one of the city's most critically acclaimed and infamous companies. They are currently under the patronage of Sandro Anaxas and are frequently invited to perform at the archon's personal lyraeum in Mahanin Palace. Their repertoire consists of popular plays from the Arathian canon as well as original works penned by Vesepia or Lyrian.

In recent years, the Company has come under fire for pushing the boundaries of acceptable art. The Arathian College, headed in Erenvor, oversees strict requirements for new plays that determine artistic form and content. Any new play seeking professional production funded by the Arathian aristocracy must meet the College's requirements and be verified by the censorship board before a professional production is allowed. The Lilac Company is infamous for pushing these artistic boundaries, which has landed them in trouble several times. Their public performances have been shut down on numerous occasions, and the full company was nearly arrested after a not-so-favourable depiction of the emperor graced the public stage. It was only thanks to Sandro Anaxas' favour and protection that they could continue operation.

After Lyrian left the company ten years ago, Veseppia turned their focus to the safety of classical Arathian works.

The Company consists of thirty members, including actors, musicians, and technicians. Following Arathian tradition, all performances are collectively directed by the troupe, sometimes with oversight by the playwright. Unlike other theatre troupes, each member has an equal share in the profits and no member is elevated above the rest. Kythera Solaria has been with the company since its inception and often plays lead roles in tragedies (regardless of gender).

Melchior no longer performs and instead oversees the company's day-to-day functions. He rarely sees the performances since Lyrian left and the company shifted the type of material it performs. Due to their popularity with the Velantian elite, Melchior is frequently able to use the company's performances as a front to access people and places he otherwise wouldn't to gather information and intelligence.

Company Members (Partial):

- Melchior Larkspur (half-melusine, genderfluid, he/him, producer)
- Veseppia Halon (dwarven, female, she/her, playwright)
- Lyrian Blushrose* (elven, nonbinary, they/them, musician/playwright)
- Kythera Solaria (elven, female, she/her, actor)
- Sabriel (half-aeda, male, he/him, musician)

* *Former*

[Progress Report 2022.08.03: Back In Business](#)

[Aug 3, 2022](#)

Hi friends,

Happy August! I'm back from my hiatus and getting prepped to get back to work on the game. My vacation was lovely and it was nice to have a break. I spent a lot of time with my family, did a canoe trip in Algonquin Park, and generally relaxed. I did get a little bit of writing done, but it was mostly just for fun.

I hope you all enjoyed the extra content during July! The character lore posts are now complete and I'll be returning to my usual content schedule. This means:

- Bi-weekly progress reports for all tiers

- Weekly sneak peeks for all tiers
- One post of bonus content per month (Apprentice tier and above)

There will not be a bonus content vote this month as I still have one post left in my drafts. But I will have a special announcement for Wayfarer tier and above coming in the next couple of weeks.

Housekeeping

A few things before I get to the game progress:

- If you upgraded your pledge to Apprentice tier or above during July, please message me. I may have missed contacting you about what name to use in the credits.
- Game credits won't be updated until the next patch
- The Wayfarer character sheet template link has been updated. If you were having issues with the link saying it was expired, it should work now. I also updated the template so there are no more locked elements (hopefully!)

August Plans

I am slowly easing back into things while I catch up on everything I missed. My main goals for the next two weeks are:

- Process bug reports and patch the game
- Continue working on Episode 3 Scene 1 and hopefully get to the end of one of the (many) Aeran branches.
- My hope is to finish a significant portion of Scene 1 by the end of the month. I'd would like to get new content added to the alpha as soon as possible.

And finally, the alpha build password has been updated for August ([it can be found on the pinned post here](#)). Just as a general reminder, the alpha contains exactly the same content as the public build until I can do an Episode 3 update.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to reach out. As always, thank you all so much for your support! 💕

[Episode 3 Sneak Peek #10](#)

[Aug 3, 2022](#)

I wrote ~4000 words while on vacation (yes, yes should not have been writing, but I wanted to finish a branch), all from an Aeran high friendship branch.



Maybe you were too selfish, demanding so much of him. This hand you've been dealt is brutally unfair. To get the closure you so desperately need, you have to force him to relive a tragedy he can barely acknowledge. It's clear that there are things he cannot talk about. There are things he does not want to remember. His actions last night were like those of a wounded animal lashing out at a helping hand.

You know he may never be prepared to tell you the truth. He may never be able to take the steps to heal. But someday, if he ever does... You need to be there for him.

Because no one else will be.

[CHOICE] 1. "I'm sorry."

2. "I guess there's no point thinking that far into the future when we barely know how today will turn out."

3. "Rebuilding is such a phenomenal task, I barely know where to begin. But I want you to be there—in whatever way you want."

1. "I'm sorry."

You raise a hand as you speak, shielding your squinting eyes from the newborn sun. Aeran slumps forward, arms still resting on the balustrade, shoulders sagging. This conversation has left you both drained. Whatever precious restfulness you felt upon waking has all but vanished.

The silence bears down on you, growing heavier with each passing second.

"You're not the one who should be sorry," Aeran says grimly. "I'm the fuck up, not you."

You inhale a long, shaking breath, conflicting choices circling your mind. There's so much you want to ask him, so much you want to say to him... But after last night, can you even bring yourself to raise it now?

[CHOICE] 1. "Then make it better. If you really want to do that, start by telling me what happened that night. I promise, whatever it is you can't bring yourself to tell me... I can handle it."

2. "That self-deprecation is doing you no favours, you know."

3. Leave him be. It's clear he needs his space right now, and you can't force the issue. He'll come to you when he's ready.

1. "Then make it better. If you really want to do that, start by telling me what happened that night. I promise, whatever it is you can't bring yourself to tell me... I can handle it."

More silence.

You fold your arms and lean your back against the balustrade, fixing him with an inescapable stare as you wait for his response. Though his expression darkened at your words, Aeran can't bring himself to answer. No response, no explanation, not even a half-hearted retort. He simply hangs his head, hands braced on the railing as he stares at the crushed stone path so many feet below you.

"It was a mistake, \$firstname," he says finally. "We should never have come here."

"What do you mean?" you ask.

"This... city... this *place*, it's... It's brought out the worst in me. And you've taken the brunt of that, and it wasn't fair... and for that, I'm so sorry. But I'm not ready to have this conversation. Not now. Not here. Not when we're surrounded by these *people*."

His revulsion is palpable, as if he is speaking after forcing down a piece of rotten fruit.

"But once we're free of Velantis and Quirinus... I'm going to tell you everything. I promise."

He meets your eyes, honesty shining so fiercely in his gaze, it rivals the morning sun. A chill creeps across your spine. You believe him. Of course you do. But the way he says it...

No. He said he's not ready. Respect that.

"Then I'll hold you to that," you say. "After all, you *do* owe me a favour."

He blinks. "I... what?"

A smile tugs at your lips. "A favour."

He frowns, confused. "Since when did I owe you a—"

"In Rona. We bargained, you lost, and now you owe me a favour. Don't tell me you forgot—"

He blows a raspberry. "Oh, come on, that was a month ago. And it was a *joke*. You can't seriously—"

"I want my favour, Aeran," you say, deadpan. "Give me my favour."

[Episode 3 Sneak Peek #11](#)

[Aug 10, 2022](#)

From a "you got fired branch" where Veyer is present. This is from my June document; I'm really hoping that I will be able to get the game patched soon and start working on new content ASAP so we can move on to something that's not an Aeran or Veyer branch. 😊



[CHOICE] 4. "What is your plan when we get to the tower, then? You must have one."

"Of course," Zenaida says, relief washing over her face. She seems quite pleased to leave your former line of questioning behind. "Unfortunately, it must be adapted due to circumstance, but as Savant Krellion has graced us with their presence, all might not be lost."

Veyer flashes you a grin. "I am thrilled to hear what you have in mind," they say, reclining in their seat and folding their hands in their lap with the air of someone settling in to watch an entertaining play. "Please, Your Grace. Enlighten us."

A bird caws overhead. You raise your chin, craning your neck as you spot the small, dark shadow cutting across the sky. The soft pinks and greys of the early morning have been chased away by the sun, making way for a vivid, cloudless blue. The swirling mist has faded at last from the river, warming with the rising sun. The back of your neck already feels warm. It seems Velantian summers do not spare the heat.

"Our goal is not to simply retrieve the Astrial," Zenaida begins. "We must do so without detection. Diradan Tower has been under watch since the explosion—the Guild, the Velantian government, the Arcanists' Lodge, even the Meissandium are monitoring the shroud. They have conjured orbs to survey the tower day and night and report on any changes."

1. "So? It's not like they can detect me."

[CHOICE] 2. "...sounds like those are going to be a problem. How do we get rid of them?"

3. Let her continue.

"They are far more than a simple problem, Wayfarer \$lastname," Zenaida says. "They could compromise the mission itself. The orbs' casters will be on guard, searching for any discrepancy, any small change, any inconsistency—"

"—and the moment I leave a physical trail, they'll know," you conclude. "And if the tower's abandoned, an open door that shouldn't be open or a trail of footprints that shouldn't be there will raise their suspicions. I'm guessing we'd like to avoid a fight with whoever might be watching?"

She smiles hollowly. "It would not do for you to retrieve the Astrial from its chamber only for it to fall into unwanted hands upon your exit."

Veyer raps their fingers against the gunnel. “Ah, so that’s why you need me. A simple solution, Your Grace. You’re fortunate I’m fond of \$firstname. I wonder what you would if that wasn’t the case?”

Malsara curses under her breath. It is the first sound she has made since you got in the boat. “Listen and keep your mouth shut, Krellion,” she says flatly, her dark eyes boring into theirs. “The tower will be in sight soon. We are almost there.”

You straighten, adjusting your posture as you peer past the bow. The river bends ahead, its shoreline overshadowed with trees, obscuring the tower from view. You’re not sure how much time has passed since you left Mahanin, but you are well into the morning now. How long has Aeran been scouting? Has he been there all night?

And if these surveillance orbs are as troublesome as Zenaida implies, how has he managed to avoid them?

Sweat trickles down the back of your neck and it has nothing to do with the sun.

“Wayfarer Kellis did propose disabling the surveillance orbs,” Zenaida continues. “But we feared it would bring unnecessary attention to our activities. Fortunately, with Savant Krellion’s aid, we can distract them instead—create a construction illusion of the grounds to mask your movement within the complex.”

Veyer whistles. “You have a high regard for my abilities, Your Grace. I hope I can live up to them. How many surveillance orbs were there again? Dozens...? Hundreds...?”

“We do not need to incapacitate all of them, merely the ones in Wayfarer \$lastname and Wayfarer Kellis’ direct path,” she says crossly. “Quinn mapped the orbs’ positions herself, but unfortunately we are without her help. We will have to rely on the results of Wayfarer Kellis’ reconnaissance to determine which areas to target.”

“That explains what Veyer, Aeran and I will be doing,” you interject, trying not to wince at that particular combination of names. You were prepared for a certain level of mortification, but this is more than you want to think about. “What about you and Nova?”

“I will ward Veyer so they are not detected,” Zenaida replies. “Nova will support me. You must remember that is a covert mission, Wayfarer \$lastname. It will be only us. Should something befall us, we will stand alone. No one will come to our aid.”

You nudge \$blade’s hilt with your fingers.

- 1. Stay positive. Despite her ominous tone, you have a feeling her cynicism is a result of last night’s proceedings than true belief that her plan will not work.**
- 2. Stay wary. She may have planned for as many contingencies as possible, but no plan is ever perfect. Without the support of Lethalis itself, you are at a severe disadvantage.**
- [CHOICE] 3. Keep your thoughts to yourself. You’re here to do a job.**

You exhale sharply and scratch the back of your neck. You can see Veyer watching you out of the corner of your eye. Their characteristic smirk has disappeared now your journey is nearly at its end. The gravitas of what you're about to do—what they have voluntarily involved themselves in—must be sinking in.

Zenaida twists her fingers in her lap. "Wayfarer \$lastname," she begins quietly. "If I—"

Malsara grips her shoulder and rises to her feet, lethally still and alert as the boat rounds the final bend.

[Refresh, Revamp, Renew: Changes to Tier Benefits](#)

[Aug 11, 2022](#)

Hi folks,

This is a housekeeping post to update you on some changes I am making to benefits. This is not applicable to all tiers, but I'd like to be transparent about changes and why I am making them.

Game Walkthroughs

As of today, I am removing the Game Walkthrough benefit from the Wayfarer+ tiers. This was a very difficult decision to make. From the beginning, I wanted to create an in-depth guide to the game that showcases all the different choices and paths, but now I have two episodes under my belt, it is not feasible. I've been struggling to work on this benefit for over a year and it's very clear that no matter how I try to tackle it, walkthroughs are too difficult to write while working on the game.

Additionally, the Wayfarer Discord server is creating its own walkthroughs and guides. There is little point of me spending hours creating an official guide when many answers to walkthrough questions can be answered by the community itself for free.

I'm sad to see this benefit go, but considering I have done almost no work on it, it is time to remove it.

Existing walkthroughs will remain on my Patreon for the Wayfarer+ tiers (Prologue and the Kane fight in Episode 1).

Bonus Content Vote

I am also removing the bonus content vote for the Wayfarer+ tier. Bonus content is difficult for me to create on a monthly basis since I have to take my focus off game content to work on it. Last May, I spent two weeks drafting bonus content posts in advance and it was a drastically better system. It is

significantly less stressful to create multiple posts in advance than to put bonus content topics to a vote, wait for the vote results to come through, and then spend the last two weeks of the month worrying about whether I'll finish the post in time.

But pre-drafting kind of defeats the purpose of having a topic vote, as everything I draft will eventually be posted. So, for now, I am removing this benefit.

Bonus Content in General

Bonus content is going to focus more on lore and worldbuilding rather than resources. I am going to continue working on writing and game development tutorials in my spare time, but they will become less frequent. Tutorials are extremely time consuming and I struggle to write them while working on the game. I may make a separate benefit for tutorials in the future, but for now they are on the backburner.

I still have plans to finish my SugarCube + Twine guide, but it will likely be a project to finish next year.

New Content On Its Way!

Because I've removed some benefits, I am replacing them with something new! Starting next week, the **Wayfarer, Master, Grandmaster, Archivist and Ambassador tiers** will get **exclusive access to monthly short stories set in the Wayfarer universe**. Since Episode 2 cracked open the world, the short stories will focus on various major and minor characters from the game and give new insights into motivations, lore, and locations.

The first short story will be posted on August 19. It is about Veyer and their introduction to the Imperial court 30 years before the start of the game.

If you are in a Wayfarer and above tier and are a member of the Discord server, there is a new private channel where you can discuss short stories together.

I hope these changes are understandable. If you have any questions about tiers and benefits, please don't hesitate to message me! 💕💕



[Mapmaking: Wayfarer World Map](#)

[Aug 15, 2022](#)

Process video for the [Wayfarer world map!](#)

[Progress Report 2022.08.16: Patches & Progress](#)

[Aug 16, 2022](#)

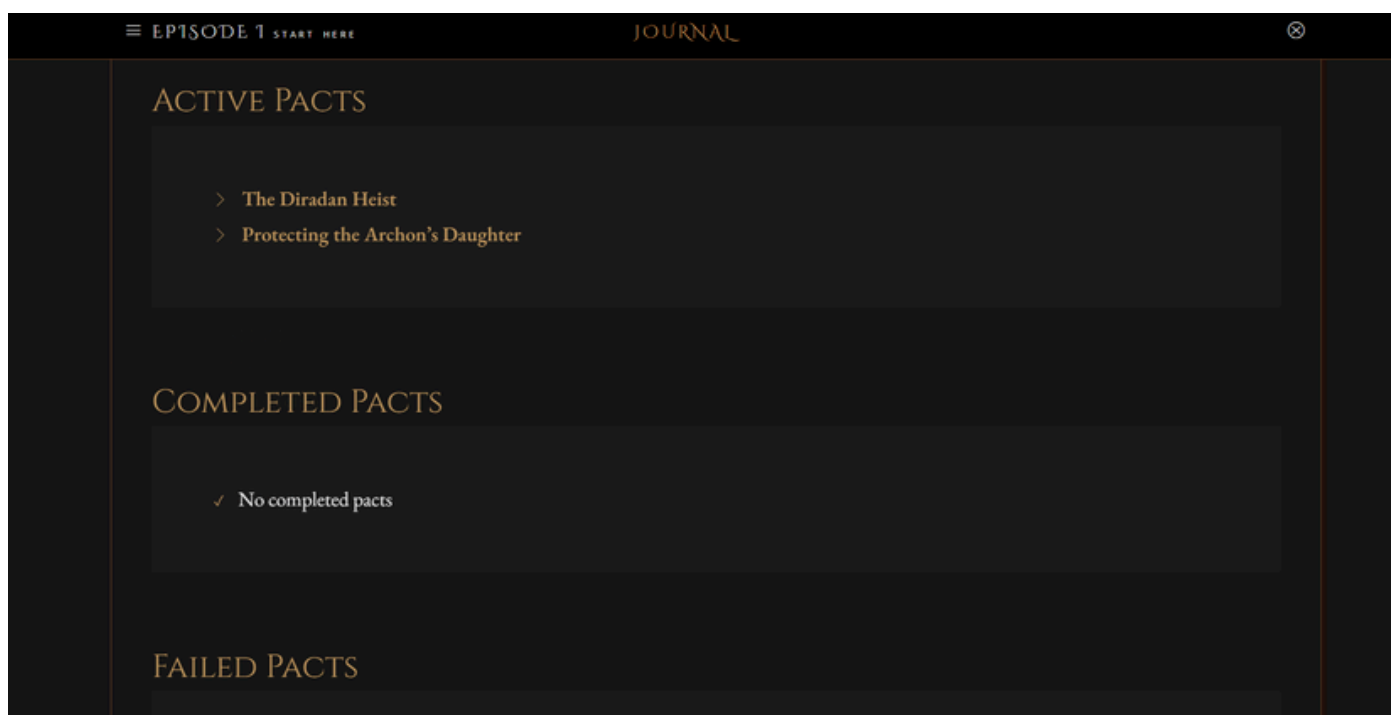
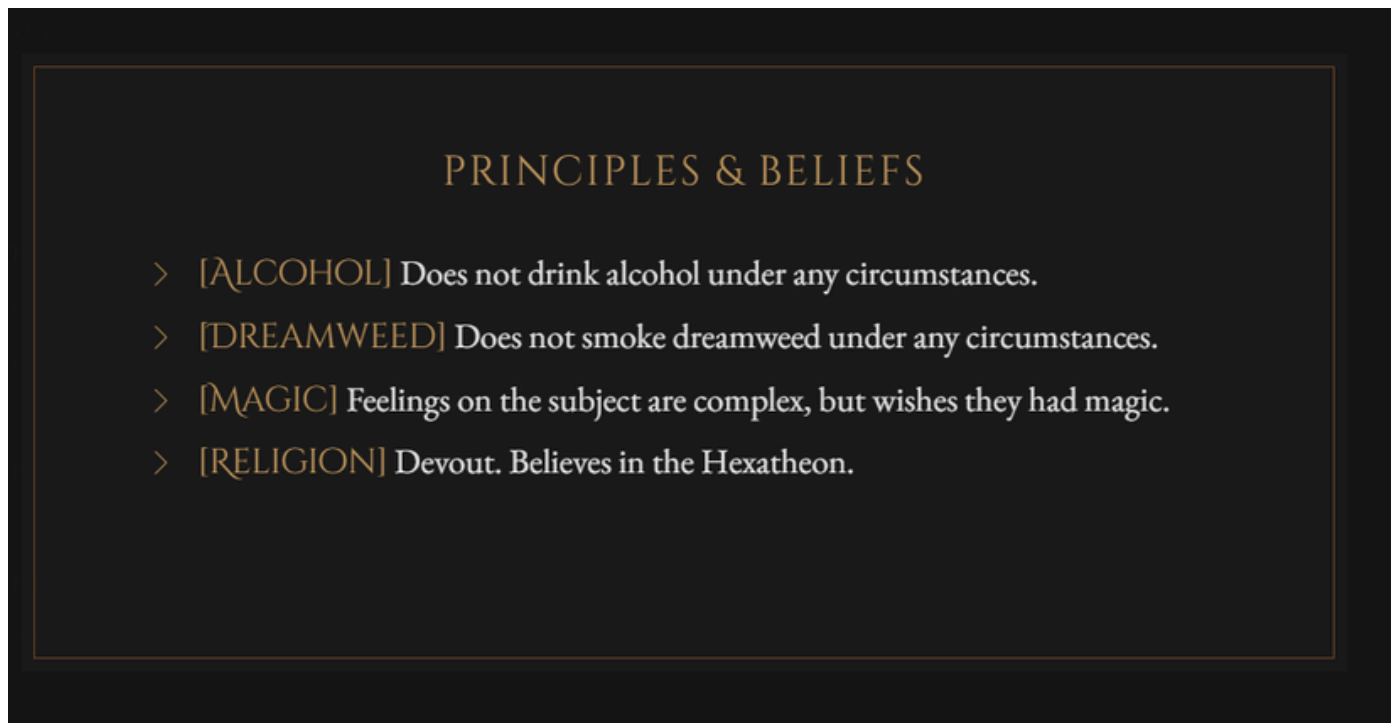
Hi friends,

There isn't much to update since the last progress report. The start of the month has been a little slow while I worked on some things for Patreon. My main focus right now is finishing the Episode 2 patch before returning to working on Episode 3 Scene 1.

Game Updates

The patch is almost complete, but it has taken me a lot longer to do than anticipated. In addition to regular bug fixes, I have added:

- A "Principles & Beliefs" section of the Character page that will list permanent opinion-type choices (i.e. whether or not your MC is sober, their feelings on magic, religion, etc.)
- A "Pacts" section of the Journal that lists active, completed, and failed pacts. This essentially serves as a quest log for the game. Faction pacts will still be listed in the Faction profiles.
- New text at the beginning of the game that comes with a warning about save files.
- A Neutral approval route for the Aeran fight. If your approval with him is between 40 and 59, there will be brand-new content in Episode 2 during this part of the game. This should hopefully alleviate some (not all) of the emotional whiplash for the player if you were on a friendship/romance route and lost enough approval to dip a couple points below 60.





WAYFARER is an in-development browser game. Currently, two out of fifteen episodes are available to play.



Old saves may not work or include bugs that have been fixed.
You may periodically need to replay your save files from an earlier point.



Please check the latest patch notes for guidance.

The patch will be released for playtesters first, then on the alpha, then finally to the public build. Once the patch comes out, it is recommended you replay the end of Episode 2 if you did not have +60 approval otherwise you may encounter continuity bugs later on.

Weekly Sneak Peeks

Because I am still patching the game, there will not be a sneak peek this week. Sneak peeks will hopefully resume next week.

Patreon Updates

Last week I announced some changes to the Wayfarer, Master, Grandmaster, Archivist and Ambassador tiers. I have removed the game walkthrough benefit and replaced it with monthly short stories. [You can read more about the change here.](#)

Because short stories are an official benefit now, I have removed public access to last year's Aeran short story and Ren short story to avoid confusion. They are now only available for the Wayfarer tier and above.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to reach out. As always, thank you all so much for your support! 💕

[Blood Rites \(Veyer Krellion Short Story\)](#)

[Aug 19, 2022](#)

Veyer Krellion is not one to be nervous.

They have lived most of their life in pursuit of one thrill or another. Some (their parents, for instance) would call them reckless—recklessly disregarding their own safety and irresponsibly endangering their family name and legacy. To a certain degree, Veyer agrees with the assessment. It is in their nature to push back against restrictions, social or otherwise, simply because they exist.

The trait has served them well in some instances and failed them utterly in others. Considering where they are headed now, they will have to reign in their quick-tempered impulses. What their family found vexing and the Farans called endearing and the Guild branded tolerable... the Imperial court will no doubt consider undesirable.

You must mind your tongue in Erenvor, Veyer. House Nesarian demands nothing less than perfect obedience from its court mages. A single stray word to the wrong person at the wrong time will have circumstances more dire than you can imagine.

Ashani's warning echoes in their mind, clear as the day they spoke those words.

I ask this favour of you because there is no one else I trust. The Axe of Athor is in the possession of the Imperial court. It must be observed, any changes recorded. You are Arathian, from a respected family. Of those of us who remain, you are best positioned to join the court and execute this subterfuge. That is the skill you are most proud of, no?

A flush creeps across the nape of their neck at the memory. Subterfuge is not what they would call it, though many did see it that way. Sathir, Calantha, Dravaden, Naro. Ten years of their life. Ten years of breathtaking sights seen, friends made, and lovers loved. Ten years of a journey they thought had no end, letting Nashira guide their way with a flippant toss of a coin. It was in Farandor—the beautiful, frozen country of dazzling fjords and glistening peaks, the country whose memory still makes their heart ache—that they were the most honest version of themselves. The most genuine.

Naturally, that was when they were arrested, accused of being an Arathian spy, and held as a political prisoner. The irony of that final day still grates on them.

Veyer picks at a nail and peers through the window of their stalled carriage, a desperate attempt to curb the unexpected anxiety roiling in their stomach. The carriage has sat here, perched awkwardly on a steep slope, boiling in the afternoon sun while its path remains blocked by the swarming horde flooding the street. Angry shouts thunder in Veyer's ears and they sink further into their seat, their serithan bunching awkwardly about them, embroidered silk sticking to their thighs.

They've always hated garments like this. They loathe how naked they feel beneath the fabric, exposed and vulnerable, the skirts tangled between their legs. On a different day, in a different place, they'd be pleased with how the flowing robe shows off their tattoos, but not here. Not in Erenvor.

Thank Metisara for their talents. An Arathian elf, marked with Faran ink... Guild mage or not, they would be mobbed the moment they stepped out of the carriage.

A shadow flickers by and something heavy knocks into the carriage. Veyer curses, the force nearly throwing them from their seat, and pulls themselves up. They chance another glance out the window.

A flash of fists and nails and feet rolls past the carriage, a pair of degenerates locked in an angry brawl. Uncontrolled magic siphons off them, the colour cracking through the air like lightning. An undirected blast of Disruption magic hits the cobblestones and blows stone and mortar into the sky, the pieces thrown in every direction, crushing anyone in their path.

Blood splatters and Veyer flinches, turning away from the horror unleashed before their eyes. Screams pierce the air and the crowd surges, the rush of feet pounding against what remains of the road as dozens of bystanders scramble away. Desperate shouts fill the street and guards in Imperial red push laboriously through the crowd, the sun reflected painfully in their spear-tips. Another fight breaks out, and then another and another and soon the road erupts into dust and stone and blood.

Veyer swallows, their mouth as dry as the air outside. Panic twists in their gut, torn between the choice to flee and take their chances and the choice to stay and hide. They know how these things play out—or, at least, they've been told. Once a riot begins, there is little the guards can do to quell it. And with uncontrolled magic involved... the street could turn into a bloodbath at any moment.

Their carriage has gone unnoticed for now and the wards provide much needed protection from rampant magic. But they will not protect from grasping hands and pummeling fists. They're a noticeable target, sitting here trapped in their finery. But if they leave and attempt to escape with the crowd, they could easily be the victim of the next person to accidentally shred a street apart.

They squeeze their eyes shut, chewing their tongue, desperately hoping the sensation will provide a distraction. Unlike many of their peers in the Guild, they are not a combat mage. They are not trained for battle. They have never *seen* battle. Though they could theoretically weave an illusion about themselves to make them unnoticeable, they are hardly in a mindset where they could even try.

They can't even think of casting magic. Every attempt has it slipping through their fingers like water.

Damn it all... Why couldn't we use a Pallaedrion like every other respectable city?

The thought roars in their mind, but they already know the answer. Erenvor's Pallaedrion network failed that morning, sabotaged by dissenters. The Imperial court was kind enough to provide a warded carriage and a driver instead. Controlled solely through magic, of course, not unlike the Velantian ferries. But knowing where this has led them, Veyer wishes they had refused the gesture, turned their back on the whole blasted city, and walked right back on the ship.

Think, you fool. You can either stay or you can go. Worrying yourself sick over it won't improve your lot.

Looking for something—anything—to keep themselves occupied, Veyer brushes a sweaty hand across their brow and twists their dark hair into a knot at the nape of their neck. Heart hammering in their chest, they reach into their sash, searching for the dagger once gifted to them in Naro.

Their fingers close over empty air.

The dagger was left in Diradan Tower on Oshiro's advice. They wouldn't be allowed to bring it into the Imperial city, and certainly not the palace. What did he say, again?

Best leave anything dear to you behind. Especially the sharp, pointy kind. You never know when it could be used against you.

Not once did Veyer ask how long Lethalis intended for them to be in Erenvor. They hope it's not for long—a year, maybe two. Despite Ashani personally requesting their help, it was Oshiro who shoved the whole affair down their throat afterward. Some infuriating nonsense about how it was their *duty* to go to Erenvor. As the youngest member of Lethalis and the only native Arathian left...

The memory makes Veyer's blood boil.

You're doing this for Ashani. You owe them, remember?

But as the crowd tears through the street, erratic magic singeing the air, Veyer thinks they have asked far too much of them. The carriage rocks terribly to one side, a shout bellows from the front, and a sickening *crunch* resounds from the front. Veyer freezes in terror, their mind frozen with the realization that their driver may have just been killed.

"Fuck," they whisper. "*Fuck...*"

The carriage door tears open, wrenched clean off its hinges. Veyer shrinks to the far side, pressing up against the window as emerald magic sputters between their fingers. The act is desperate, an urgent attempt born out of terror to throw up an illusion and weave themselves out of sight and mind.

Not fast enough.

Clawing hands seize their arm, dragging them off their seat. Veyer resists and pulls back against the iron grip. Sharp nails dig into their skin, tearing lines of blood down their arm. They hiss in pain and twist sideways, grunting as they roll onto the carriage floor, their teeth jarred.

Breath knocked from their lungs, they raise their head and stare into the wild eyes of their attacker. Grey eyes gleaming faintly red, sparks of conjured lightning crackling around their head. A brown serithan, torn and muddied, the sash already stained with blood.

The man sneers, his lips pulling back into a horrifying smile as he looks Veyer up and down. He lingers on their elegant serithan, embroidered and bejewelled to fit the tastes of the Imperial court. It is the most expensive item they have ever owned.

"Emperor's bootlicker," he spits, his unrestrained magic now streaming off his arms, his face, his eyes. Veyer has never seen the like; even the Guild novitiates know better than to tap into their powers in such a way. "Out you come—"

Veyer bears their teeth, hissing and scrabbling, fighting with every fibre of their being as the man drags them face-first from the carriage. Their foot hooks something—the bottom of the seat? They don't know what—and halts their progression. The man heaves, cursing, and releases his grip. Veyer collapses over the side, half in and half out, dark hair flying into their eyes as their head hangs inches from the cobblestoned road.

"Fucking noble d—"

The man chokes. A hideous wet stickiness showers the nape of Veyer's neck and the pungent tang of iron fills their nostrils. They gasp, chest heaving, and pull themselves upright, shrinking onto the floor of the carriage as they take in the sight before them.

A spear tip thrusts through the man's throat. He gurgles, choking on his own blood, eyes wide with terror, hands spasming at his sides. With a rough, horrific *crunch*, the spear removes itself from his throat and he collapses, dead on the ground.

"What a waste," a disgusted voice says.

Veyer raises their eyes and beholds their saviour.

An elven man stands before them, his strong frame backlit by the afternoon sun. His thick, black hair unravels from its elegant braids, cascading over his shoulders. Though he carries himself with the air of a sovereign, he is dressed plainly in a nondescript green abberan. One jacket sleeve is torn clean off, showing a thickly muscled arm. White light mists across his skin, the remnants of a ward fading into the sunlight.

If Veyer didn't know better, he could be a sentinel of legend, striding out of the annals of history to do battle once again.

"Sorry, friend," the elven warrior says, stepping over the dead man as if he were little more than a stone in the road. "I need to borrow this."

Without waiting for a reply, he clammers unceremoniously over Veyer and into the carriage. They pause, rooted to the floor, overly aware of the hot, sticky blood dripped down their neck and staining the back of their serithan. Though they despise wearing the thing, it was a gift from Ashani.

Ruined.

The riot roils around them, a symphony of screams and howls and broken magic. The man curses and seizes the edge of the empty door frame, yanking himself off the seat. He sticks his head out, glossy black hair curling around his shoulders.

"Nasaia!" he bellows. "We're leaving!"

A human woman in stained leather armour thunders down the path. She leaps into the vacant driver seat with practiced, efficient grace, her waist-length black braid whipping out behind her. The carriage takes off, lurching so terribly Veyer nearly falls through the empty frame. They push themselves against the far wall of the carriage, teeth rattling as the carriage trundles over every rut and stone in the road. Sights they wish they had never seen blur together as it picks up speed. Their stomach churns, yet they cannot look away from the horrors flooding Erenvor's streets.

The elven man perches on his seat, periodically hanging out the broken door to survey the shattered streets with a discerning eye. His fingers flex around his spear, holding it close. "My apologies, friend," he says through gritted teeth. "Erenvor continues to prove itself a stubborn beast."

Veyer nods in silence. Their throat is too thick to speak, congealed, like the blood coating their hair, their skin... The image of that man's throat ripped open stains their memory. They cannot see anything else.

The elf frowns. "Why don't you sit?" he says, gesturing to the seat beside him. "Surely the floor is not comfortable—"

"I'm fine."

He shrugs. "Suit yourself."

A blast shakes the carriage. The man's companion curses from the front of the carriage and it lurches horrendously to one side. It sails around a corner and into a narrow alley, bashing into a wall with such force that Veyer nearly bites their tongue.

They squeeze their eyes shut. *Fuck, fuck, fuck...*

"I must thank you, friend," the man says, speaking as idly as an aristocrat at a gala. "If it weren't for your fortunate position on the road we would likely all be dead."

Their head lolls on their shoulders, faint, uncontrolled laughter bubbling across their lips. "I would," they manage hoarsely, eyes fluttering open. "You, on the other hand, have demonstrated quite clearly you're more than capable."

"Sheer luck," he replies. He flexes his fingers, shifting the spear so it rests comfortably against his shoulder. The tip is streaked with half-crusted blood. "Nashira blessed me today. I am no soldier."

"Could have fooled me, friend."

The word slips out, a sarcastic echo of the man's earlier words and a hollow ghost of Veyer's usual dry humour. They curse inwardly, wishing they had bit their tongue before they play the fool in front of their rescuer—

The man smiles.

Veyer freezes, brows drawn together in confusion, as a delighted smile creeps across his face. The man chuckles quietly and draws himself up, sweeping his glistening black hair over his shoulder as he peers out the open carriage, keen eyes observing the alley walls, watching for an exit.

“Aris, please,” he says. “I think our present circumstances have done away with the need for formality, don’t you?”

They pause. Unwilling to move, unwilling to speak.

“What House do you hail from?” he continues smoothly. “I will ensure you and your family are properly compensated for your troubles—”

“No House,” Veyer croaks. They swallow hard, their mouth still impossibly dry. “Guild mage.”

His mouth opens, tongue resting against his upper lip, recognition gleaming in his grey eyes. “Ah. I see. From Velantis?”

They nod.

“Fascinating. I suppose that explains what an Imperial carriage was doing in the middle of the high street long after the Pallaedrions went down. The Erenvor nobility would rather cower in their villas than risk the streets. Even when they oppose Calas’ reign behind closed doors, they would choose complacency over revolution.”

Veyer inhales sharply, their fingers gripping their serithan, twisting the stained fabric between their fingers. This man—Aris—speaks so easily, so candidly, it takes them a moment to understand the meaning of his words.

Words that disparage the emperor.

Words that can get you killed in Erenvor.

Words that are unquestionably, undoubtedly *treason*.

Aris notes their silence with an amused look, the rattling of carriage wheels against shattered stone grinding in their ears. Veyer raises their chin and sets their jaw, meeting his eyes with a resolute gaze. They know the gravity of the words this man has spoken, and what he has pulled them into simply by speaking them. They were a coward before, when the riot began. They refuse to be now.

“And what do you choose?” they ask.

A sly smile crosses his handsome face. “I didn’t catch your name, friend,” he says. “I can’t very well flee across Erenvor and call my companion *Guild mage*, now can I? I may be a mongrel in my mother’s eyes, but she did raise me to be polite.”

Veyer swallows. "Veyer," they murmur. "Veyer Krellion."

Aris breaks into an open grin. "Krellion, hm? I've heard the name before. A merchant family, well-funded and well-travelled. I suppose their voyages explain those tattoos on your arms, or do I have the pleasure of speaking to a Faran sympathizer?"

They curse, crossing their arms across their chest, fingers digging into the soft flesh in a desperate attempt to cover what they can.

Aris throws back his head and laughs, grey eyes glimmering with mirth. "Have no fear, Veyer, I will not tell a soul. Whatever your history with them may be, you are bold to stroll into Erenvor with the markings of our enemy engraved on your skin. If you intend to remain in Erenvor for long, I suggest you find a way to keep those concealed."

"I..."

Their words are strangled in their mouth, their terror refusing to subside while screams rip through the air and the carriage rams against the alley wall. Though they are desperate to cover themselves with an illusion, their magic remains impossibly out of reach.

Damn it all. Why is it impossible to string two words together? Is this what fear does to a person? They have never been afraid in their life, but step on foot in the Imperial capital and the city is determined to break them.

Don't let it. You're clever. You will get through this.

"I would gladly offer help, should you need it," Aris continues. "I'd hate to see a fellow Arathian subject suffer thanks to the emperor's prejudices—"

"I'm fine," Veyer spits out. "I'm a savant, I have my methods." Something breaks within them and they tug on their magic, fuelled by their pride. Its familiar warmth spreads outwards from the base of their spine, circling down their arms, their legs, their hands. They weave the illusion over themselves, their tattoos fading to nothing as if they were never there. Judging from Aris' expression, they have no doubt a glow must be shimmering in their irises, natural brown bleeding to emerald green.

Shock twists in their gut. It takes a considerable amount of concentration and effort to contain the physical indication of casting magic. As an illusionist, they have always been adept at it—there is little point in cloaking or weaving if your eyes give you away. That they now lack the control and precision they honed for over a decade shakes them to their core.

It horrifies them. And they have never been horrified, not like this, not even in that damn Faran prison.

To their surprise, Aris simply nods in respect and allows them to complete their illusion in silence. "Tell me, Veyer," he says, eyes flickering between the open door frame and where Veyer lies curled on the

carriage floor. "Have you always wished to become an Imperial mage? Or was your appointment at an archsage's suggestion?"

Veyer swallows. "I—"

The carriage rips out the alley entrance and rolls onto a boulevard. Veyer rams into the seat in a tangle of limbs and clammy fabric. They gasp, winded, and the carriage jerks to the side, the impact throwing Veyer towards the door. Aris catches them before they sail out the threshold, grasping their arm and yanking them onto the seat beside him.

"Close one," he says, eyes sparkling with a rush of euphoria. He flashes Veyer a grin and leans out the broken door, silver spear flashing in his hand, wind tearing at his hair. "NASAIA! HERE!"

A shadow drops to the street and rolls across the cobblestones. Veyer's stomach drops, a realization dawning on them that the carriage is now without a driver—

Aris grips them by the arm. White light siphons off his hands, enshrouding Veyer in whirling mist, and he shoves them unceremoniously out the carriage door.

Veyer drops, knees buckling as they land unevenly, the breath knocked from their lungs. The ward absorbs the impact, saving them the agony of a painful landing, and flickers out of existence. Free from the ward, they stumble across the uneven flagstones, wheeling around to come face to face with shattered, smoking tenements and bloodied streets.

In the span of a quarter hour, the Imperial city centre has become a battlefield.

The clash of weapons, the wails of the injured and dying, the acrid stench of blood and rot... Even the air sizzles with the tang of uncontrolled magic. Veyer stops in their tracks, heart thumping in their throat. Everywhere they turn is an image that will haunt them to their dying day. This is more than a riot; this is a bloodbath. A city ravaged by its own people, the conflict so chaotic they do not know who is fighting whom or why.

"Veyer!"

They press a hand to their mouth, fighting the urge to gag.

"Veyer!"

A hand seizes their shoulder and shoves them forward. Veyer lashes out, fingernails scratching skin, drawing blood—

Aris' face swims before them, silver spear flashing in his hand. He curses and heaves, a string of distorted words falling from his lips as he pushes Veyer down the street. They blink, desperate to clear their muddled, overwhelmed mind. The woman—Nasaia, did he call her?—charges ahead, black braid

swinging across her back like a pennant. She carves a path through the rioting crowd, cutting her way through with ruthless determination.

Veyer's body is not their own. Their feet trample grit and broken stone, mindlessly keeping pace with Aris as he drags them to their destination. For all the experience their decade abroad has given them, nothing could have prepared them for this. Without the training of the Guild's combat mages, they are useless. Without Aris, they would be dead.

Up the street, Nasaia delivers an enhanced kick to a door and shatters the wood beneath her foot. She disappears through the threshold, Aris following in her wake with Veyer tucked beneath his arm. A cramped apartment swims before Veyer's eyes and they watch, senses dulled, as Nasaia pulls a rug off the floor, revealing a bronze mechanism implanted into the stone. She pauses, toeing the perimeter.

"My lord," Nasaia says. "Are you certain?"

Aris closes his eyes. "Do it. If consequences arise, I'll deal with them myself. You will not be punished for my actions."

"And the mage?"

A pause. "Any rapport I have with the Guild will be compromised if I allow one of their own to die," he says coldly. "They come with us."

"But—"

"They come with us."

An order. Nasaia nods, all further objections dying on her tongue even as her eyes harden in opposition. She steps onto the central plate and kneels, activating it with a single touch. Scarlet light ripples through the maze of bronze lines, illuminating a series of nodes around the perimeter.

"Hold on," Aris says and drags Veyer onto the plate.

The apartment vanishes.

Pressure pounds in Veyer's ears, light and dark assails their eyes. They are everywhere and nowhere, the only constant Aris' grip on their arm. They gasp, their chest aching, their lungs straining, but there is no air—

The world rips into existence in a vortex of green and white and blue. Veyer falls to the ground, breathless and panting, desperately sucking in deep breaths of cool air. They lie flat on their back and stare into a cloudless sky, vibrant trees swaying overhead. A soft floral scent wafts over them, carried on a gentle breeze.

After the chaos of the streets, such silent calm is unsettling.

“This is unprecedented, even for you, little brother.”

Veyer rolls onto their side, their head swimming. The portal transported them to a walled garden overflowing with flowering bushes and trees. They’re lying on a marble platform, a web of bronze veins flowing through the white marble to a central node. Aris and Nasaia stand at the perimeter, staring down their accoster.

An elven woman in an elegant serithan the colour of red wine observes them with a cool gaze, her grey eyes narrowed with suspicion. Her lustrous black hair is coiled and piled on the top of her head, the intricate braids adorned with jewels. A high collar of woven gold and rubies covers her throat, the elaborate piece glinting in the sunlight.

“I do not believe you have the right to judge my actions, sister,” Aris returns, his lip twisting with disgust. “When was the last time you stepped foot outside these walls? You know nothing of our city—”

“Says the man who parades through the streets, slaughtering its citizens himself. How many did you send to the funeral pyres today? How many families will weep Nashira’s name because you could not stay your hand?” She scoffs, earrings chiming softly at her ears as she tilts her head, grey eyes blazing with emboldened spite. “How does it feel, brother? How very courageous of you, so puffed up on your self-importance, putting skills wrought from your pastime to use against *untrained* civilians who have never held a weapon in their life—”

“Really, Cilla?” he says wearily. “What do you intend with that insult? Either I’m an amateur buffoon who plays at being a soldier, or I’m a skilled warrior who slaughters innocents for fun. Make up your mind. You cannot have it both ways.”

Her expression hardens. “You have lost the right to call me that.”

“And you have lost the right to meddle in my affairs. My business is my own. We are of equal station and I am not compelled to answer to you. Even if the day did come where I saw fit to grace you with the information, I doubt you have the capability to understand what I intend to accomplish—”

“Is this how you see yourself, brother?” she sneers. “A hero of the people, a man who will stop at nothing to save the empire from a degenerate’s reign?”

He pauses, a storm brewing in his eyes. “Careful with your words. You do not know how far they will carry.”

“They were yours first. And when they reach his ears—and I have no doubt that they will—I wonder how he will take them. If he is a degenerate like you say, then I’m sure your punishment will be... fascinating.” She smiles slyly—a near perfect replica of the smile Aris gave Veyer not long before—and turns her back on him. “I’ll remember this, Aris. But perhaps I can be convinced to forget. It will take some doing, but I’m sure you have the means—if you’re willing to part with them, that is. Think on it.”

She glances over her shoulder, a challenge in her eyes. Her serithan flows sinuously around her, the gold and ruby collar glinting dangerously in the sun, and she strides down the path and out of sight.

It is a long time before anyone speaks.

“My lord,” Nasaia begins, breaking the silence.

“I know,” he hisses. *“I know.”*

Cursing under his breath, Aris hands her his spear and crouches beside Veyer. “Are you well, friend?” he murmurs.

Veyer pauses, throat too raw to speak. They nod.

“Good. Then listen to me carefully.”

They nod again, dread gnawing in the pit of their stomach. Though they are exhausted and worn, a small part of their mind remains alert, considering everything they have witnessed. The news of the Pallaedrions failing, the growing unrest... The riot ravaging the streets, uncontrolled magic destroying half the city centre... Aris commandeering their carriage and fighting his way to an escape route hidden conveniently nearby...

Something about the series of events feels off. It itches at Veyer’s mind, but in the aftermath of the bloodbath, they have no hope of putting the pieces together.

“Through no fault of your own, you have witnessed something today that puts you and I in grave danger.”

Aris’ voice floats above them, dragging them back to reality. Veyer blinks, jaw clenched, and inhales a deep breath. It does little to steady them, not when they cannot escape the cold, grey eyes staring down at them from above.

“I must ensure your silence, Veyer. Not simply for my protection, but for your own.”

Their lips move, but no sound comes out. “I... I do not know what you are involved in, Aris,” they whisper. “But I cannot. I am not here for politics—”

“Then they sent the wrong mage,” he snarls with unexpected ferocity. “A savant of common birth with no accolades to their name, marked in Faran motifs... You may bear an Imperial name, but you are no Arathian in the eyes of the emperor’s court. You will not last six months without my aid.”

Any hint of compassion Aris may have had vanishes as the striking, celestial warrior who rescued them from certain death twists into something else. Demanding. Conceited. Cold. The promise of a tyrant lurking beneath the handsome smile and charming voice.

Veyer knows they cannot refuse again.

"You must do this for me, Veyer. You owe me your life."

They look up, still sprawled on the marble platform, and meet his gaze. "What do you require of me?" they rasp.

White light gleams in Aris' eyes, turning the grey to molten silver. Power thrums through the air and gold ring glows on the fifth finger of his left hand, reacting to the surge of magic.

An augmenter.

"A promise," he says, extending the hand. Magic siphons off his fingers, drifting through the air like mist. "An oath. That you will never knowingly contribute to any plot against me that leads to the foiling of my designs or the death of me and mine."

Veyer pauses. The gravity of the situation weighs so heavily on them they can hardly breathe. They have never sworn a blood oath, though they have seen them performed many times. They remember how they were enacted upon prisoners in the Themistrya, and even once marvelled at the sheer ingenuity of the magical engineering it took to cast one.

That had been a decade ago. And now facing Aris, an undeniable threat in his eyes... Blood oaths cannot be forced unwillingly, that much is true. But as Veyer wonders what Aris would do if they refused, they are suddenly quite aware of how flexible the rules surrounding that willingness can be.

"For how long?" they ask.

He shrugs simply, as if it is a negligible question. "Until my death or the death of my legacy," he answers. "Or yours. Come now, Veyer, why so surprised? We are friends now, are we not? Friends who share the most deadly of secrets. The Guild sent you to this court for a reason. I will do everything in my power to ensure you accomplish your goal if you help me accomplish mine."

The Axe of Athor is in the Imperial palace where none but the court may reach it, Ashani told them. You are its guardian now, Veyer. You must safeguard it. Observe it. Remove it when necessary. If Quirinus' agents get their hands on it...

Veyer sucks in a breath and clasps Aris' outstretched hand, pulling himself to an upright position. Aris smiles widely, white light streaming from his fingers.

"Then say the words."

They do, each syllable thick and heavy on their tongue. The white light sears their skin, infusing them, infecting them with its brilliance until they are glowing with Aris' radiance. An oath carved on their souls, binding them together until the end. An exchange of names is required to seal it. Aris speaks theirs quickly, but when it comes time for them to speak his, they falter.

They do not know his name. Aris is not enough.

White light surges in a vortex around them, so bright Nasaia is all but a shadow on the perimeter. The magic waits hungrily, impatiently, pushing at its confines as it demands the final words.

“Who?” Veyer asks hoarsely, their fingers slipping in Aris’ grip. “Whose name do I speak?”

He smiles. That handsome smile, now twisted with arrogance.

“Ariston and Nesarian.”

Veyer’s eyes widen, a horrified realization dawning on them as they repeat his name. Aris. Ariston. Eldest child of Calas and Nesarian, the Arathian emperor. Heir apparent to the empire.

How did they not see it before?

The blood oath completes and the light vanishes, winking out like a snuffed candle. Ariston rises and pulls Veyer to their feet, then dusts off his hands as if casting a complex piece of Preservation magic is part of his daily regime. He collects his spear from Nasaia and raps the end against the marble platform, surveying the Imperial gardens with a vigilant eye.

“I suspect my sister has informed my mother of our untimely arrival,” he declares. “We should anticipate trouble at the palace. With any luck, my grandmother will intercept on our behalf. She has always had a way with Eirene. The woman is too weak-willed for her own good.”

Veyer adjusts their torn and stained serithan with shaking hands, the blood oath thumping through their veins, reacting to their proximity to Ariston. The gravity of what they have done finally sinks in and their stomach roils. They swallow the urge to gag and force themselves to walk calmly across the platform.

Ariston casts a sideways glance as they approach, a sly smirk playing across his lips. “As far as introductions go, I’m sure this is not the one you expected,” he says smoothly. “Have no fear, Veyer. Lucilla may bite, but she is not as poisonous as she thinks. If you should be wary of anyone, it is my grandmother. Fortunately, I have her favour—and through me, you do as well. I promise I will ensure no harm befalls you. You cannot be much younger than I. We will have a century or more to bring my father’s legacy to its knees and usher in Arathia’s new dawn. Stand tall, my friend. Great change is coming. It is an honour to be a part of it.”

Veyer stares defiantly ahead, cursing everything from the beautiful gardens to the man standing at his side. *Consider my debt more than paid, Ashani*, they think wretchedly. *You owe me more for this than you will ever know.*

[Episode 3 Sneak Peek #12](#)

[Aug 24, 2022](#)

This is from a branch on either Aeran's high romance or high friendship route. I am still working through these variations and pushing the content towards a bottleneck. We'll see if next week if I'll have non-Aeran focused content for once. 😊



“Implicitly because they want to, or implicitly because they’re compelled?”

You pause, your fingers in the midst of knotting the cloth. Your eyes dart from Aeran to Malsara, noting the fury on both their faces.

“Do not presume to understand the inner workings of House Anaxas,” she says coldly. “Rasmira loves Her Grace like a daughter. She is dear to many of us. Our dedication to her remains, blood oath or no blood oath.”

You trade looks with Aeran. “Does Rasmira know, then?” you say quickly, heading off any further arguments. “About Lethalis? About what Zenaida intends to do?”

“They know enough—that is all I can say. We are fortunate to have their support. Should we be spotted moving through the corridors this morning, they will do what they can do squash any rumours before they spread. Not only do we have Solarath to contend with, but we must avoid alerting Lethalis to our movements at all costs.”

Aeran snorts and inspects another arrow. Malsara’s frown deepens and she retreats further down the steps into the foyer, staring at the flash of Alassar steel as if it will bite her.

“These aren’t going to hurt you, you know,” he says irritably, running a thumb across an arrow’s fletching before stuffing it into his quiver.

“Pardon my caution. Alassar may have its uses, but I do not care to be in its presence.”

“Planeswalkers... You’re all the same—”

“Meaning?”

“I’ve never met anyone more uncomfortable around Wayfarers and Alassar than a Planeswalker. Doesn’t matter whether they’re Rhesainian or Faran or even from Erethar—”

“Perhaps it’s because we see the world differently than others, Kellis. When you’re attuned to Nashira’s sphere, you can feel the planes between spaces. It is the plane we walk when we transport ourselves

across time and space and it is always present. To cut my connection to it is tantamount to losing my senses. I do not like it.”

Aeran rolls his eyes and places the last arrow into his quiver.

“Now, if you’re finished?” Malsara says testily, turning her dark gaze on you. “We’ve delayed long enough.”

[Progress Report 2022.08.29: Ups & Downs](#)

[Aug 29, 2022](#)

Hi friends,

As the end of the month is coming up, I just wanted to get you caught up to where progress currently is. Unfortunately, I’ve contracted Covid and I am quite ill at the moment. I can’t really work on the game while I am sick (the brain fog is real). Fingers crossed that it won’t take me too long to recover, but everything’s been brought to a stop for the time being.

The Patch

The major Episode 2 patch is being playtested. I have a few more things I need to add before it goes live, but they are minor tweaks. I’d like the new Neutral Approval route of the Aeran fight to be tested a little bit more before I release it.

Episode 3

Scene 1 is very slowly coming together. I had hoped to have to finished by the end of August, but between settling back in after my trip and getting caught up, doing the patch, and now getting sick, I have not written nearly as much as I planned this month.

Due to the many possible end points in Episode 2, I’ve split scene 1 into four branches based on the MC and Aeran’s physical location.

- **Branch 1:** This covers the events that occur when the MC and Aeran both end up in the apartment, including the following sub branches: the romance reconciliation, the friendship reconciliation, the low romance variations, and the romance and friend break ups. This branch is about 75% complete and is the most content dense/complex branch of Scene 1.
- **Branch 2:** This covers the events that happen if the MC sleeps with Veyer. This branch is about 80% complete.

- **Branch 3:** This covers the events that happen if the MC ends the night at Melchior's party, including the following sub branches: getting high with Kit, drinking alone, drinking with Melchior, hanging out with Melchior, sleeping with Melchior, etc. This branch is 0% complete.
- **Branch 4:** This covers the events that happen if the MC ends the night at the apartment, but Aeran is not present. This includes all the other miscellaneous sub branches, including drunk route. This branch is 0% complete.

Hopefully things will be back to normal soon! Even though the timeline has been pushed back a bit, the plan is still the same: to get Scene 1 drafted, edited, and coded as soon as possible, and added to the alpha build.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to reach out. As always, thank you all so much for your support! 💕

[Episode 3 Sneak Peek #13](#)

[Aug 31, 2022](#)

This is from a branch where the MC did not trigger either or the reconciliation scenes, or chose to break off their romance with Aeran. I removed the flavour text tags, so some additional conditional things: Rhodarth is alive, MC talked to Veyer in the gallery, and MC's mentor is Cenric.



1. “Bad night?”

He stares dully at the floor. “Fine.”

“Liar.”

You snort and roll your eyes. Loading a plate with a generous helping, you dig in and eat in silence, taunting him with your careless body language. There is only one thing you need him to understand: his words hold no sway over you. You're not going to bow and grovel and crawl back to him with some false apology for pushing him too far. He hurt *you*. Not the other way around.

Aeran watches you and shifts uncomfortably in his seat. “I'm fine,” he repeats. “Anxious to get going.”

“Why? Lethalis won't let us be late.”

“\$firstname—”

“Or if you really are that anxious, why don’t you get a head start? The door’s right there.”

You gesture to the foyer. He grimaces, his eyes darting around the room as he follows your pointing finger. For a moment, he looks like he is on the verge of getting up and following your advice, but he remains seated. His hand curls into a fist.

“Don’t be like this, \$firstname,” he says quietly. “Please.”

“Like what?” You pop an olive into your mouth. “I’m the same as I ever was.”

He closes his eyes, sighing irritably. “You don’t understand. Malsara—”

[CHOICE] 1. “Though I suppose I could be better. I had an interesting proposition last night. Regret not taking them up on it, I’m sure it would have been fun.”

2. “Add it to the list, then. Alongside the Spire and you.”

3. Let him finish.

Aeran’s eyes widen, heat flushing across his cheeks. “You… what?” From the strangled noise in his throat, you know he knows exactly what you meant by *proposition*. “It’s a good thing you didn’t. Zenaida —”

“Why not?” you interrupt, pouring yourself tea. It comes out of the pot piping hot. Fanning away the steam, you wrap your hands around the cup and raise it to your lips, the rich cardamom scent wafting over you. The brass sears your palms. “What I do on my free time is none of her business.”

He runs a hand over his mouth and chin, spluttering his next words. “It’s not… professional—”

The tea burns your mouth, but you swallow it anyway. “A little sex didn’t hurt anyone, Aeran,” you say. “Except maybe you and Rhodarth, you’re far too uptight for it. How did that work, by the way? Or was it just another one of your relationships you couldn’t wait to self-destruct?”

He rounds on you and his mouth twists into a snarl. “Leave Rho out of this—”

“Gladly. He doesn’t deserve it.” You set down your cup. Unsurprisingly, you did not find the cardamom soothing. “Shame, really. Veyer almost had me convinced. A Wayfarer and a Guild mage… would have been an interesting night.”

Aeran stiffens. “Veyer?” he asks, their name garbled in his mouth. “Veyer asked you to…”

He shoves off the couch, pacing furiously across the room. You watch him, absently mulling over the breakfast feast, trying to decide what to select next. A spiteful feeling twists triumphantly in your gut, pleased that you’ve goaded this reaction out of him. Whether he’s furious that you could have slept with

a Guild mage, hating himself for destroying what you had, for simply jealous—you don't care. It's more than enough to see him squirm.

"What?" you call. "Is it too much for you that someone else would want to sleep with me?"

"You don't know them, \$nickname. Whatever game they're playing, they wanted to tangle you in it, too. They're an Imperial court mage, it's all they ever do—"

"It was just sex they were after, Aeran. It's not that serious."

The words fall out of your mouth easily. Whether you believe them or not, it doesn't matter—you know it's exactly what you need to say to piss him off.

True to form, he scowls and curses under his breath. But instead of giving you the retort you wanted, he turns his back on you and strides for the balcony exit, putting as much distance between you and him as the room will allow.

Irritation twists in your gut. "Besides, I said no!" you shout, rising to your feet. "I wasn't going to go through with it, so what, exactly, is your problem?"

Aeran wheels around, eyes dark and hurting. "No problem at all," he says hoarsely. "Fuck whoever you want, \$firstname, it's not my business."

An ache pangs in your chest, too far removed for you to care. "Good," you spit. "Glad we finally agree on something. I'm sure Cenric and Varyn would be so proud of us if they could see us now."

[Episode 3 Sneak Peek #14](#)

[Sep 7, 2022](#)

Some WIP text where the player can define what gift their mentor gave to them. This isn't guaranteed to appear in the game, but there's a good chance it will. There are 3 mentor specific options and 3 options that can be chosen by anyone. Choosing Option #2 unlocks the first Wayfarer tenet if the player has not done so already. Option #4's description changes depending on the player character's origin.

Options #2, #3, and #4 use Cenric as the default mentor.



You retrieve your pack and hoist it onto your bed. Pulling it open, you slip a hand inside to double-check its contents. With the exception of the weapons Rasmira took from you yesterday, everything is as you left it—an assortment of equipment and tools stuffed between a handful of useless objects. The mysterious bronze sphere Hera gifted you, the strange idol you took from Drakehand's establishment on a whim, the silver cube you plucked from the site of the Marshwall massacre... You don't know what to do with any of it. Keep it? Sell it? A decision for another day.

Your fingers brush a familiar object buried in the bottom. You pause, momentarily caught off-guard. You haven't seen it in months. You assumed you lost it in Rona, forgotten in your apartment long before you set foot on the *Dareia*.

A gift from Cenric/Sero/Varyn, given to you on the day of your inauguration.

[CENRIC ONLY] 1. A whetstone crafted of Alassar steel.

[SERO ONLY] 1. A compass inscribed with the Wayfarer sigil.

[VARYN ONLY] 1. A tinderbox that contains a piece of pyrestone, a stone that always sparks when struck.

2. An inscribed wood carving no bigger than your palm.

3. A piece of fannarl antler, polished and strung on a small chain.

4. An understated gold earring.

[CENRIC] 1. A whetstone crafted of Alassar steel.

Whetstones like this one are rare. Since the ability to forge Alassar steel was lost, so too was the knowledge of tools to care for the historic weapons. You recall Cenric telling you once that by his day, most whetstones had been lost or destroyed. While regular methods are more than sufficient, nothing sharpens Alassar like Alassar itself.

The whetstone isn't large—just large enough to get the job done. It once belonged to Cenric himself, and his master before him. He gifted it to you when you graduated, citing he had little use for such tools now that he no longer went into the field.

Like \$blade, it is a relic of a bygone age with a lineage all of its own, passed from one Wayfarer to the next.

[SERO] 1. A compass inscribed with the Wayfarer sigil.

Without magic to guide your way, the compass has been a vital tool throughout most of your career. Its casing is no bigger than your palm and expertly crafted from a rich, dark wood. Luminescent stones line the edge, though some have been knocked free after years of use. They glow softly in the dark, ensuring that you can always use it. The Wayfarer sigil is emblazoned on the inside of the lid, the delicate points detailed in gold leaf that has partially worn away.

You remember Sero joking the night they gifted it to you. They flashed you a wink and a smile, and loudly declared that the Order's sigil was designed to look like a compass so no Wayfarer would ever

lose their way. You are wanderers, travelling far across the world in pursuit of magic gone wrong.

Or you once were.

You hold the compass in your palm and turn, sending the needle spinning. You stare at the opposite end, watching it balance until it settles, pointing south. South to Artanis. South to the Frostmarks.

South to the Spire.

[VARYN] 1. A tinderbox containing a piece of pyrestone, a stone that always sparks when struck.

The box is elegantly crafted. Rich carvings adorn the sides and lid, reminiscent of Sathiric motifs. It is far too sophisticated to be a tinderbox; if you didn't know what was inside, you would assume it was a jewelry box. Inside, it is divided into compartments. One contains a block of pyrestone, its yellow-gold sheen worn and scratched from use. A small firesteel nestles in the section beside it. The last compartment is empty, save for a few remnants of wood shavings. It's been months since you resupplied; good tinder was difficult to come by in Rona.

An inscription is carved into the inside of the lid in an elegant hand: *May you always find a light when you need it the most.*

You remember when it was gifted to you. The box was crafted by an artisan in Tyridian, the firesteel forged by a Wayfarer smith at the Spire, and the pyrestone hand-selected and prepared by Varyn herself. Fire is difficult to come by on the road for magiani. Without magic, you cannot rely on conjured flames to warm your hearth or cook your food or light your way. She gave you a tool to serve you in any circumstances, preparing you for the hard life ahead.

2. An inscribed wood carving no bigger than your palm.

The wood carving is oblong in shape and intricately engraved. The Wayfarer sigil is emblazoned on the back, the delicate points detailed in gold leaf that has stood the test of time. On the front is an inscription in a strong and steady hand, written in your native language:

To protect others, I must first protect myself.

It is the first of the Wayfarers' tenets. In the final years of your apprenticeship, \$master told you that the tenets were the words of the founders, a collection of six oaths have come to define the Wayfarer Order.

It has been centuries since they were treated with any gravitas by active Wayfarers. To be honest, in the decade since your graduation, you've all but forgotten them—save this one. A few words of wisdom from ancient Wayfarers pale in comparison to everything else Cenric taught you, but it doesn't make his gift any less meaningful. Holding the wood carving now... it's a reminder of who you are and where you came from.

And what you've lost.

3. A piece of fannarl antler, polished and strung on a small chain.

The curved spike is stark white and smooth to the touch, fitting easily into the palm of your hand. You flip it over, the chain tangling in your fingers, and recall the night Cenric gifted it to you.

He took you for a walk on the ramparts, slowly climbing to the Spire's highest point. From that vantage, the Frostmarks spread out below you, the snow-covered peaks stretching far into the distance beneath the green and violet canopy of the southern lights. You stood together, staring in the direction of the clearing where you fought the fannarl all those years ago.

He had saved it, this tiny piece of antler. Broken off from the original monster and taken before Quirinus disappeared with the corpse. A decade later, he passed it to you as a reminder of the night you joined the Order—and how far you had come since then.

4. An understated gold earring.

The earring is a small teardrop with a Sathiric motif. Though your home was far behind you, Cenric never forgot your roots. He knew how much you enjoy small fineries, difficult thought they are to come by. The earring was a small gesture, something to remember him by when you were traversing the world alone.

[Alpha Build Version 1.1.2. Patch 2.3.](#)

[Sep 12, 2022](#)

Hi friends,

The alpha build has been patched. This patch contains several UI updates and new Episode 2 content. It will be released to the public build in two weeks time on September 26.

PLEASE READ THE PATCH NOTES CAREFULLY. This update *will* affect your save files. Depending on your continuity, some save files will require a restart from a certain point; others may contain insignificant errors that do not affect gameplay until you proceed to Episode 3.

Additionally, the alpha build password has been updated.

Alpha Build Access

Link: <https://idrellegames.itch.io/wayfarer-alpha-build>

Password: EVtVJnd2QN0opME5

✗ DO NOT SHARE THE PASSWORD ✗

There is NO Episode 3 content in the alpha build. Episode 3 Scene One is still in-progress. I am aiming for an update at the end of September or in October.

Patch Notes - September 26, 2022

- If you **used the Quick Character Creator** you MAY need to start over from the beginning. If you made a character and selected to use your mentor's surname, then went back to edit that character and **did not** select your mentor's surname, you will have a bug in your file where the game treats it like you have your mentor's surname even if you do not. The only way to fix this is to make a new character and start from the beginning.
- A simplified list of patch notes/save notes is available from the top of the title screen and in the credits page.

Patch Notes - September 12, 2022

Notes on Save Files

As bugs are fixed, previous saves may continue to have continuity errors on them. Please take save file notes into account when loading old saves; you may need to restart the game from certain points to fix continuity errors.

- ♦ **Always start the game in a new tab/window OR refresh your tab.** Keeping the game running in a tab for an extended period of time will cause you to miss patches and updates.
- ♦ **Some icons and fonts will not load if you play offline.** This may break elements of the UI.
- ♦ **If you see the \$lastname1 variable,** you are playing on a old save. You must restart the game from the beginning in order to fix it.
- ♦ If your save file is from before January 2022 and you left off in the middle of Episode 1, you must start a new file from the beginning. Continuing with your old save will cause the buff/debuff system to trigger incorrectly.
- ♦ If you encounter the **state.variables.aeran_approval is undefined** error at the end of Episode 2 or **bad conditional expression in <<if>> clause: Cannot read properties of undefined (reading 'ep1')** during Episode 2, your save is too old. You must restart from the beginning of the game OR from a save that starts BEFORE the beginning of Episode 2.
- ♦ **If you approval with Aeran was below 60 at the beginning of the fight scene at the end of Episode 2, you MUST replay from the Lethalis meeting or earlier.** If you do not replay the fight sequence, you may experience continuity errors on your playthrough later on.
- ♦ Pacts made with the Crimson Count will not appear in your Journal if your save is from before September 12, 2022. You must restart the game from the beginning if you want them in your Pact list.

On save files from before September 12, 2022, the \$pactcomplete variable will remain undefined until you either:

- Proceed to the first passage of Episode 2 (if you save is from Episode 1)
- Proceed to the first passage of Episode 3 (if your save is from Episode 2)
- If your save is in the middle of Episode 1, you will encounter an error where the \$pactcomplete variable cannot be added to even if you retrieve the chalice. If you do not want to have any errors with this variable on your file, you must restart the game from the beginning.

UI/Graphics

◆ Extended the time the Idrelle Games logo lasts and added a Twine logo to the start of the game. These can be clicked through to dismiss.

◆ New messages at the start of the game to warn about in-development content and to remind players to double-check patch notes.

◆ Minor visual adjustments; added the Wayfarer sigil to a few new places.

◆ Added aeda heritage to the player's Character page. Currently, heritage is only visible if the player speaks to the aeda interpreter in the water gardens.

◆ Added a "Principles and Beliefs" section to the Character page. This will track any major static character choices (i.e. whether the MC drinks or not, the MC's opinion on magic, religion, etc).

- The player will receive a "Journal Updated" notification when they make a choice that defines their character's principles and beliefs.

◆ Added a "Pacts" page to the Journal. This is similar to a quest log and will track active, completed, and failed pacts. Faction pacts will continue to be tracked in their faction profile. Added a new icon for miscellaneous pacts that aren't associated with a faction.

- The chalice quest is now officially a pact.
- The two pacts you can make with the Crimson Count (the chalice quest and serving him indefinitely as a bodyguard) will not show in the Pacts log unless you replay Episode 1.
- The \$pactcomplete variable now tracks how many pacts the player finishes. If your current save file is in the middle of Episode 1, this variable will not be defined until you proceed to Episode 2. If your current save file is in the middle of Episode 2, this variable will not be defined until you proceed to Episode 3. As such, your save may have the wrong pact complete count, but this **will not** affect gameplay.
- If you want to have the Count's pacts and the pact complete count display correctly on your save file, you should restart with a new save file.

Gameplay Fixes

- **[EPISODE 1, ROUTE A]** Fixed an inventory glitch during the scene at Runes & Relics when Drakehand returns the MC's Wayfarer pendant. You will need to replay from before this section to have the pendant put into your inventory properly.
- **[EPISODE 1, THE COVE]** Fixed an error with the haggling scene with Thelkar. You should now be able to haggle with him if you have enough funds.
- **[EPISODE 2]** Fixed a glitch where Aeran's letter does not show up in the codex after the MC reads it. You will need to replay from before this section to have it show up.
- **[EPISODE 2]** Added additional text to the Episode 2 Story Log that summarizes the MC's activities after the fight with Aeran.

New Lore

- Adjusted some of Quirinus' dialogue lines in the Prologue
- Updated the Calendar. The in-universe calendar is now a 13-month calendar with 28 days each. I highly recommend checking out the codex entry for some new lore about the moon!
- Updated the Astrandium mythology. "Harbingers"(which was always a placeholder name) has been replaced with Apokarians. The player's introduction to the Astrandium in Episode 1 and its relevant codex entry have been updated to reflect this.

New Content

Updated the Aeran fight at the end of Episode 2 with new content. There are now four potential branches:

- Drunk Route (the MC is intoxicated)
- High Approval (Aeran's approval is 60 or higher)
- **[NEW]** Neutral Approval (Aeran's approval is between 20 and 59, or his romance stat has *any* points)
- Hostile Approval (Aeran's approval is below 19)

The Neutral Approval branch features a different sequence of events and new options for the MC. If you are experimenting with potential outcomes, it is highly recommended to take the ABSTAIN option or let the timer run out on the timed choice.

Some sections of the Hostile Approval route have been re-written. A hidden strength check has been removed and replaced with a different continuity flag.

Due to this change, old saves from before this patch may have continuity errors. If your approval with Aeran was below 60 before the fight, you must replay Episode 2 from the Lethalis meeting or earlier.

Screenshots



WAYFARER is an in-development browser game. Currently, two out of fifteen episodes are available to play.

CONFIRM



Old saves may not work or include bugs that have been fixed.
You may periodically need to replay your save files from an earlier point.
Please check the latest patch notes for guidance.

CONFIRM



EPISODE 1: CONFLICT AT RONA

The **Arathian Empire** spreads its reach ever further. The **Guild of Mages** emerges as the strongest institutional power in the world with representatives in every political court. And the **Wayfarer Order**, torn asunder by a devastating loss, has grown obsolete.



EPISODE 1

Wayfarer Order

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PACTS

 **PACTS** are contracts or agreements, and form an essential part of your work as a Wayfarer. They may be proposed by factions, companions, or others. While some pacts must be accepted, others may be rejected outright.

You can always choose to fulfill or deny the terms of your pact. However, forging a pact is an act of great importance. Breaking a forged pact may result in unexpected consequences.

You can check active, completed, and failed pacts in your Journal.

CONFIRM

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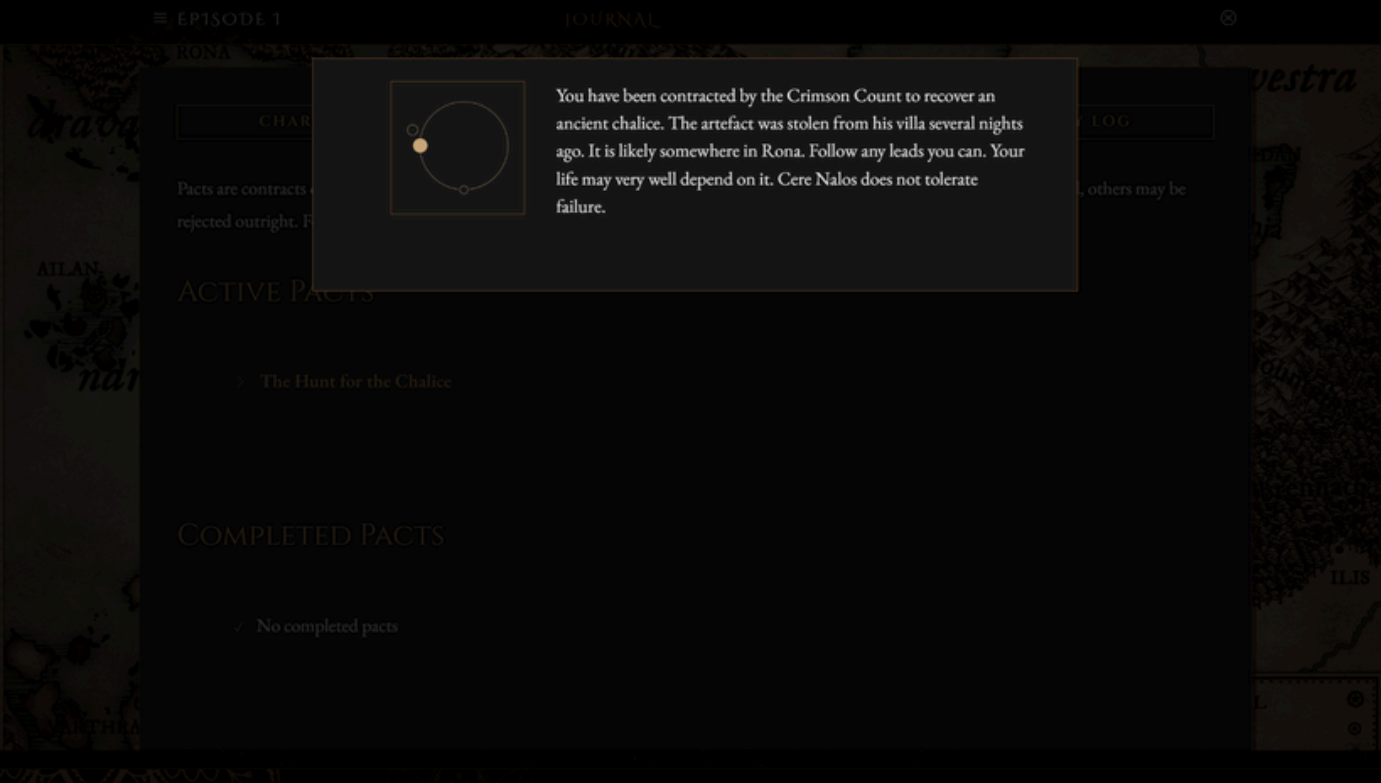
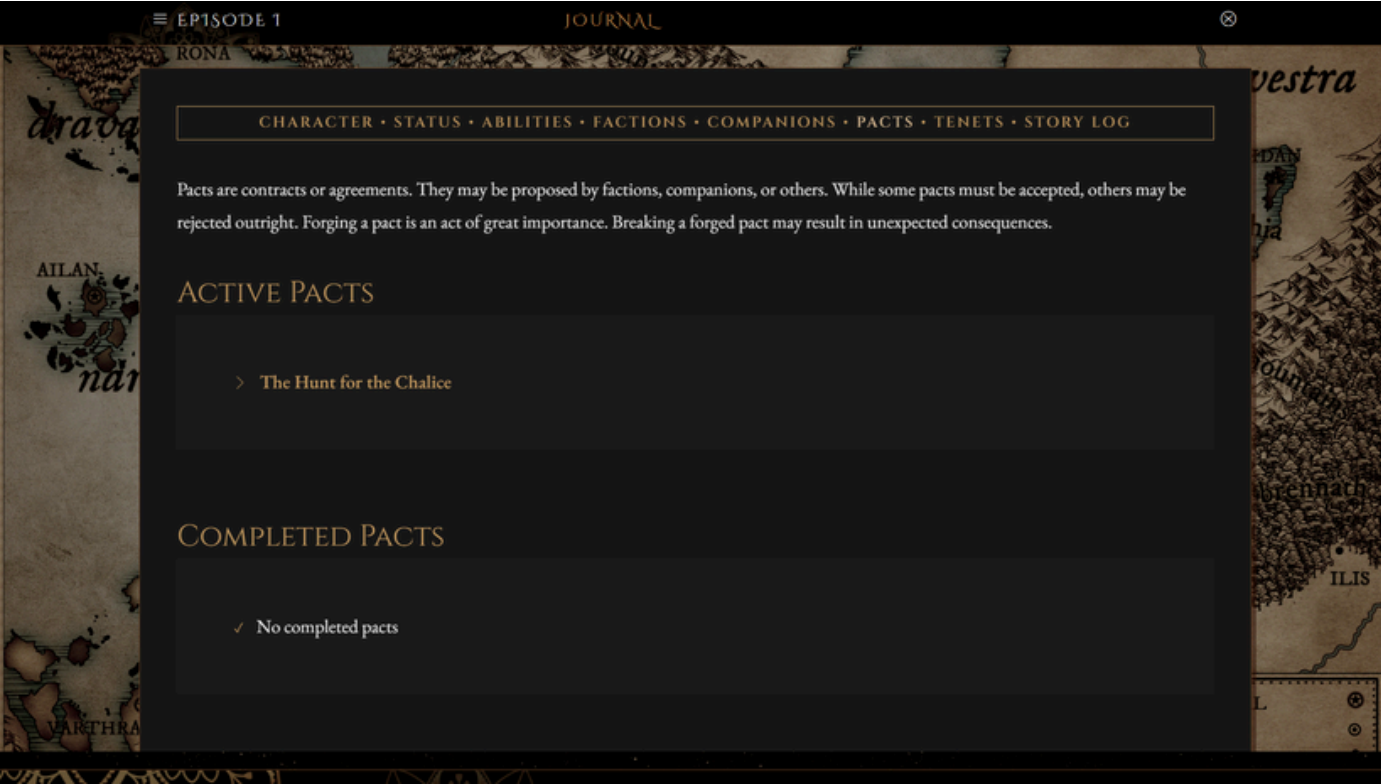
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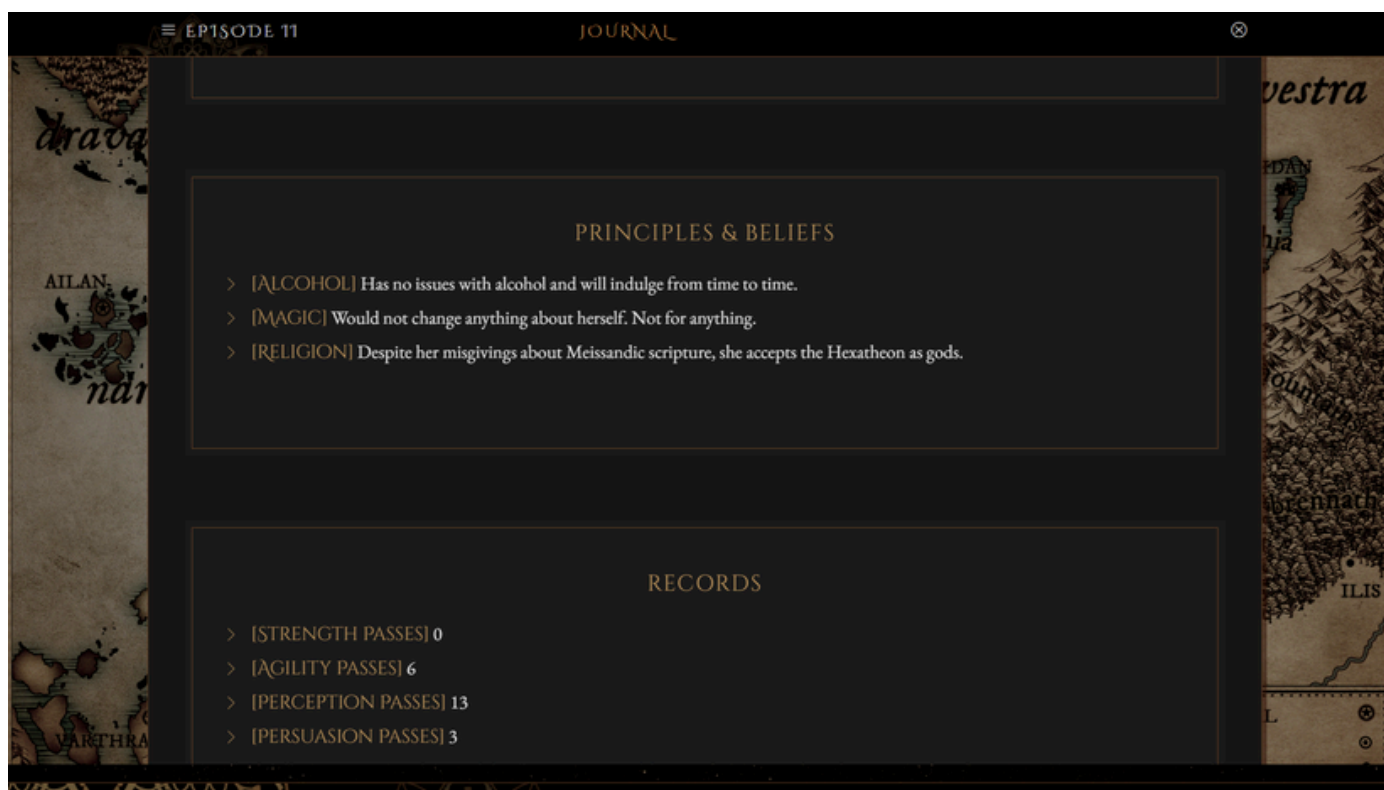
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behind.







[Arathian Fashion: A Primer](#)

[Sep 15, 2022](#)

Fashion is a uniquely important consideration in fiction. My background is in theatre, so I've always had an interest in how clothing can enhance a fictional world. Because prose is not a visual medium, fashion can sometimes be overlooked—both for storytelling in general and in worldbuilding. While I don't think it is necessary to always describe what a character is wearing, providing those details can help define the world while helping the reader visualize the scene.

Clothing and accessories can communicate much about a character without stating it outright. What they are wearing and how they are dressed can indicate anything from personality to social status. A character dressed in fabrics that are difficult to obtain can signify wealth; a character who purposefully alters popular styles or dresses against the norm can indicate their social deviance. Even something as simple as colour can be used to underscore theme, relationship to other characters, or emotional state.

From a worldbuilding perspective, fashion can help define a fantasy culture and make it feel lived-in. Using specific terminology can make the setting feel more historical or more modern, regardless of the actual historical usage of those words. For example, the word "tunic" can leave a medieval impression, whereas "blouse" and "tank top" leave a modern impression.

When I started worldbuilding for *Wayfarer*, I didn't consider fashion as part of the worldbuilding beyond a few vague descriptions. This shifted as the culture of the Arathian Empire began to take shape. As the game's main setting, I needed to have a clear idea of what people wore—not only for the sake of worldbuilding, but also as a reference for any future game artwork.

In early drafts, Arathian garments were originally “robes”. All of the Arathian characters—Quirinus in the Prologue; Zenaida, Malsara, and Nova in Episode 1—were described as wearing robes. There were a handful of reasons for this choice:

- The main inspirations for the Arathian Empire are historical Mediterranean and Middle eastern cultures, primarily classical Greece, Republican and Imperial Rome, and the Byzantine Empire, with nods to the Islamic Golden Age. There is also some inspiration from the Mughal Empire. I wanted a term that could easily invoke the visual of a “long, flowing garment”.
- *Wayfarer*'s world is gender-neutral by default and clothing is not gendered. There is no distinction between what men and women wear. However, I am writing in English. Certain words for clothing are gendered and would carry those biases and perceptions with them. Because I wanted to solidify the idea that most people wear the same garment, regardless of gender, I didn't want to use “robes” for Quirinus (a male character) and “dress” or “gown” for Zenaida, Malsara, and Nova (female characters).
- Using specific historical terms for clothing made Arathia's worldbuilding too analogous to its inspirations. Using terms like *chiton* (ancient Greek tunic), *himation* (ancient Greek outer garment), *stola* and *palla* (shawls worn by ancient Roman women), and *dalmatica* (Byzantine tunic worn by men and women) would make the setting feel like “fantasy [BLANK]”, which is something I wanted to avoid.

But robes didn't feel specific enough. While the term is vague enough to leave it open to interpretation, it felt *too* ambiguous. As I did more research into historical dress and costuming, I felt that creating my own terminology specific to my world was the way to achieve the *lived-in* feel while avoiding gendered clothing language.

GENERAL CLOTHING

Arathian culture values clean and bright clothing. Dyes are among the Empire's most important export, and form a crucial part of the economy. As they are readily accessible to all social classes, vibrant colours are common in clothing for all.

Colour is important to Arathian society. In some areas, it is traditional to match an individual's clothing to their personal magic for holidays and special events. Some shades have restricted usage. Imperial red (a vibrant scarlet) may only be worn by those who serve the Empire directly. This includes: members of the Imperial family, members of the Imperial court, archons, governors, high-ranking generals, and the Imperial guard in major Arathian cities.

Archons of major cities may enact civil laws banning the general public from wearing certain colours within their city limits. This occurs when the colour in question is of special significance to them; the laws typically restrict anyone except for members of their House from wearing it.

Silk, linen, cotton and wool are the most commonly used. Cotton and silk were originally imported from countries in western Istaran. In 763 IE, two Meissandic clerics from Erenvor smuggled silkworm eggs out of Calantha, kickstarting the Arathian silk industry.

Some garments include panels of inscribed textiles, specialized fabrics embroidered with Imperial motifs celebrating the current reigning emperor and enchanted with protective wards. They are gifted to those who have achieved a high standing in Imperial political ranks, or who have earned the Emperor's favour. By law, they can only be crafted in Erenvor and their production is strictly regulated.

SERITHANS

***Pronunciation:

****Sair* (rhymes with "air") – *ri* (sort i, like in "it") – *than* (rhymes with "anne")

***Word Creation:

****Seri-*: from the Latin *sericum*, meaning "silk" or "silken garment".

-than: vowel/consonant combo than fits the rest of the setting, has no meaning.

Serithans is a garment worn in the Arathian Empire. Due to shared regional history, it is also worn in the former Lotharic city-states (even prior to Imperial annexation) and in Vestra.

There are many variations of the serithan. The basic shape comprises of a long piece of draped fabric fastened at the shoulder with pins, broaches, clasps or ties, and gathered at the waist with a sash or belt. As Arathian beauty standards value asymmetry, it is common for the neckline to be one-shouldered. An common alternative style is a high collar that leaves both shoulders bare.

**Everyday Serithan

**These garments have the least amount of additional structure and detailing. Traditional serithans are constructed from silk, linen, cotton, or wool. They may be worn with or without trousers beneath. Additional shawls, scarfs or sashes may be draped overtop for added interest or warmth.

Everyday serithans traditionally come to the ankle, but some may be calf or knee length. They are typically sleeveless. However, in cold or mountainous climates, serithans with wide-hemmed sleeves are common, occasionally featuring a undersleeve that runs the length of the arm and over the hand, attaching at the middle finger.

Some serithan skirts may feature pleating or additional draping details.

Imperial nobles may sometimes have their everyday serithans constructed out of muslin instead of silk. These are often left undyed and are kept a pristine white.

**Formal Serithan

**Formal serithans are worn for special events and as ceremonial garb. Some members of the aristocracy may wear them daily, but within their ranks they are considered court attire. While formal serithans keep the main silhouette of the everyday serithan, the overall fit and neckline may be

experimental. Some are form-fitting over the chest, creating something akin to a bodice. Sashes are often worn over the shoulder to add a splash of additional colour.

They are always sleeveless and are never worn with trousers underneath. In cold or mountainous climates, enchanted threads are sewn directly into the fabric. For those who cannot afford it, enchanted gemstones or jewelry may be worn instead. Lower class citizens often wear embroidered wool or fuel-lined cloaks, capes, or shawls over top.

Formal serithans are constructed from silk. Within the Imperial aristocracy, damask weaves (reversible patterns) or solid, vibrant colours are preferred. In the case of solid colours, elaborate embroidery is added to the hem and necklines with gold or silver thread. In some cases, fabric may be jewel or pearl-encrusted. Translucent gauzes may be added as a fashionable outer layer.

****Travel Serithan**

****Travel serithans** may be worn for work or travel. They comprise of three parts: an undertunic, trousers, and an overgarment. The overgarment is shorter than everyday serithans, cutting off at the calf or the knee. It is gathered and belted at the waist, then splits down the side to show the trousers underneath. Sleeveless versions are the most common, but some may have full sleeves that cover the arm.

****Masculine & Feminine Versions**

****There** is no distinction between masculine and feminine in Arathian dress. This distinction is made in the game to help inform players. In Episode 2, the “feminine” turquoise serithan has a structured bodice that leaves room for breasts. The “masculine” purple serithan does not. Both, however, are long garments with skirts.

ABBERANS

*****Pronunciation:**

*****Ab** (*likes “abs” but without the s*) – *bair* (*like bear*) – *run*.

*****Word Creation:**

*****Not based on any real world language roots. The result of mixing vowel/consonant combinations together until I found something I liked.**

Abberans are the second most popular garment in the Arathian Empire. Unlike serithans, they are worn across all of Rhesainia, with the exception of rural Artanis and the Forest of Brennath. While they are not common in Artanis, they have been gaining popularity in urban areas since the country's annexation.

****Everyday Abberan**

****The abberan** is comprised of three parts: a tunic, a pair of trousers, and a jacket. Tunics may be long or short; the long ones reach mid-thigh and the short ones are tucked into the trousers. Both variants button up the sides and typically have a high collar. Full length sleeves are more common, but some may be sleeveless. The tunic is belted at the waist with a sash, belt or scarf.

Trousers come in two variations, loose-fitting and form-fitting. Both are high-waisted. The loose-fitting versions are drawn in at the waist and at the ankles. The form-fitting are cut straight against the leg.

Loose jackets are worn over the tunic and trousers. They are long, typically reaching the knees, with wide-hemmed sleeves. Abberan jackets are highly detailed; the quality of the fabric and the intensity of the embroidery is a sign of wealth and status.

Everyday abberans are more likely to be constructed of mixed textiles, depending on location and climate—silk for the tunic, linen for the trousers, and leather or wool for the jacket.

****Formal Abberan**

****Formal abberans** are very similar to their everyday counterparts. They are constructed from silk, with a heavy emphasis on fine details and embroidery. Tunics and trousers will typically match, with a belt or sash of a different colour for an accent. Trouser cuffs are usually embroidered. Jackets are often constructed from damask silk and embroidered with patterns and motifs. The more intricate the jacket, the better.

They are considered less formal than the serithan, but remain acceptable garb to wear to official functions and events.

OTHER CLOTHING

Beyond serithans and abberans, some Arathians wear long tunics and trousers for everyday wear. Soldiers, military officers, mercenaries, and other combat-focused professions incorporate gear and armour into their everyday wear.

OUTER GARMENTS

Outer garments come in many variations, depending on the need for cold and/or wet weather wear:

- **Cloaks.** A rectangular piece of cloth around the size of a blanket. Traditionally constructed from unwashed wool and either enchanted or saturated with lanolin to make it water-resistant. Secured at one shoulder with a clasp or a broach. Extend to the knees or longer. Often comes with a removable hood. Cloaks of the upper class are often bordered with intricate embroidery.
- **Capes.** Shorter versions of cloaks.
- **Shawls.** Outerwear typically worn with serithans in cold weather. Constructed from goat wool or silk and dyed vibrant colours. Arathian shawls favour intricate designs with nature motifs, particularly trees, apple blossoms, and birds.

UNDERGARMENTS

Undergarments are typically made from linen. Styles change depending on the garment worn. Arathians wear a loincloth similar to a pair of shorts on the lower body. The upper chest may be supported by a breast band constructed fabric twisted around the chest.

Serithans with fitted styles have support structures woven into the bodice to support the breasts. They may also be worn with a shift or chemise-like underlayer, cut in the same silhouette as the serithan, omitting the need for a band. If a shift is worn, most individuals forgo additional undergarments (depending on the comfort level of the individual).

Undergarments are typically undyed. Some members of the upper class may embroider or dye their undergarments, if they can afford it. In this case, some breast bands are decorated with jewelled or gilded y-shaped chains.

FOOTWEAR

Footwear is an important sign of wealth in Arathia. Going barefoot is unacceptable and is viewed as either a sign of societal deviance, loose morals, or poverty. It is also an indication of social class and profession. Sandals are worn by commoners; boots are favoured by soldiers, mercenaries, and labourers; shoes are worn by Meissandic clerics, Imperial nobility, and government officials.

Arathian footwear does not feature raised heels with the exception of boots worn by cavalry.

****Sandals**

**Sandals are worn by Arathian lower and middle classes. They are thick-soled openwork boots constructed from ox hide and are left unadorned. Typically, they reach just above the ankle, but can extend up to the mid-calf. Strapwork differs between regions, with each major city having their own unique styles.

Wool socks are worn in certain regions to insulate against cold and wet weather.

****Boots**

**Boots are worn primarily by soldiers and mercenaries. They are generally considered to be an indication that the wearer is a combatant. Boots are the most durable Arathian footwear, and are thick-soled and constructed from leather. They typically extend up to the mid-calf, though some can reach just below the knees. Some boots include a raised heel, while others do not.

High-ranking imperial officers often have motifs imprinted into the leather.

****Shoes**

**Arathian shoes are worn by the nobility, the Meissandic clergy and government officials. They feature slightly tapered toes and may be secured with straps, silk ties, or nothing at all. Constructed from soft leathers, Arathian shoes are heavily decorated and may be dyed a variety of colours. They may be gilded, adorned with medallions, or encrusted with gemstones.

Many shoes are symbolic, indicating the wearer's House, sphere of magic, or religious beliefs. Soles are often carved with messages, inscriptions or motifs, which imprint on the ground.

JEWELRY

Jewelry is extremely important in Arathian culture. It is worn by people of all social classes, though type, style, and material are an indication of social class. Some types of jewelry are often used to store enchantments that enable the wearer, including augmenters used by Guild mages and court mages.

Asymmetry is valued. In the case of piercings, one side of the face will often not match the other (for example: two lobe piercings in one ear, but only one in the other).

- **Earrings.** It is typical to have multiple ear piercings throughout the ear, particularly in the earlobe and the helix.
- **Septum and nostril piercings.** Nose piercings are less common than ear piercings, but they are a traditional part of Arathian beauty standards.
- **Upper arm cuffs.** As serithans often leave the arms bare, bands worn on the upper arms are common decorative pieces. They may be small or large, sometimes extending from the upper arm down to just above the elbow.
- **Cuffs & Bracelets.** Thick cuffs are very common, usually worn on the wrist of the non-dominant hand. They may sometimes be inscribed with motifs or inscriptions. Hand chain bracelets are a staple among the Arathian Guild of Mages and are typically adorned with a gemstone that acts as an augmenter.
- **Rings.** Rings are very common. They often hold enchantments that aid the wearer with daily activities or allow them to perform small magics from another sphere (such as conjuring light). Some are worn stacked on a single finger.
 - o Augmenter rings are traditionally worn on the index finger of the dominant hand.
 - o A version of a signet ring is worn by Arathian governing officials, including the emperor and Imperial archons. It is worn on the little finger of the dominant hand, and set with a gemstone that matches the colour of the wearer's personal magic. It is attuned to the wearer and holds a fraction of their magic.
- **Broaches.** Broaches are typically designed with Meissandic or nature motifs. Broaches bearing the Arathian phoenix are worn solely by high-ranking government officials.

Necklaces are not very common. When they are worn, they are typically intricate collar pieces that merge with a serithan's neckline.

Lower class jewelry is highly decorative and detailed, though it lacks gemstones. It is typically constructed from bronze, copper, and pewter. Gemstones, jewels, and precious metals are reserved for the upper class. A recent trend in Erenvor fashion has seen members of the Imperial court wearing jewelry fashioned from inactive Alassar steel. While the steel keeps its unique silver-white colour and watered texture, once it has been reforged it loses all anti-magical properties.

TATTOOS & SCARS

Tattoos are not common in Arathia. Within upper class circles, they are viewed either as a curiosity or something to be shamed, depending on the person in question. While it is generally acceptable for soldiers and mercenaries to have tattoos, it is an extreme social faux pas for the nobility.

Prior to annexation, the Lotharic city-states had diverse tattooing practices with regional motifs unique to each city. This has mostly fallen out of fashion since becoming Imperial territory. However, Velantian tattooing practices are carried on in the Undercity. They are common among the criminal underworld. As such, tattoos sometimes carry a bad reputation in the city's other districts.

Any form of visible scarring is frowned upon as it is an indication of poverty or that the individual lacks magic.

HAIRSTYLES

Long hair is valued in Arathian society and considered beautiful. Complex braids and plaits are standard for all hair types and textures. After braiding, hair is gathered and decorated with hair pieces, such as cuffs, beads, jewels, and combs. Loose hair is socially acceptable only if it is shoulder length or shorter.

Most Arathians are clean-shaved. If facial hair is worn, it is kept short and well-maintained. Long beards are considered a social faux pas, particularly in aristocratic circles.

****Hair Coverings**

**Hair coverings may be worn for everyday use. They are typically worn by servants and labourers for practical reasons, to protect the hair, or to protect from the sun. In the upper classes, hair may be covered in private during downtime as an alternative to complex braiding and decorations.

Hair coverings are constructed from linen, cotton, or silk. They may be a solid colour or intricately embroidered. They are worn over the head and wrapped at the nape of the neck. Hair may be completely contained or remain partially visible.

MAKEUP

Arathian makeup takes inspiration from the theatre scene. Focusing primarily on the eyes and lips, it is primarily used to enhance facial features for dramatic effect and to play with colour. Makeup may be applied through enchantments, but many individuals prefer using tactile means in the event the enchantment fails.

Makeup is worn primarily for social and ceremonial events, but it does make an appearance for day-to-day activities. It is not necessary to wear makeup to be considered attractive.

[Progress Report 2022.09.15: Getting Back on Track](#)

[Sep 15, 2022](#)

Hi friends,

I'm sorry for the delayed update. Usually I try to get progress reports out biweekly on Mondays, but this week has been extremely busy. I am thankfully mostly recovered from Covid; with the exception of a little fatigue, I am pretty much back to normal and working on the game.

There will be no sneak peek this week as I am working on this month's bonus content post (Apprentice tier+) and short story (Wayfarer tier+). The [bonus content post](#) just went live earlier today; I should be finished drafting the short story soon for a release later next week.

Game Updates

If you missed it, the Episode 2 patch is now available on the alpha build! I highly recommend reading [the patch notes](#) so you know how your saves are affected. The patch will be released publicly on September 26.

Episode 3 Scene One is progressing. I have written about 17,000 words of new content. The Aeran branch is inching towards being finished, which I am hoping to do by Friday next week. Unfortunately, I am not able to give a rough estimate as to when Scene One itself will be complete. I was hoping for the end of September, but there is still a lot of variations to work through. October is much more likely for an update.

Other Updates

September is a huge month with a lot going on! September 9 was Wayfarer's one-year anniversary. To celebrate, I am hosting a couple of events that will end on September 30. If you're interested, you can see [the details here](#).

Additionally, some folks from the Discord server and I are organizing a 2023 Wayfare digital calendar. This is a volunteer project, with all proceeds donated to an LGBTQIA+ charity (to be announced in October). We are currently accepting applications for artists, so if you're interested, you can [check out the details here](#)! Artists must be 18+ and have a Discord account. Applications close on September 26

I don't have too much else to add. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to reach out. As always, thank you all so much for your support! 💕

[Hearth & Home, Part I: Amali \(Wayfarer Order Short Story\)](#)

[Sep 23, 2022](#)

Deep in the Frostmarks lies a tower. To some, it is a citadel of myth and legend, a relic of a bygone era. To others it is a dark bastion of horror, used to frighten children with wild stories of fiends come to steal their magic.

But to Rindan Cenric, the Spire is home.

It is early in the afternoon when he tromps into the kitchen. A sturdy dwarf of an unmentionable age, he is the short, greying, one-eyed Wayfarer master widely considered to be as much a part of the Spire as the black ramparts and the stained glass windows. Some days, it feels as though the whole tower will collapse without him. As the Order's archivist, he has too much work, not enough time, and too little patience.

So, it is with a sigh of relief that he finds the kitchen empty. Resting his favourite mug on the table, he putters about the hearth, lights a fire, and sets a pot of water to boil. His eye and mind are bleary from a morning of paperwork and he is in desperate need of another cup of tea.

"Free from hiding in your tower?" a mocking voice calls. "Never thought I'd see the day."

Rindan grimaces. "It's called paperwork. Shouldn't you be familiar with it by now?"

Amali Sero hobbles through the threshold on a pair of crutches, their sardonic grin unhampered by their injury. On an ordinary day, the Wayfarer Grandmaster can be seen swanning about the Spire in full battle gear, ready to trek into the woods on a hunt or leave on a mission to Tyridia. Today, however, they have opted for a loose, knee-length dress from their native Naro, and left their long, greying locs unbound about their shoulders.

"That's the joy of being Grandmaster," they say, grunting softly as they limp through the kitchen. "I have other people to do it for me."

Rindan frowns. "Didn't Sirin tell you to stay off that leg?" he calls.

"If Sirin expects me to stay bedridden, she's smoked too much dreamweed," they reply, flashing him a grin. They lower themselves carefully into a chair at the table and exhale a long, satisfied sigh. "What's for lunch?"

"I'll fetch you something."

He crosses the kitchen and digs around the pantry, searching for dried rations. Lunch was over an hour ago and with the Spire busier than usual this summer, there isn't much leftover once everyone eats their fill. Thankfully, their kitchen is well-stocked from recent supply runs. Grabbing a tin of tea leaves for himself, he quickly returns with a plate of smoked sausage, bread, cheese, and dried apples.

Amali raises an eyebrow as he shoves the plate in front of them. "This same fare?" they ask, inspecting the cheese. "How unimaginative. Remind me to expand our pantry sometime, we're desperately lacking in culture around here. Where are the spices?"

"You could have had something different if you got up an hour ago," Rindan points out.

"Ah," they tsk, already scarfing down their food. "But see, *Siri* told me to stay in bed. Wouldn't want to disobey our favourite physician."

Rindan frowns at the contradictory statement and lets it go, too irritated to make a counterpoint. Even so, as he raises the pot lid to check the water, he can't help a small smile. Like all Wayfarers, Amali is a notoriously poor patient. It's not in their nature to sit still. As far as he's concerned, they can gripe however they like.

It's better than the alternative.

"A watched pot never boils," Amali says through a mouthful.

Rindan slams the lid. "Hm?"

They chuckle and wipe their mouth with the back of their hand. "I'm grateful for this," they say. "I've been wanting to talk with you, but there's very little chance of me getting all the way up to your favourite hidey-hole with *this* in the way." They rap their knuckles against their crutch. "Sit with me?"

"Sure. Better than watching the pot."

Amali grins.

Rindan pulls up a chair and sits down. He's not far from where he left his mug—he picks it up out of habit, turning it over absently in his hands.

"Been meaning to ask," Amali says, brown eyes alight with curiosity. "Where's that from?"

"This? Oh... uh..." He pauses. "My apprentice made it for me. Took at least six tries before this one. Even scrawled his name on the bottom..." He flips it over, fondness welling up inside him as he takes in the faded, clumsy signature and the small thumbprint next to it. "Ah, he was a good kid."

"How long ago was that?"

"Long before your time."

They nod soberly and run a hand over their chin, scratching at the fine layer of stubble. "How many apprentices have you had? Fifty? Sixty? I can't imagine what it has been like. Watching every Wayfarer pass through these halls—training with their masters, mingling with their peers, living life to the fullest only to leave the Spire and never return."

"You've taken a grim turn." Rindan places the mug on the table and cracks the tea tin open, tapping a generous amount of leaves into it. The tea pot went missing this morning—someone's idea of a prank, no doubt—and this will have to do. "Is this your injury talking, or do you have something else on your mind?"

Amali's dark eyes linger on his eyepatch and the scarred, mangled flesh beneath. "It's a bit of a shit life, isn't it, Rindan?" they say. "Taken from your family to the one safe harbour you may ever know, only to be pushed out the door and sent into the fray. Wayfarers don't retire. We push ourselves to our limits, and then we die."

"Has your recent brush with death left you grappling with your mortality, or is this your age talking?" he retorts gruffly. Amali is human. Though they are only midway through their fifties, they are already beginning to resemble Rindan in age. The discrepancies between human and dwarven lifespans will never not shock him.

They snort. "You'd know that better than me, old man," they say, plucking a piece of dried apple from the plate and rolling it between their fingers. "We're in rough shape, Rindan. And I don't know how to fix it."

Rindan pauses, knowing full-well they are not talking about him or himself.

The Wayfarers' future has long been in question, even before Amali became Grandmaster. Rindan has seen much in his two centuries at the Spire, but the passage of time has proven one truth: the Wayfarer Order is waning.

Even in his early days there were fewer magiani found, and from their numbers fewer recruited and trained. Rhesainia was changing and cultural views radically shifted public opinion of the Order. Where once they were saviours and protectors, now they were little more than a necessary evil. Families once proud to enlist their magiani youths were afraid: afraid of the repercussions, afraid of the backlash, afraid of what their children would become. Their reach was diminished, hampered by laws made by governments that feared what they could do.

With fewer recruits each year, the number of Wayfarers slowly shrank. Of those who completed their training, more and more refused inauguration, filling the ranks of the Order's blacksmiths, artisans, and physicians. With many of the trained Wayfarers travelling the continent in pursuit of work, there were fewer masters available to train new recruits. And on and on it went, until the overall numbers were so diminished, the modern Order could not hold a candle to the Wayfarers of the past.

With their resources stretched to a breaking point, Amali made a decision. As their first significant act as Grandmaster five years ago, they called for a temporary halt on all recruitment. The Spire has not seen a new recruit since. And though their decision is respected, it has not been taken well by all.

"You know the solution," Rindan says slowly. "Return to recruitment—"

"It's not a solution. More recruits won't fix our loss of Alassar weapons, our dwindling resources, or our strained relationships with Rhesainian governments. Brissa is talented, but even her sharp tongue can't fix what's already broken. Continued recruitment will only prolong what's already happening."

"Then what do you propose?"

Silence settles over the table, interrupted only by the slow gurgle of the water pot.

Amali pushes their unfinished plate away and rests a hand on the table. “If I become the last Grandmaster, what would you think of that?”

“You can’t honestly be considering *ending* the Order—”

“I’m not. Not in any official capacity, at any rate. But change is coming, whether we like it or not.” Heaving a sigh, Amali grabs their crutches and drags themselves upright. “Water’s ready,” they add, nodding at the bubbling pot.

“Yeah, I see that.”

Chuckling to themselves, Amali hobbles their way to the door. Rindan ignores them and putters about the hearth. He carefully ladles boiling water into his mug, watching the tea leaves swirl as they sink to the bottom.

“Rindan.”

He looks up. Amali stands in the threshold, leaning heavily on their crutches. They flash him a grin, a mischievous gleam in their eyes.

“I had Tiva leave you a gift. Hope you like it.”

Rindan scowls.

Cackling with laughter, Amali limps through the doorway and disappears, the sound of their crutches hitting the flagstones fading into the distance. Grumbling with annoyance, Rindan takes his mug and heads for the back door. Though he would normally return to his office and continue work, his conversation with Amali has left him uneasy. He could use some fresh air.

Mug in one hand, he pushes the door open and trundles outside. The latest bout of warm weather has encouraged the Spire’s residents to seek the outdoors and the grounds are bustling with activity. The sky is a clear, vibrant blue without a single cloud in sight. The mountains rise high above the walls, their snow-capped peaks sparkling in the golden afternoon sun.

Leaning comfortably against the kitchen’s outer wall, Rindan blows on his tea and observes the spirited racket unfolding before him.

Dessa Meryst—once his apprentice, now the former instructor of several active Wayfarers—walks a good-natured pony into the paddock. His current apprentice is the youngest recruit, a half-melusine child of fourteen or fifteen. They hang onto the fence, two feet on the lowest rung, their eyes wide with curiosity and apprehension as they sway excitedly in anticipation of their first lesson.

Sirin Torvar, the Order’s long-standing physician, strides through the garden with a gaggle of bored trainees in tow, stopping to point out medicinal plants. When the dwarven woman rolls up her sleeves and kneels in the dirt to demonstrate proper harvesting, she all but disappears into the vegetation. Her

peculiar broad-rimmed reed hat bobs up and down as she takes what she needs and prunes the rest, working her knife with the speed and precision reserved for her surgery table.

Tiva Anzar, a recently inaugurated Wayfarer yet to take her first official contract, has taken over the archery range for the afternoon. Her bright voice echoes through the grounds as she leads a casual competition with her friends among the older apprentices. Each line up in turn to take their shot, clapping each other on the back at the perfect hits and whooping with good-natured laughter at the misses.

But none of it can compare to the lively commotion of the sparring ring. This summer has seen the homecoming of several established Wayfarers, warriors who have returned to enjoy a much needed reprieve from their work across the continent. Most have their own regimens honed through years of practice, and not even the most well-intentioned break is enough to interrupt the habit. It comes as no surprise that with the streak of good weather, they would gravitate to the ring to spar against each other.

A dozen Wayfarers hang at the edge of the sparring ring, sweaty and tired from their personal bouts. Most are in various states of undress, forgoing shirts and shoes in the heat. Some douse themselves with water, others chat conversationally as they observe the opponents in the ring. Though the previous bouts have drawn a fair amount of attention, this is nothing compared to the current opponents. Everyone from open-mouthed apprentices to practiced Wayfarer masters to the Spire's non-combatant magiani have all gathered to watch.

Darius Avennor spars the way he fights—with supernatural grace and pinpoint accuracy. Though he prefers archery above all else, trouble will befall any enemy who assumes he is unfamiliar with other weapons and combat styles. He was a quick study during his training, hungry to learn and never satisfied. While those habits ran Brissa ragged when he was a youth, they have since transformed him into an unparalleled warrior, a keen hunter, and an expert diplomat. In only a decade, he has amassed more accolades, more rewards, and more notoriety than any other active Wayfarer. With his quick wit, natural charm, and genuine compassion, it's no surprise that he is beloved by everyone who comes to know him.

If the Order had a golden child, it would be him.

Rindan sips his tea, carefully checking its temperature. Though it has cooled off enough to drink, it is still too warm for his liking. He swirls it absently, occupied by the spectacle happening in the sparring ring.

Always one for the dramatic, he muses.

Darius rounds the ring on agile feet, sizing up his opponent with a sly grin on his face, his pace measured as he waits for an opening. His brown hair is tied up in a loose knot and he is shirtless, his bronzed skin glinting in the sun. The display has earned more than a few blushes and gapes from the watching apprentices, some of whom are overly taken with him. He is fighting Brin Algar, one of his contemporaries and a friend since their early apprenticeships. If anyone is capable of defeating him, it would be Brin. The half-aeda is nearly as acclaimed as Darius himself.

They spar with spears today, the edges blunted for training. The spear is just one choice in a rotating line-up of weapons, chosen each morning by drawing lots. It has caused a bit of a stir among the apprentices, quickly becoming their daily entertainment before they are dragged away for their own drills.

Rindan tests his tea once more, lost in thought. It seemed only yesterday when Darius, Brin, and the others were a band of snotnosed youths with big attitudes and even bigger dreams yet to be served their first taste of reality. Shit... how many Wayfarers has he seen pass through these halls? Hundreds? He's lost count, but he is certain that if he put pen to paper, he would remember all their names.

"Drawn out of your refuge by the excitement? Or has the fine weather finally convinced you to take a break?"

Brissa Varyn appears in the kitchen doorway, hands resting loosely on her hips. She is dressed in a light silk serithan and her bountiful, red-gold hair twisted back in a thick braid at the nape of her neck. Instead of a traditional sash, her skirts are cinched at the waist with a thick leather belt, to which she has attached a utilitarian satchel. Though she has always preferred aristocratic clothing when not at work, he has never thought of her as a noble. Her shoulders are too broad, her arms too defined, her raw strength too evident. While she puts in the effort to say otherwise, it has been six decades since she last looked the part of a Vestran aristocrat.

Not that he would ever tell her that.

"You too?" Rindan mutters, lowering his mug. "Sero said almost the same."

"We only tease you because we love you."

"Ha." He lowers his mug. "Let me enjoy the sunshine in peace, would you?"

She shoots him a fond, but aggravated smile. "I know there's a pile of reports on your desk that isn't getting any smaller."

"That implies you've seen my desk recently. Thought you were done stopping by my private quarters."

If she's bothered by the comment, she doesn't let it show. "I did. Twenty minutes ago. Looking for you. But Rindan, if you need assistance, I'm sure there are others who would be willing to help you. Amali or I, or even Sirin—"

"Sirin's up to her elbows training new physicians, Sero is injured, and you have your own responsibilities to tend to," he interrupts gruffly. "The unfortunate nature of deskwork is that it never ends, even if you ask politely. The reports aren't serious for the most part. It's grunt work. Nothing an old man can't handle."

"Stop that. You're not old."

“Two hundred years is plenty old, Brissa. Even for a dwarf.”

A chorus of shouts cut across the grounds. Darius flies across the sparring ring and executes a perfect leap, knocking Brin flat on their back. He lands on top of them, pinning them to the ground, his spear held inches from Brin’s face. Darius breathes heavily, a smirk on his lips and blue eyes gleaming with triumph. His hair has loosened from its knot and hangs about his face, plastered to his neck with sweat.

“Show off,” Rindan grouses.

Brissa smiles. “A flair for the dramatic never hurt anyone.”

“It’s wholly unnecessary—”

“Darius is Arathian. It’s in his blood. Besides, it’s good for the apprentices. No one enjoys the tedium of daily drills. A little friendly competition—however flashy—may give them the inspiration they need to focus on their training.”

“It’s a distraction. Look, Tiva’s going to shoot somebody because she’s too busy looking over her shoulder—”

Brin groans and taps the ground, signalling their defeat.

Whooping cheers burst around the ring. Darius withdraws, leaping gracefully onto his feet, and extends a hand. Brin grabs it and allows themselves to be pulled up. They clap Darius on the back and sheepishly run a hand through their hair as they rejoin their friends.

“This is daily training, not a performance!” Rindan bellows.

Darius plants his spear in the ground and leans on it. “Who says it can’t be both?” he shouts back, grinning from ear to ear.

“Doesn’t matter when you’re setting a bad example!”

He throws back his head, his good-natured laughter echoing across the grounds. “Then come join us yourself, old man!” he calls, backing up to the centre of the ring and spreading his hands in invitation. “Show us how it’s done.”

“Darius!” Brissa calls, a hint of admonishment in her voice.

He drops the act and stands up straight. “Sorry, Master Varyn,” he says, bowing his head. Even after ten years, a single word from her is enough to instill respect.

She smiles and raises a hand. Catching Rindan’s eye, she nods toward the kitchen door and disappears through the threshold. With a weary, accepting sigh, Rindan pushes off the wall and hurries after her. Brissa Varyn waits for no one.

Gods, I'm going to need another cup of tea for this.



Part 2 will be posted in October.

[New Patreon Billing Options](#)

[Sep 26, 2022](#)

Hi friends,

Patreon has introduced a new potential billing system. Under this new system, instead of being charged on the first of the month, you would be charged monthly on the date you sign up. This helps patrons avoid things such as back-to-back billing (if you pledge late in Month 1 and then are charged at the beginning of Month 2).

There are a few downsides to this for me as a creator. Namely, many of my benefits operate on a monthly schedule - the alpha build password changes at the start of each month, bonus content tends to be scheduled for the middle of the month, and side stories are typically posted towards the end of the month. If I change the billing options, I will not be changing my monthly schedule.

Unfortunately, this isn't something I can test out and then change later down the line. As with all Patreon billing options, once you switch to a specific system, the change is permanent.

I'm open to hearing if the "charge by signup date" is better for you than the "charge on the first of the month" system. This poll won't determine my ultimate decision, but I do want to hear what you think!

I also have the option of enabling annual plans. Instead of paying monthly, you would pay once and have access to all of your tier's content for 12 months. I haven't enacted this before, but if it's something that would be of interest, please let me know!

Poll closes on October 7th. 💖

I prefer charge by signup date

16

I prefer charge on the first of the month

66

I'm interested in annual subscriptions

7

Poll ended Oct 7, 2022 · 89 votes total

[Progress Report 2022.09.30: And Then It Was Fall](#)

[Sep 30, 2022](#)

Hi friends,

September's been a bit of a time. I've been sick, there's been events to coordinate, work to get done, and, of course, lots of writing.

To be honest, I'm not fully back to normal after Covid. I'm still struggling with brain fog, which has hampered my ability to write the way I normally do. Though I've kept to my regular work schedule, I am writing much slower than I usually would. It's been quite a frustrating experience to feel like your mind has turned to sludge and how much effort it takes to string a single sentence together.

I am trying not to be too hard on myself for this, but I am aware that I am massively behind schedule. Between my hiatus in July, writing a new branch for Episode 2, handling the gameplay/UI patch, staying on top of tier benefits, doing community and social media management, and getting sick, there hasn't been much time to work on Episode 3 since June.

Episode 3 Scene 1 is progressing. Aeran's branch is currently around 80,000 words for all content/variations, and I am hoping to complete it next week. With the patch released, September's events out of the way, and October's bonus content/side story drafted in advance, I only have game writing to focus on.

The goal for October is to complete Episode 3 Scene 1 and add it to the alpha build. Looking at it optimistically, I think we're looking at an update during the last week of October/first week of November. There's still a lot of content to draft, edit, proofread, and code. Ideally, I want to be finished Episode 3 in its entirety by mid-December.

Sneak peeks should be back starting next week. I've been holding off on posting any until I've completed the current branch and have something different to show; most of the major conversation topics have already been previewed.

Depending on how October progresses, I may put a hold on bonus content/side stories in November to focus on getting Episode 3 finished.

Additionally, I am currently [running a poll about preferred billing](#). Patreon has added some new options (charge by sign-up date vs charge on the first of the month), so if you'd like to weigh in, please check it out!

If you have any questions, don't hesitate to reach out. As always, thank you all so much for your support! 💕

[Episode 3 Sneak Peek #15](#)

[Oct 5, 2022](#)

Sneak peeks are back! This is from a part of Aeran's continuity branch. The MC did not get fired from the Lethalis mission and they did not speak to Veyer in the gallery in Episode 2.



The long, narrow courtyard is surprisingly chilly, its vibrant plants and decorative architecture dull without the sun. A channel carved from white marble cuts through the centre, flowing westward to the imposing red stone of Mahanin's outer wall. It passes through an arched gate at its base, the threshold glimmering with layers of security spells. Several small, personal boats are moored on either side, bobbing gently in the water. A private yachting exit, intended for members of the House and their important guests.

You raise your head, eyes narrowed as you scan the battlements. Even if this is a private gate, surely the Anaxas guard must be up there...

"And here I was beginning to think you weren't coming," a familiar, mocking voice calls.

You freeze, body tensing instinctively at the interruption. Exchanging looks with Aeran, you round on the intruder.

Veyer Krellion emerges from the shadows, a shoulder leaning against an arched column and a hand in their pocket. Their dark hair hangs loosely about their face, brushing the shoulders of their rumpled jacket. They are wearing the same clothing as they wore to the gala. From the dishevelled look and the satisfied smirk, you gather they didn't make it home last night.

"So many complex parts to Her Grace's plan," they continue drily, meeting your eyes. "So many ways it could go wrong. I was concerned, of course. Perhaps you were waylaid by the archon's guards, or placed under house arrest, or otherwise spirited off to a place where even Malsara couldn't reach you. It would be an atrocious start to the day to discover the key to our success had been compromised. I do hate rising early for no reason."

"What are you doing here, Krellion?" Aeran grunts.

Their eyes flick past Aeran and land on you. "Did you forget? I'm a crucial part of this mission."

"Didn't realize you were part of the escort."

"I had no reason to leave the security of Mahanin. Poor Malsara would have had to pluck me out from under the watchful eye of Sabien Quirinus had I returned to Ruval with my colleagues. Besides, I had no intention of wasting my evening. I enjoy the archon's little gatherings. Erenvor leaves me with little opportunity to indulge."

Aeran snorts with disgust. "You're a real piece of work—"

"I am merely playing my part, Kellis," Veyer interrupts. "The Guild expects me to misbehave in Velantis. Imperial court mages often do. Should any of this run afoul, well..." They push off the column and spread their hands wide. "It can fall on my shoulders and no one will think twice of it. I have the emperor's favour, after all."

[Progress Report 2022.10.10: !\[\]\(05be7c7a8995decd503647c99211f7c2_img.jpg\) Writing Work Ahead!](#)

[Oct 10, 2022](#)

Hi friends,

Happy October!

This will be a quick update this week as there's not too much going on. Canadian Thanksgiving was this weekend. Though my partner and I did not do anything special, I did take an actual weekend and logged off all of my social media.

Even when I'm not actively working on the game, I am often "working"—managing my tumblr, answering questions in my inbox, queueing and commenting on fan art, keeping up with the Discord server. I do it because it's fun and it's one of my favourite parts of my job, but it does get overwhelming from time to time. Even when I want a break, I find it very challenging to disconnect and *stay* disconnected. I've been trying to give myself more space and more time away from Wayfarer things so I don't feel like I am plugged into the game 24/7.

The break was refreshing, but I need to hunker down and focus on writing. Episode 3 has a lot of moving parts and I did not get as much work done last week as I had hoped (only 3 writing days, as last Thursday/Friday was dedicated to non-game writing Wayfarer work). Every "bad" writing day puts me further behind. I am making cuts, shifting things around, and merging events and dialogue where I can, but there are still a lot of branches and continuity flavour text to get through before I can bottleneck everything together and move on to Scene 2.

(This will probably make more sense when Scene 1 is complete and playable. We are suffering the consequences of Episode 2's multiple endings. 😊)

Episode 3's current stats are:

- **Aeran Content Branch, Part 1:** 90,855 words [finished]
- **Aeran Content Branch, Part 2:** 8330 words [in progress]
- **Veyer Content Branch:** 33,841 words [in progress]
- **Melchior's Party Content Branch:** N/A
- **Drunk Route/Other/Misc:** N/A
- **Scene Total:** 133,026

October's bonus content piece and side story are drafted and scheduled for Oct. 14 and Oct 21 respectively. Because of how work has progressed this month, I will not be releasing bonus content/side stories in November so I can focus on finishing Episode 3.

Thank you to everyone who participated in the [Patreon Billing poll](#). I **will not** be changing the format; my Patreon will continue to bill on the first of the month. I am going to consider opening annual subscriptions, but probably not until the new year.

If you have any questions, don't hesitate to reach out. As always, thank you all so much for your support! 💕

[Episode 3 Sneak Peak #16](#)

[Oct 12, 2022](#)

A small thing from the Veyer branch. In this continuity, they did not vote for the mission and the MC was fired.



Malsara rolls her eyes and ducks ahead, leaving the mages to size each other up. Her footsteps are swift and silent against the cool stone as she follows the rippling water into the wall's shadow. The channel flows through an arched gate at its base, the threshold glimmering with layers of security spells. Several small personal vessels are moored on either side, bobbing gently in the water. She selects the least decorative one, stoops down, and begins untying it.

Veyer sticks their hands in their pockets and casts an eye across the courtyard. "It's a lovely morning, isn't it?" they say. "Perfect for some treachery. Perhaps some light backstabbing—"

Zenaida's nostrils flare. "If you disapproved so strongly, you'd be on your way to inform Oshiro right now —"

"Oshiro? As if I'd tell him anything. Besides, my curiosity has been piqued from the very beginning."

"Has it? You voted against my proposal. Considering your actions last night, I can only believe your curiosity has more to do with collecting another unique notch on your bedpost than any genuine regard for my plan."

"What I do in private—with or without \$firstname—does not concern you, Your Grace," they say sharply. "Frankly, I thought more of you. You never struck me as one to resort to low blows, but I suppose even the most principled of us aren't free from spite."

She recoils as if stung. Toying with the edge of her hood, she casts a glance in your direction, an apology in her eyes. You shrug and turn your back on her, crossing the courtyard to assist Malsara with the boat. The assassin barely acknowledges you when you arrive and reluctantly passes you a rope. You rip through the knots without comment. Once finished, you decide to keep your distance from Zenaida and Veyer's argument and clamber into the boat.

"...very well, then, Krellion," Zenaida says finally, struggling to keep the embarrassment from her voice. She walks briskly to the channel, keeping to the shadows. "You know what we're up against. We can use your skills."

Veyer follows at a distance, meandering down the path. They pause at the edge of the channel and stoop, dipping a hand experimentally into the channel. "Then they're yours for today," they say, swilling their fingers back and forth. "I only ask for one thing in return."

She regards them coolly. “Name it.”

“That I’m the one who delivers the Astrial—if only for the look on Oshiro’s face. It will be quite shocked, I imagine. I intend to savour it.”

Zenaida sighs wearily. “As you wish.”

[Process: Location Sketches](#)

[Oct 14, 2022](#)

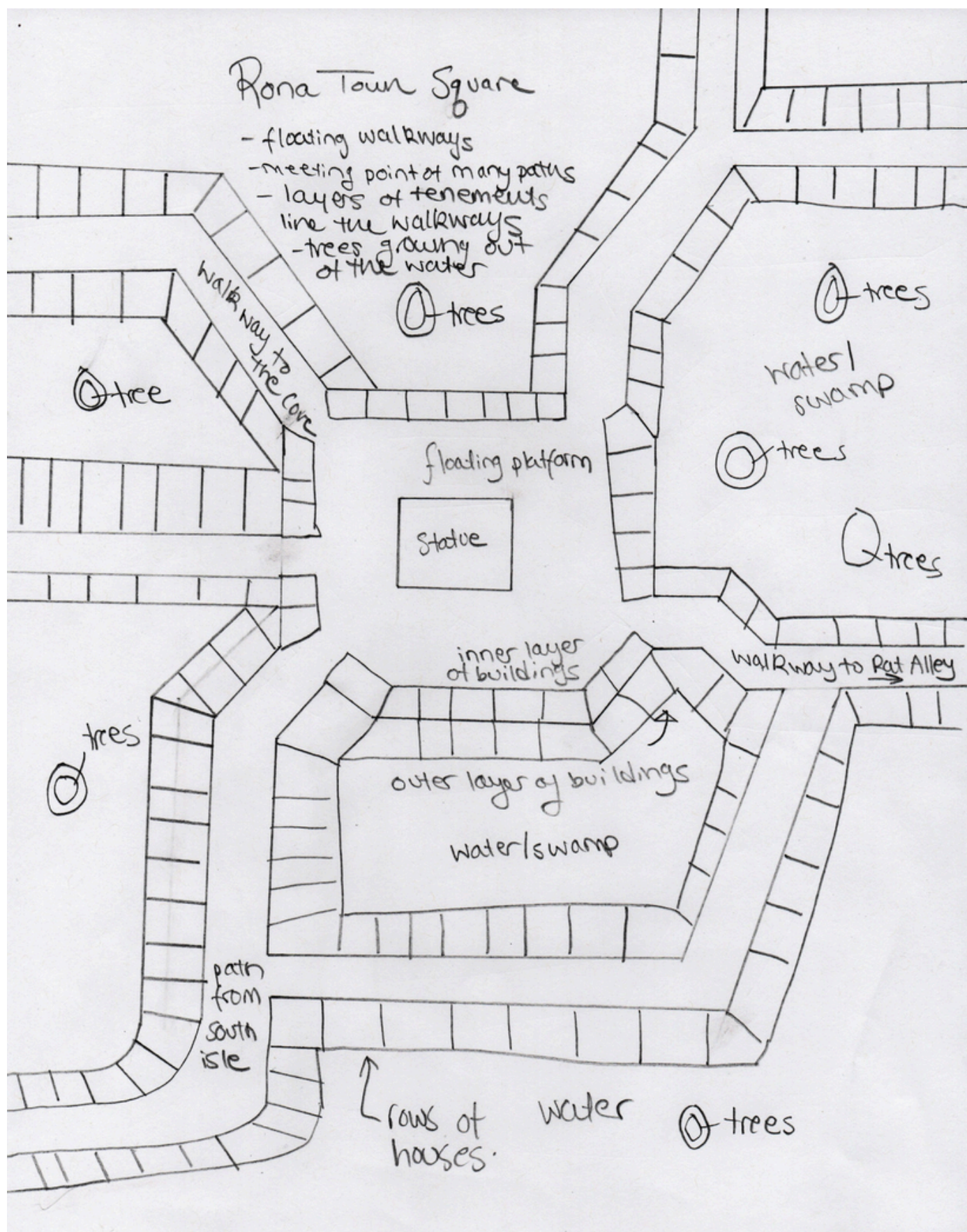
Setting is important. It’s often crucial for worldbuilding, establishing where the characters are and giving the audience an understanding of the culture and location. It can also be used to indicate tone and atmosphere of the scene overall.

I’m a very visual writer; I know exactly what each space looks like, and I do my best to communicate that through descriptive writing where necessary. But setting isn’t only about descriptions—it’s also about a sense of space. This is especially important for scenes like action sequences, which have a lot of movement and engagement with the environment.

For any given scene, I have a full visualization of what it looks like and where each character goes. This is a carry over from my playwriting background. In theatre writing, a playwright often needs to know how their characters may move around the stage during a scene. Even if the stage directions are kept to a minimum (or later ignored by the director), they still need to have an understanding of how their text works within a physical space. With every play I have written, I have always a basic set design sketched out in my head that helped inform where characters were for certain lines and where they may need to go.

While I don’t sketch out settings while writing *Wayfarer*, I always have a good approximation of one in my head when I write. I thought it would be fun to put some of those down on paper. I’m not an artist by any means, so these sketches are very rough.

1. RONA TOWN SQUARE



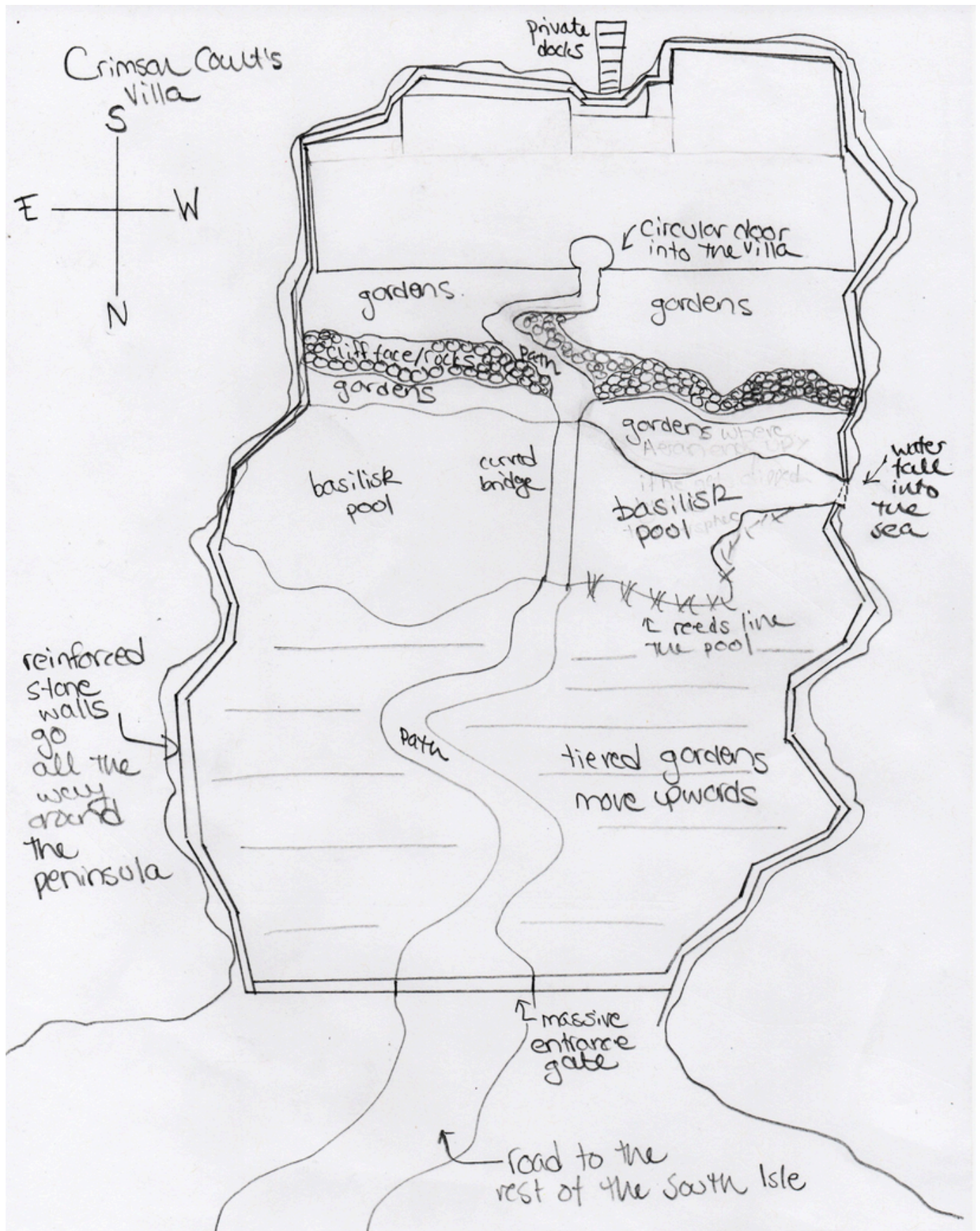
Sitting at the juncture of several major thoroughfares, Rona's town square is a floating platform that stretches between several islands. Surrounded on four sides by rickety buildings that tilt inwards on each other, the square is currently home to a plethora of wooden stalls erected for market day.

In the centre of the platform is an enclosed hole where the boards have been sawed away. Rising from the water below is the upper half of a bronze statue, a remnant of Rona's Imperial heritage. Depicting the emperor who ruled at the time of Rona's settlement—poised, triumphant, glorified in his royal armour—the statue supposedly cracked the platform beneath and fell through into the lagoon below. What remains is a heavily graffitied and defaced sculpture claimed by several nesting wetland birds.

With the rain little more than a light drizzle the townspeople are hardly deterred from going about their daily business. Though the sizable market day crowd has yet to form, a couple dozen townspeople are already out and about. The cacophony of voices rises as fishmongers, bakers, and merchants peddle their wares.

Wayfarer, Episode 1, Opening

2. COUNT'S VILLA



You round a final bend in the road and come to a halt. Ahead of you lies a walled complex perched on an artificial cliff. The white walls are smooth and shimmer with the tell-tale glow of dozens of security enchantments. They meet in the centre around a circular gate that leads into the centre of the complex. You can hear rushing water in the distance, like a waterfall tumbling down into the sea below. [...]

Small lights lining the path burst to life as Rhodarth escorts you through the courtyard. The landscaping is elegant and well-tended. Tiers of gardens slope delicately towards the gate, the dark soil bursting with leafy plants and colourful flowers. A curved white stone bridge arcs over a broad pool that cuts through the centre of the complex. Its water flows towards the western wall, gushing through a gap and cascading into the sea.

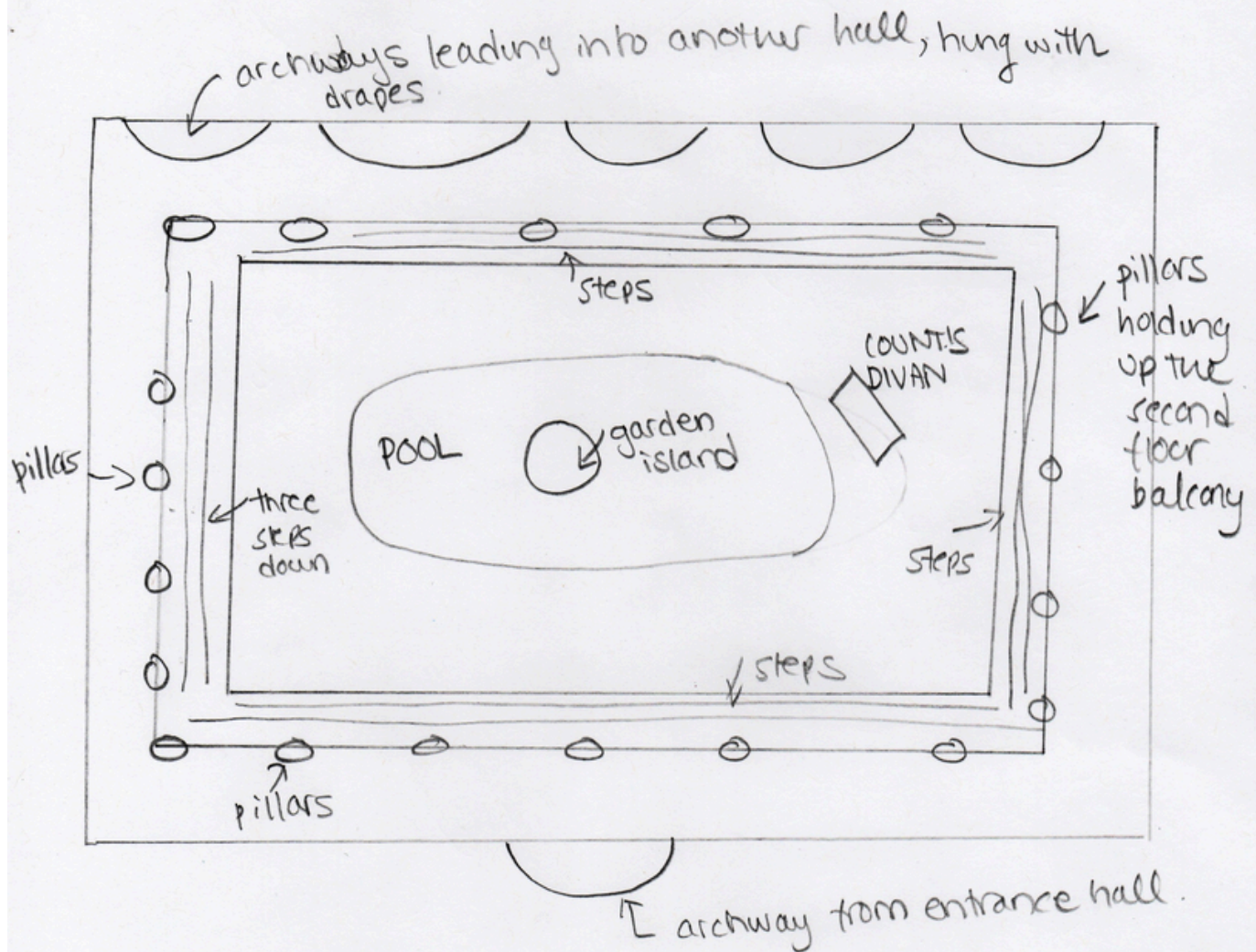
A mansion sits at the back of the complex, shining like a beacon against the black sky. Its stone façade is embedded with hundreds of conjured lights. Large arcing windows and doors open onto balconies that run the perimeter of the upper levels. Their frames are hung with soft, translucent curtains that ripple in the wind. Where there should be a door is a circular threshold that leads further into the manor.

You reach the bridge. Rushes, water lilies, and ornamental aquatic plants cluster along the edge of the pool. The water is oddly still, the dark surface broken by a single stream of bubbles rising from the depths.

Wayfarer, Episode 1 Route B, Return to the Count

3. COUNT'S VILLA, INTERIOR COURTYARD

COUNTIS VILLA - INSIDE COURTYARD

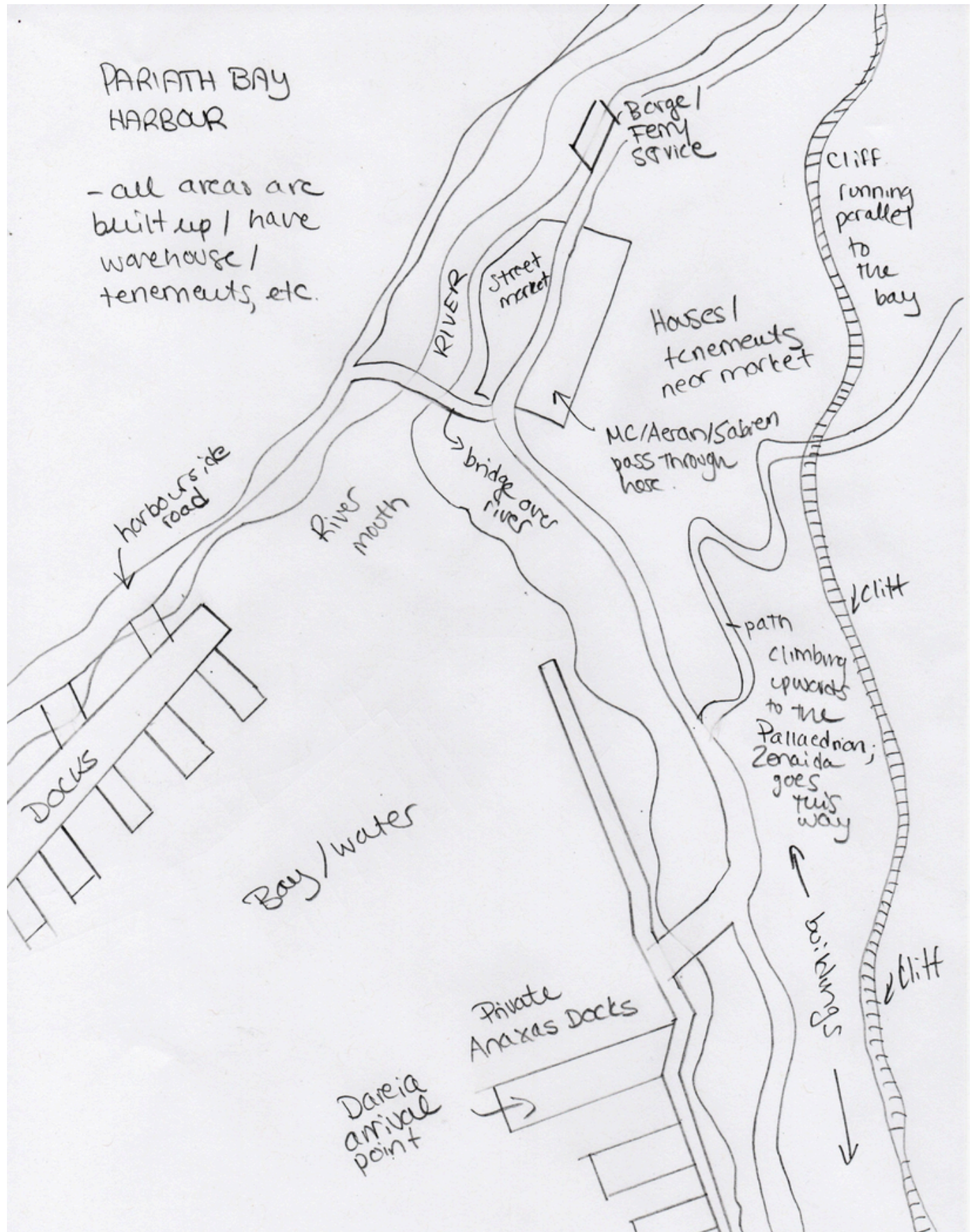


The hallway reaches the centre of the mansion and opens into a wide, sunken courtyard. Grand archways hung with red and gold drapes line the perimeter of the ground level. Elegant, white columns support a second-floor balcony. Between them, a line of shallow steps lead down to the level below. Ornamental flowers and leafy greenery rest in the corners, strung with floating lanterns that cast an even light throughout the space. The floor is tiled with colourful mosaics, creating a pattern of geometric lines that lead toward a large, oval pool that is the courtyard's focal point.

A circular island of white marble sits in the centre of the pool, supporting a small garden of vibrant plants. Steps on the opposite side descend into the deep turquoise waters and disappear from view. It's impossible to tell how deep the pool goes.

The Count lounges on a white divan near the pool. He watches you approach with an enigmatic smirk on his lips and he absently twines his fingers together.

4. PARIATH BAY HARBOUR



If you thought the Docks in Rona were lively, the Velantian harbour is overwhelming. The port is at least five times the size and rings around the entire bay. Every inch of shoreline is

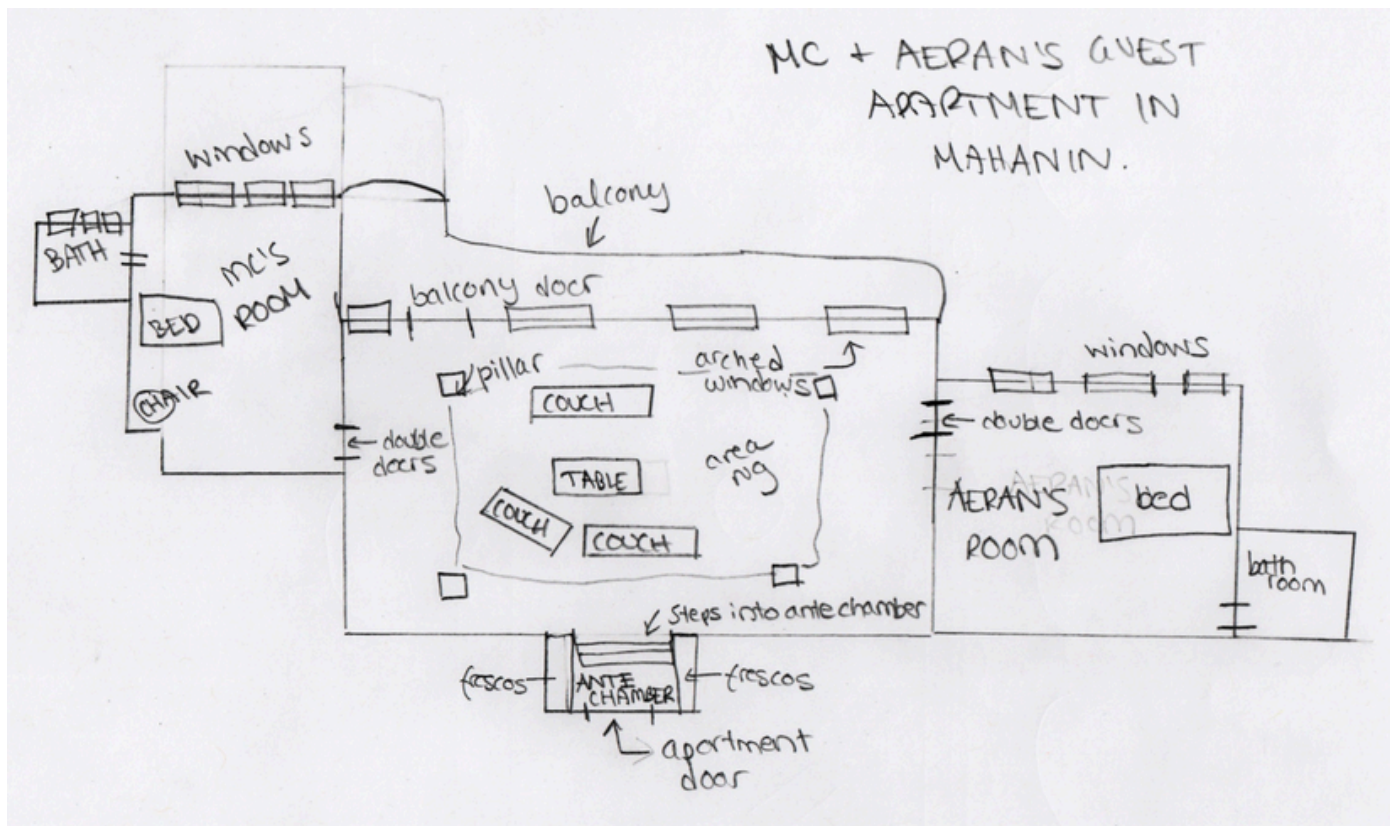
threaded with a network of docks stretching out into deep waters.

The waters are thick with traffic as ships of all sizes come and go, their captains navigating the lively bay with expertise. A wide river-mouth splits the harbour evenly down the centre. Judging from the colourful flags streaming in the wind, one half is for foreign vessels and the other for Velantian ships.

Beyond the dockyards rises the city's port district. Wide streets lined with warehouses, inns and small shops wind their way up the bluffs. Street vendors peddle their wares beneath bright blue and red marquees, and a jostling fish market spreads out from a central square near the river.

Wayfarer, Episode 2, Opening

5. MC & AERAN'S APARTMENT IN MAHANIN PALACE



Rasmira did not exaggerate. The suite is elegant, with furnishings and fineries fit for royalty. An antechamber decorated with idyllic frescos leads into a central sitting room. A thick, rich rug covers the majority of the floor, embroidered with the geometric patterns so common in Arathian art. A trio of divans are clustered in the centre of the room, arranged to face a low, circular table laden with food. Arched windows line the outer wall, their carved frames illuminated by the warm afternoon sun. Two bedchambers—one of which must have been a converted study—connect to the central room, one at either end. The tall double doors are constructed and engraved from the same rich wood used so generously throughout the palace.

[Extra pillars not mentioned in the description, but I do visualize the four corners of the main seating area with decorative pillars.]

[Episode 3 Scene 1 Release Schedule](#)

[Oct 18, 2022](#)

Hi folks,

Since we're past the midpoint of the month, I wanted to revisit my plan for Episode 3's release. As it stands right now, I'm still working on Aeran's Scene 1 branch. I'm close to the end, but since there's still some dialogue subbranches and expository information to get through, it's not coming together as quickly as I would like. I was hoping I would be moving on to the other Scene 1 major branches. This isn't taking into account editing that needs to be done and the whole coding process.

I wasn't planning on updating with an incomplete scene, but since the alpha build hasn't had new content since May, I want to revisit that. Please let me know what you would prefer below:

1. Update sooner (end of October/early November), but with INCOMPLETE material.

Episode 3 Scene 1 would only be playable if you have the following continuity in your save file:

- Aeran's romance reconciliation scene
- Aeran's friendship reconciliation scene
- Broke off your romance with him
- Broke off your friendship with him
- Low romance variant (+10 but under 60 romance) and returned to the apartment without going to Melchior's party

2. Update later (late November at the earliest), but with COMPLETE material.

Episode 3 Scene 1 would be playable for *all* continuity variants.

Update sooner (incomplete material)

Update later (complete material)

81%

Poll ended Oct 25, 2022 · 101 votes total

[Episode 3 Sneak Peek #17](#)

[Oct 19, 2022](#)

Here's a hefty preview from the Aeran branch! This occurs on a route where the MC remained hired and the mission is a go. Veyer, Aeran, and Malsara are present in the boat, but not Zenaida.

Depending on Malsara's current mood towards the MC (this is set by Lethalis' general approval level or if the MC takes certain dialogue options with her in the section prior to this), Malsara will address them as either "Wayfarer *lastname*" (*respectful*) or "lastname" (pissed off).

This sneak peek has multiple flavour text flags within it, so when you encounter it in the game, you might experience something slightly different. This sneak peek has:

- High Aeran approval (friendship or romance reconciliation)
- Low Lethalis approval
- MC feels negative towards magic
- MC made a pact with Sophia Anaxas at the gala and asked for more money
- MC has made an impression Veyer



Veyer runs a hand across their chin. "Care to elaborate?" they ask. "Zenaida is one of the Guild's most talented brightwardens. She crafted a portion of Mahanin's wards herself; I have no doubt that if she wished to leave the palace, not even the archon could stop her—"

"She can and she has."

They fall silent, brow furrowed with confusion.

“House Anaxas’ ties to the Arcanists’ Lodge are too strong, their researchers too eager, their engineers too clever,” Malsara continues, unbridled fury tinging her voice. “Her Grace is restrained until further notice. Should she attempt to leave her boundaries, her bonds will portal her back to her quarters. Not even my magic can circumvent it. She is effectively tethered to Mahanin. And while she is keen to find a loophole, I do not care to experiment. Protection and spatial magic have unexpected consequences when synergized—ones that could very well result in her death.”

You exchange looks with Aeran. He shrugs with disinterest and rolls his eyes. You can’t blame him. After the way Zenaida strung you along, concealed information about Lethalis, and held off on your payment, you understand where he’s coming from.

Magic is a boon, a tool, a fundamental part of the world’s natural laws. Without centuries of research and innovation into magical theory, modern society would not exist. Velantis itself would never have turned into the metropolis it is without it. Crucial though it is to the well-being of the world, magic is too easily corruptible. You’ve seen it time and time again. Magic is powerful, but whatever good it has done is outweighed by the warped and twisted forms it can take.

Regardless if what Malsara says is true, Sophia Anaxas has gotten what she wanted. Zenaida has been effectively removed from Lethalis without any effort on your part. Would she still pay you for services rendered? Unfortunate that you’re unlikely to ever find out—you have no intention of returning to Oriath District, let alone Mahanin Palace, once this is over.

[CHOICE] 1. “That’s reprehensible.”

2. The situation disgusts you, but you’ll keep your opinions to yourself. You’re here for one reason and one reason only.

3. Malsara’s opinion is notably biased. Without knowing more, it’s not something you’re willing to judge.

Veyer stiffens, twining their hands together twine their hands together as they tug at the ring on their index finger. They glance at you, a determined look flashing in their eyes.

“You would do well to keep that opinion to yourself, \$wayfarer,” Malsara says grimly. “The river may protect you for now, but the archon has eyes and ears in even the least likely of places. She does not take insults lightly where her family and her House are concerned.”

They snort. “Sophia Anaxas has more important things to worry about than arbitrary gossip about her daughter,” they say, relaxing once more into a leisurely sprawl. “Not when she herself is the subject of Oriath’s latest scandal. Poor Lord Anaxas, ousted by a former mercenary and a Faran to boot. No wonder her court couldn’t keep their mouths shut last night. Erenvor will delight in this; there’s nothing more entertaining than disparaging self-centred provincial nobles. Tell me, Markal, is it traditional for Velantian aristocrats to bed their bodyguards, or is it a habit of Anaxas women?”

You pause, mouth half open, caught off-guard by the boldness of Veyer’s statement. Malsara looks ready to commit murder. If you were with anyone else, you would consider throwing yourself overboard to avoid getting caught in the crossfire.

"You are not in a position to judge," Malsara says. Amber light flares in her eyes, stoked by her quiet wrath. "I doubt someone with your kind of notoriety has the capacity to understand."

They laugh, their mouth hardening into a grim smile. "Come now. Don't say you're in love with her. You and I both know it doesn't work like that."

"There is no oath to tie me, no vow to bind me, save the ones I made in private," she hisses. "Take care with that wit you think is so clever, Krellion. I may have the stomach for it, but many do not. How long will it be before Lethalis no longer indulges you? The emperor's favour allows you to behave however you please, but there will come a time when even his word cannot protect you."

The smile vanishes. "His favour has granted Lethalis many privileges through me," they say coldly, sitting upright for the first time since they boarded. "Privileges that have benefited the cause in more ways than one, privileges that would have otherwise been unattainable. The price was paid in kind. Lethalis knows this. But what of you, Markal? What have you done for them? Your record proves you care little for the organizations itself or its goals. Why would an Erebian operative care for a little thing like the Astrial? You are loyal because your sister and your lover are loyal. If it weren't for them—"

"Zenaida has done more to further Lethalis' cause than anyone in recent years," Malsara snaps. "Do you understand how many months of preparation—how many years of research—went into her plan? She sacrificed her relationships and reputation to retrieve \$wayfarer and Kellis from Rona, only to return to an unanticipated disaster and to be outplayed by an unlikely alliance at the eleventh hour. Though this is a mere shadow of her original proposal, be grateful for it. It's thanks to her Lethalis can act at all."

You stare over the gunnels at the rippling river, the sound of water rushing in your ears. There's something about the way she says this that troubles you. Zenaida's arrival in Rona was unprecedented, the kind of incident even the most talented augur couldn't predict. The determination with which she pursued you and Aeran... She was never leaving Rona without you. Even had the incident in the town square had gone differently, she was never going to leave without you.

But why? She's a highborn noble, the scion of one of the most important Great Houses in Arathia. She could have had a comfortable life, far from the Guild and the machinations of Lethalis and Solarath. And there is still the matter of her informant, the mysterious informant who pushed her in Aeran's direction and lead her to Rona...

[CHOICE] 1. "What do you mean years of research? How long was Zenaida planning this?"

2. Catch Aeran's eye. He must have his own questions. Maybe you can nudge him into asking...

3. Keep your mouth shut. Focus on the mission. That is all that's required of you.

The boat rocks abruptly from side to side. "Very few Guild mages are interested in your kind, \$wayfarer," Malsara answers after a moment. "But where some would see you as a threat to all mages, Her Grace saw you as allies to be won. Your abilities are unique, a tool of untapped potential no one else could dream of utilizing."

Your jaw clenches and your hand presses sharply into \$blade's hilt. "I don't appreciate being called a tool."

"Strange of you to take offense when you tout those skills as part of your mercenary prowess," she says pointedly. "If you do not wish to be considered a tool, then do not label yourself as such."

Anger flares in your chest, an ugly retort forming on your lips.

"Her Grace first suggested allying with Wayfarers some eight years ago," Malsara continues, cutting across you. "It was not taken well, a proposal considered laughable at best. Many found it an affront to Guild principles and were resistant to the idea."

"Oshiro, primarily," Veyer interjects. "Though I'm sure that does not come as a surprise to you. Unfortunately for Her Grace, the archsage often has the loudest voice in the room. I certainly wasn't resistant to the idea. A magianis is the obvious solution to the Astrial conundrum. Frankly, I'm surprised the idea has not occurred to Quirinus himself."

Malsara sighs irritably. "It was not only Archsage Oshiro. Wayfarer movement through Imperial territories may have been recently permissible, many authorities refused to see it that way. At the time, inviting a Wayfarer into Velantis would have been difficult."

Veyer shrugs, uninterested in her correction, and casually dips a hand over the gunnel. They occupy themselves with the flowing water, as if the conversation has completely lost their interest. You aren't fooled. From the angle of their head and the deliberateness of their movements, you're certain they are keeping an ear out.

"Her Grace was resilient," Malsara continues. "She was preparing to speak with a senior representative of your order when the Spire fell. Any plans she had in motion died with it. It was not until she was informed of Wayfarer Kellis' survival that she could consider it possibility once more."

You frown. Zenaida told you once she met both Sero and Varyn a decade ago. That meeting appears to have been influential.

Last night, Sophia called her daughter's hunt for a Wayfarer all-encompassing, that it was her only concern for a year. You have no doubt that the timeline coincides with her hunt for Aeran. During that time, did she know of Varyn and Sirin's appearances in the city? Did she attempt to track them down before she turned her attention to Aeran? Was he her only choice?

And why were you never part of the equation?

- 1. "This senior representative... who was it?"**
- 2. "Why did Zenaida seek Aeran out? He has a reputation in the Empire, her informant must have known that. Not many Guild mages would risk that."**
- 3. "Zenaida didn't know I was in Rona. For someone so interested in the Wayfarer Order, how is it—in all of her searching—she never found a trace of me?"**

[Unlocked by progressing the question loop] 4. [PERSUASION] Ask her for the identity of Zenaida's informant.

5. You have so many questions, but Malsara is unlikely to have the answers. You're here now. Focus on the mission.

The above dialogue loop can greatly impact your approval with Lethalis. Pursuing the #4 option will be difficult to do successfully and you will have to balance getting information vs Lethalis' rapport and Malsara's mood and temperament.

[Patreon Update: New Discord Server!](#)

[Oct 20, 2022](#)

Hi friends,

A big change is coming!

Discord has been a huge part of Wayfarer's community for a couple years now. As the community has grown immensely after Episode 2's release, I decided it is time to move the Patron channels into their own space.

As of today, patrons now have access to private server that is separate from Wayfarer's public server. There is nothing you have to do on your part. If you have Discord enabled on your Patreon account, you will be added automatically to the new server.

If you don't have Discord enabled, you can do so from Settings -> More -> Third-Party Apps:

Settings

[Basics](#)[Account](#)[Email notifications](#)[Active memberships](#)[More ▼](#)

Connected apps

Click "Connect"

Third-party apps

You gave these apps access to some of your Patreon data in order to receive benefits from your memberships.



Discord

Logged in as Idrelle#6762

Disconnect



Vimeo

Post patron only videos

Connect

If you have enabled Discord and you cannot access the server, please message me. I will send you an invite link and add you manually.

The Patron server is set up very similarly to the public one (you can choose character roles, pronouns, etc) and is moderated by members of the main server's mod team. This server is private and can only be accessed by being a subscriber. If you unsubscribe, your access to the server's channels will be revoked when your benefits expire. You will always be welcome back at a later date! 💖

During this transition period, the Patron channels will remain in view only mode until November 15. This should allow you time to archive any lore conversations you would like to save as we will be starting fresh.

If you have any questions, don't hesitate to ask!

See you there!

[Hearth & Home, Pt II: Brissa \(Wayfarer Order Short Story\)](#)

[Oct 21, 2022](#)

[\[Read Part 1 Here\]](#)

Brissa's manner is abrupt, her pace brisk. Like in all aspects of their relationship, she doesn't make it easy to keep up with her.

"You said you were looking for me?" Rindan asks as they enter the main hall.

Inside, the Spire is eerily quiet. The misaligned furniture and scattered personal belongings makes it more like a home than a base of operations, but with everyone outside it feels derelict. The rugs are threadbare, their once intricate patterns worn through to the stone beneath. Half the windows are boarded up, waiting to be repaired. Barricaded doors guard the entrance to collapsed or unstable wings. The surviving stained glass windows cast strange patterns of light across the floor, candles run down to stubs flicker from brackets in the walls, and an unlit, iron-wrought chandelier creaks from its chains.

"I was," she answers, pausing at the foot of the stairs to wait for him. "There is a matter I would like to discuss with you. Privately."

First Sero, now Brissa? Something must be in the air.

"Oh?" he says, joining her. He eyes his mug as they climb the curving stairs together, watching it carefully so as not to spill his tea. "Should be interesting. Why private? Is this not something Sero should know?"

"The situation is sensitive, considering their current stance. I would like to discuss it with you before bringing it to them."

He pauses, a foot halfway to the next step. His heart clenches, unease sinking to the pit of his stomach like a stone. As one of the senior most Wayfarer masters and the Order's ambassador, the future of the Wayfarer Order must be weighing on her mind as heavily as it does on his and Sero's.

"There's nothing to talk about," Rindan says, passing her as he walks hurriedly up the stairs. His tea sloshes around his mug, threatening to spill over the edge. "I'm not interested in going behind Sero's back."

He reaches the landing and turns sharply to the left, following the curve of the second-level mezzanine. From here there is a clear view of the hall below; it must have been spectacular during the Spire's glory days. Centuries ago now. A thousand years, perhaps. Too long. Were the signs of what they would become there, even then? Were their predecessors too far up their own asses to realize what they would become? A failing motley organization hidden in the mountains, refusing to change with the rest of the world?

He groans. He's feeling his age more than usual these days.

"I believe there is," Brissa says insistently, already on his heels. "I saw those reports, Rindan. They're not only regular accounts sent by Wayfarers in the field. They're intelligence on magiani children."

“And your point? I’ve been receiving those kinds of reports for years. I doubt our contacts would stop sending them to me even if I asked politely.”

“And if you asked impolitely?”

Rindan pauses, a hand on the tarnished doorhandle. It’s lopsided, the wide iron-wrought circle hanging at a strange angle. No doubt a screw has worked its way loose. He can’t remember how long it’s been like that. “...same difference,” he grunts and yanks the door open.

A narrow, circular stairwell lies beyond. Sunlight streams through the slim windows lining the exterior wall, illuminating the path upwards. He shuffles up the stairs, Brissa behind him, and together they climb with the casual pace of old familiarity. His office lies at the top in one of the Spire’s many turrets, the slender, elegant structures from which the citadel gets its name.

“The fact of the matter is that we are needed,” Brissa continues. “There are magiani—children, no less—across Rhesainia with nowhere to go. Uncertain of how to live with their abilities, ostracized by their families and communities for an accident of birth.”

“I know. But with the way things are, we can’t afford what you’re proposing—”

“How do you know? I haven’t proposed anything yet.”

Rindan grimaces. “And now you’re being infuriating on purpose,” he grumbles, glancing over his shoulder. “Thought we put that behind us—”

He yelps, his foot slipping on a wobbly step, and falls up the stairs. Cursing loudly, he catches himself on the exterior wall, his mug shuddering in his hand. Somehow, miraculously, he hasn’t spilled a drop of tea.

Brissa eyes him from the steps below, an amused smile on her lips. “Problem?” she asks.

“Damn it, Amali,” he mutters, stooping to inspect the step. As expected, he finds a familiar oval stone beneath—the gift Amali asked Tiva to leave him. It’s an ongoing gag that has gone on for more years than he can count. Countless times he has removed the stone and discarded it, only to find the exact same stone under the exact same step. Cursing quietly, he retrieves the rock and pockets it, then firmly shoves the step back into place. “This isn’t the place for this. Let’s go upstairs.”

Her smile widens. “I’m waiting on you.”

Rindan treads up the stairs, round and round in a tight spiral until he reaches the single arched door at the top. The landing is small and cramped with little room for more than one person. Brissa waits several steps below, stooping a little to keep her head from bumping the ceiling, watching as he slides a key from his pocket. He shoves it into the lock, grappling with it for a moment—he’s refitted this lock more times than he can count, but this part of the Spire is cantankerous, just like him. When it finally clicks into place, he pushes the door open on creaking hinges and enters the room.

Rindan's office is modest. Most senior Wayfarers chose more impressive parts of the citadel for their personal quarters, but this suits him just fine. Its comparatively low ceilings aren't a concern for him, it's a short walk to the kitchens, and he enjoys the quiet. Besides, the view from this small, insignificant tower has his favourite view of the grounds and the mountains beyond.

Three large, curved windows are set in the far wall, filling the room with warm afternoon light. A deep red rug stretches across the floor, covering the flagstones. To the left, an interior wall is lined with bookcases built for dwarven height, their shelves stuffed with a vast collection of books and scrolls, meticulously catalogued and cared for. A ladder rests against a bookcase near the centre, next to the gap that opens into his private chambers.

The turret's little heart sits in the opposing exterior wall, its mantle decorated with an eclectic collection: old pottery, ancient figurines, a decorative box that holds the glass eye Brissa gave him to wear to formal functions forty-odd years ago. A couple of large-backed armchairs sit in front of the heart, a chessboard on the small table between them, its pieces still scattered across the surface. He played Dessa that morning, part of their morning routine in the early hours before the rest of the citadel wakes. The hearth is unlit for now, but when evening rolls around, the cold will necessitate a fire. The Frostmarks are still the Frostmarks, even in high summer.

Though the stonework made it difficult, the hearth's wall is hung with a hodgepodge of pieces—art and tapestries collected over the decades. Many of the canvases are old and faded, splashed with an eclectic assortment of colour and depicting beings and beasts that only a child could dream of. The children who painted them grew up long ago, becoming Wayfarers in their own right. Some are scattered across the continent, writing only once every handful of years to report on their work. Others have children of their own. Most are dead—felled by beasts, battle, injury, or the unyielding passage of time.

A large world map stretches across the remaining space, its surface stabbed with colour-coded pins. Red for senior Wayfarers, green for recent graduates, purple for masters travelling with apprentices, yellow for pairs or groups, blue for everyone else, and silver for... well, he doesn't want to think about the silver pins. Most of the colour markers are concentrated around Rhesainia, though there is a noticeable absence within Arathian territories. Some have migrated to other continents, but they are few and far between.

A heavy ornate desk sits off to the side, turned awkwardly to provide a view of the map and the windows. Its surface is scattered with a collection of pens and inkpots, waxes and seals, and disorderly stacks of paper. This is all an unfortunate part of record keeping: missives to be sealed and sent, reports to be processed, codes to be transcribed, personal letters to be read... He'd be a fool to think there will ever be an end to this parade of paper and ink. He has been the Order's archivist for more years than there have been archivists.

"All right, Brissa," Rindan says, holding the door open for her. "You were saying?"

She ducks through the threshold and crosses the room, effortlessly sweeping into a half-sitting, half-leaning position against the armrest of her favourite chair. "I have concerns that I am not prepared to voice to Amali," she says. "Not without consulting you."

He nudges the door closed with a foot. "You value my opinion?" he replies, trodding over to his desk. "Glad to know I haven't fallen that far out of favour." Settling into his work chair, he shuffles a handful of papers aside, leans back and raises his mug to his lips. If he's going to have this conversation with her, he might as well enjoy his tea first.

She glances at him. "Your tea must be cold."

He pauses, a smile tugging at the corners of his mouth. "That's the intention," he says and downs a mouthful.

Brissa shifts her weight, calmly adjusting her skirts as she waits for him to finish, and casts an eye about the room. Her golden-eyed gaze lands on the map with its kaleidoscope of pins. Frowning, she rises and approaches it, drawn by intense curiosity. She raises a hand and trails her fingers carefully across the markers, her forefinger coming to rest on a trio of pins pushed into Tyridia.

"Tell me again why the Grandmaster has forbidden recruitment," she says.

Rindan sets down his mug. "We do not have the resources," he explains. "How many ships must we charter? How many couriers must we pay? A century ago we may have had wealthy contributors from across the world, but times have changed. The Spire may be self-sufficient with our current numbers, but if we had more, how could we afford to feed them all?" An unintended glance out the windows has him staring at the grounds below. Darius and his friends have finished sparring for the day and are relaxing in the shade of a large oak. "This summer alone is proof of that, with Avennor and the others here."

Her eyes narrow. "Give me another reason. If crowns were the only issue, I would have resolved that long ago."

"There is not enough remaining Alassar to equip every new Wayfarer. Our weapons are diminishing faster than our numbers. Without it..."

He trails off, catching her eye.

She pauses and looks away, casting a sideways glance at the map. Her fingers ghost across a silver pin. "Alassar is potent, that much is true," she says. "But Wayfarers do not need it to accomplish our ends. Why else would Tiva take so enthusiastically to archery? She will never inherit an Alassar bow or arrows, but she is a hunter at heart. The lack of Alassar will not stop her. It is our most valuable tool, yes, but a Wayfarer who has mastered their skills is just as accomplished with steel as they are with it. We must not let it become a crutch."

A heavy silence settles about the room. She turns her back on him and studies the map, her gaze focused on those blasted silver pins. He pauses, grinding his teeth, and pushes his half-empty mug across his desk from hand to hand. He should have known the conversation would take this turn the moment she entered his office.

Seeking a distraction, he stretches back in his chair and glances out the window. Down on the grounds, Tiva wanders away from the archery range and hovers on the edge of the oak's shade. She watches Darius and his friends, her bow held loosely in her hands, too nervous to interrupt.

"How many are new?" Brissa asks gravely.

He turns back, his mouth oddly dry. "Two," he murmurs. The word is difficult to get out. Even after two hundred years, confronting the death of former students and comrades does not get easier. "The reports came this morning. I'll inform Sero and the others tonight."

"Who was it? Who fell?"

"Finnica and Oreth."

She nods, her expression blank. "At least they fell together," she says quietly. "Have arrangements been made?"

"I have contacts near Corsida who will retrieve their bodies and their weapons, and send them home. I'll make burial arrangements once they reach Tyridia."

"And the others?"

Rindan eyes the map, his gaze passing over the remaining silver pins. Four pins. Four dead Wayfarers. Four Alassar weapons to collect. "There are... challenges," he says. "They can't be retrieved and their weapons are missing."

Brissa closes her eyes. "More missing Alassar..."

"I have an Erebian contact looking into it. Brin has offered to personally track down the ones in Vestra if other methods prove unsuccessful. They've been intending to return for a while now." Sighing heavily, he leans forward and shoves his mug out of reach. He has little desire to finish his tea. "This isn't about Alassar, Brissa. Or funding, or resources. Sero's decision reflects a reality too many refuse to acknowledge. Our numbers have been dwindling for years—decades and centuries, even. If there are fewer magiani, there are fewer Wayfarers."

"But are there?" she counters, turning back to him, her expression hardened with intense resolve. He has a feeling she has finally reached the point she wanted to discuss. "It was true a hundred years ago. Perhaps even thirty or forty. But now? I have reason to believe it is changing. Reason that substantiated by more than that pile of reports on the corner of your desk." She nods to the leather-bound portfolio

stuffed with five years worth of letters, missives, and notes. It is bursting at the seams, its contents barely contained.

He follows her gaze, craning his neck to account for his missing eye. The socket aches. Though the injury is older than most of the Order's current members, it feels emptier than usual. He blinks, eyelashes scraping the back of his eyepatch. "Don't have to make me feel guiltier than I already do," he grunts. "I know how many are out there. How many need a place to call home. How many we've left behind—"

"And I believe it's more than you think." She reaches into her satchel and withdraws a pamphlet. "I had the luxury of visiting a friend at Seiran College last winter. Her research focuses on magical heredity. It's a proven fact that attunement to certain spheres are more common than others—"

He groans, rubbing his forehead. "*Brissa*."

"But that's not important. In the Lotharic provinces alone, there has been an undeniable increase of magiani births in the past ten years. Enough to indicate a change."

His stomach drops, the implications of her words shaking him to his core. He clenches his jaw, the last vestiges of a rebuttal vanishing into silence. From the gleam in her eye and the intensity of her speech, he has no doubt she believes this with every fibre of her being.

Taking his silence as a cue, Brissa drops the pamphlet on his desk. "Read it," she continues and pushes it towards him. "Her articles have been denied publication more than once on the grounds of improper research. A comical façade to anyone with half a brain. The Arathian government would murder their own emperor before presenting magiani in a half-decent light."

Rindan eyes the pamphlet and runs a hand over his chin, his fingers catching in his beard. "I'll read it when I have damn time," he says finally. "What do you want me to do? Even if this was true—"

"It *is*. Look at your damn desk! You must believe it—why else would you take such dutiful notes? Such dutiful records?"

His mouth is dry. "We can't help them all."

"Then start with the ones we can." She rounds the desk and seizes his portfolio, pushing it to the centre. Gripping the back of his chair, she leans over him and flips through the first few pages, scanning his meticulous notation. "Look. Nesactium. Tol Covere. Vodena—"

"*Possible* sightings. Read my notes, they've yet to be corroborated—"

"Hell, here's one from Trian remarking on one of the Brennath clans! Three in Tyridia alone—"

"There are always magiani in Tyridia," he interrupts darkly. "Doesn't take a mastermind to realize why."

Brissa pauses, the intensity of her tirade fading as guilt flickers across her face. “I had hoped the current generation of Wayfarers would be less cavalier than their predecessors, but...” She looks away, her hand slipping from the back of his chair.

Rindan gently pulls the portfolio from her grasp and closes the cover. “I would help them all if I could, but sometimes it’s not in the cards. The Order is stretched thin. Our people are half a continent away. Of those that remain, half are apprentices themselves. The other half are masters with students, active Wayfarers without the disposition to instruct, or civilians who can’t.”

“We have had more students than masters before. If we had more leniency—”

“It’s tradition.”

“Then perhaps it is our traditions that are at fault!” She exhales a sharp breath and strides away, pacing around the chamber with brisk, direct steps. “Are we really so unyielding that at the slightest difficulty, we would rather give up entirely than implement change?”

“Traditions are important, Brissa. Our techniques are not easily learned. More than that, they are our history. Our way.”

She eyes him irritably. “Humour me, please, Rindan. Consider, just for once, that our current methods are outdated, suited for a time long before ours. If we do not have enough Wayfarers capable of instructing, then perhaps a single master to a single apprentice is the wrong method. We should expand our reach, not restrict it.”

Rindan grimaces and folds his arms, keeping his mouth firmly shut. Considering the current direction of their conversation, he knows better than to argue with her until she has exhausted her point. He cautions a quick look out the window. Tiva has finally worked up the courage to approach Darius; they have migrated away from the oak, lost in an animated conversation.

“The Guild of Mages once had a system similar to ours, but even they understood the need to adapt,” she begins. “Their novitiates are instructed in classes before they are chosen for apprenticeship—”

He curses. “Brissa—”

“—allowing a single instructor to teach the basics while the specialists focus on one-on-one training. They changed their ways and now their academies are successful, respected institutions across most of Rhesainia—”

“The Guild is not a point of comparison!” Rindan rises out of his chair, hands slammed against his desk. A loose page crinkles beneath his palm and he shoves it out of the way. “Their methods work because they are training *mages*, something anyone with high enough skill, talent and ambition can be. This is not the case for us.”

She raises her chin. “Perhaps it could be.”

“What are you talking about?” he asks.

Brissa pauses. “The Guild divides its novitiates by sphere,” she begins, speaking more fervently by the second. “While many of their principles are the same, soulweavers cannot train with spiritbreakers, just as brightwardens cannot train with planeswalkers. What if magical immunity was considered in the same light? Not as something that is opposed to the spheres, but something that is part of them?”

His eye widens with disbelief. “You can’t be serious.”

“I am.” The words are cold, all trace of her fervour vanishing in a heartbeat.

“Magiani *do not* have a sphere!”

“Are you certain? Or is that simply Meissandic rhetoric?”

He snorts, shaking his head. “I’ve always admired your tenacity and, frankly, the level of your sheer ingenuity is at times frightening, but this makes even you sound like a fool. You’re refuting millennia of known history!”

“Consider it. Our abilities are just that—*abilities*. Ones we have honed through years of practice, just like the Guild’s mages. Magical immunity is more than a state of being. We control it, we direct it, we manipulate it. There is a veritable difference between a magianis without training and a skilled Wayfarer. What if magic does not stop at the sixth sphere? What if there is a seventh—”

“That’s heresy.”

“It’s forward thinking.”

“No one would believe such an idea.”

“Some already do.”

“Then they are fools.”

Her expression darkens. “I never took you for a devout man, Rindan,” she says derisively. “But you sound far too much like certain Meissants for my liking.”

Rindan scowls and leans into his desk, the tips of his fingernails turning white. It has been years since he and Brissa have fought like this. They respect each other too much, know each other too well, and have passed far too many decades together to allow circumstantial anger to outweigh their history.

“What you’re proposing isn’t heresy because of the Meissandium,” he says. “It’s heresy because if it were true, it would break Rhesainian society apart!”

“You’re a recluse. When did you care about society?”

He takes a breath, swallowing his anger. "I care when wild theories would make life difficult for the rest of us. More than it already is. Besides... what's the point of arguing this? It is theoretical. It won't restore the Order to what it was, and it won't help with our current conundrum."

She's quiet for a long time. "No," she says finally. "I suppose it won't. I'm sorry. I came to ask for your help, and I have once again digressed into an entirely different topic."

His shoulders sag. He loves her, but gods damn it, she makes him exhausted. "And what was that help again?"

"Despite our best efforts, the Order is fading. Amali may think they have done what is necessary, but five years is far too long. Help me convince them to overturn their decision. It doesn't have to be a whole cohort. Two, perhaps. Two new apprentices. A test, if you like. Perhaps between the three of us, we will find a new way to keep our traditions alive."

He looks down, resting a hand on the portfolio. The leather is stretched beyond capacity. Shit... he's going to need a second one. "I'll give it some thought."

"Thank you."

He grunts noncommittally, distracted by the portfolio, and flips the cover open. He leafs through the pages, squinting at his scrawled notes, barely cognisant of Brissa's footsteps as she crosses the room.

"And Rindan?"

A horrendous creak jars him out of his thoughts. His head shoots up and he finds Brissa waiting in the threshold, a pale hand on the doorhandle. "What?"

"I'm sorry."

Brissa shuts the door behind her, leaving him standing like a gape-jawed fool at his desk. He groans, irritated at her and at himself, and closes the portfolio. Picking up his mug, he sips slowly at his tea and wanders to the windows.

Darius and his friends have dispersed. Some remain beneath the shade of the great oak, others have converged on Sirin and her trainees, teasing her ruthlessly. Darius himself has strolled over to the archery range, Tiva at his side, and is demonstrating his skill for an open-mouthed crowd. And Dessa jogs slow rings in the paddock, spurring his young apprentice on as the kid finally takes his first ride.

There's a rare peacefulness to it all. The Spire, with looming towers and formidable walls and dark ramparts, is far from idyllic. But summer has gifted them something precious—this small community, bound together by shared experience, far from war, far from rage, far from the blind hate and distrust so many of them have suffered.

Amali and Brissa have their diverging opinions, trapping him in-between. There will be much to argue about in the forthcoming months. But regardless of the Order's future, it is moments like these that must be protected. Not for the sake of tradition, but for the silent promise he made to all them.

Gods, I'm too old for this.

Downing the rest of his cold tea, Rindan takes a seat, grabs the portfolio and the nearest pen, and begins to work.

[Episode 3 Sneak Peak #18](#)

[Oct 26, 2022](#)

We're finally here. 👍



Diradan Tower rises ahead of you, perched on a green knoll beyond the trees. The river widens, curving around the rocky cliff as it flows out into the vibrant waters of Lake Messeida. Behind the tower's white walls, a dark citadel juts up high above you, its multitude of thin spires cutting jaggedly across the sky. It overshadows the complex below, its pointed arches and flying buttresses a dark anomaly next to the bright mosaics and burnished domes of the buildings below it. Quinn's replica does not do it justice. There is something uncanny about the citadel, all spikes and black stone. Though it is ancient, it is foreign. Unbelonging.

And it is dreadfully familiar.

You inhale sharply, an eerie homesickness twisting in your gut. The similarities to the Spire—your home, your safe haven until it was gone—are stark, save for one major difference. Where the Spire had been a single stronghold hidden deep in the mountains, Diradan is a monstrosity of a compound. The surrounding complex has been expanded over the centuries, grafting Arathian buildings onto the lower levels to accommodate the Guild's ever-growing numbers. Their attempts to reshape it into something it is not only calls attention to the incongruity.

An incongruity made all the more evident by the damage.

The boat glides closer, water lapping in your ears as you stare open-mouthed at the complex. It is as if the explosion itself was caught and distilled in time. The blast ripped through the citadel, tearing off

chunks of wood and stone as if a monster's jaws bit through the western wing. A detached turret rotates slowly, suspended stones and broken gargoyles forming a floating path to a balcony in some parody of a bridge. Shattered stained glass from once glorious windows are strewn about the air, glistening like jewels in the morning sun. An oily haze saturates every surface, rippling off the rooves and battlements like smoke. It curls higher and higher into the sky until it fuses with the plume's dark tail.

"Horrific, isn't it?"

Veyer sits with their hands in their lap, craning their neck as they stare at the shroud. A disturbed look crosses their face, their upper lip curled with disgust. You watch it together in unnerved silence, mesmerized by its movements. It writhes through the air like a serpent, coiled upon itself one moment and unfurled the next, lashing against the invisible barriers that keep it contained with a mind of its own. From the way it devours the sky, it looks... hungry. Ravenous.

And you're going to walk into its grasp.

"Oshiro was the first to call it the shroud," Veyer continues grimly as the boat passes into the tower's shadow, heading for shore. "A name as good as any, I suppose. What do you call ten thousands years' worth of impacted magical energy? These were no ordinary wards. They were never designed to be unbound."

A shiver runs down your spine. You can't stop looking at the shroud. The *thing*. When Lethalis spoke of it last night, you imagined it as something akin to the Calanthan Wall—an invisible barrier spanning the whole of the tower, damaging anyone who strayed within its boundaries. But this is no simple barrier.

This is something else.

[Progress Report 2022.10.31: Ready When It's Ready](#)

[Oct 31, 2022](#)

Hi friends,

I hope you all had a wonderful month. While I have done a significant amount of work this month, Wayfarer's progress isn't close to where I projected it to be. Looking back at August, September and October combined, I am writing significantly slower compared to the first six months of the year, and it's making it difficult to estimate deadlines properly.

Thank you to everyone who participated in the [Release Schedule poll](#). Because of the results, I am going to stick to my plan and update the alpha when all the variations are done and playable. Unfortunately, I'm not able to give an estimate as to when the alpha update will be ready. I am writing every day, but at this point the most I can say is that Episode 3 Scene 1 will be ready when it is ready.

Game Updates

I am pushing to get Episode 3 Scene 1 finished. I'm nearing the end of Aeran's content branches. Much of the content I am writing now include conversations that will be recycled on other branches (with continuity edits). Since my last progress report, I've added about 25,000 words to the section, bringing Episode 3's new total to ~157,000 words.

I will be doing a patch soon to address a major error that affects high friendship/no romance Aeran playthroughs. There's a bug in the code that if you selected a specific dialogue option with Nova on the boat in Episode 2, it nets you +1 to romance even if you don't have his romance stat flagged. This unintentionally puts your playthrough onto the low romance variant, even though Aeran's romance bar is blocked off in his profile and you can't see what's going on.

Patreon Updates

There have been a few major changes with Patreon and Discord. Wayfarer Patreon now has its own server separate from the public server. The Patreon-exclusive channels in the public server are currently read-only and will be available until November 15. If you'd like to grab screenshots of any lore discussions, now is the time to archive it!

If you'd like to join the patron server, you can do so automatically by enabling Discord in your Patreon settings. [This post explains how to do that](#) and also has more details about the server split.

Finally, for those in the Wayfarer tier and above, I'll be taking a break from writing short stories for the month of November. Because I would like to get Episode 3 Scene 1 done as soon as possible, I need to take a step back from additional content to complete game content. New short stories should be back in December!

If you have any questions, don't hesitate to reach out. As always, thank you all so much for your support. 💕

P.S. Happy Halloween! 🎃

[Episode 3 Scene 1 Sneak Peek #19](#)

[Nov 2, 2022](#)

Everyone is up to something. ;)



Veyer takes the lead, strolling ahead with easy strides, their hands stuffed deeply in their pockets. On the far side of the grove, a wide, raised boulevard sweeps up the hill. Lined with cultivated cypress trees and decorative statues, the road to Diradan Tower is a grand entrance befitting royalty. The sight would be majestic on any other day, if not for the shattered citadel darkening the summit.

You keep to the ditch, hiking through half-dried mud and loose rocks. Though the climb would be easier from the road, Diradan is abandoned. Two Wayfarers and a mage ambling towards the broken tower would raise the alarm for anyone watching.

Aeran trails behind, keen to keep his distance, a hand on his bow and his eyes on the sky. The surveillance orbs Quinn mentioned must be near. You leave him to it, far more concerned with the broken tower ahead of you. Now you're confronted by the sheer ferocity of the explosion and its aftermath, pressing questions linger in your mind. Quirinus and Umbria were both vague about the details. If the explosion occurred in the centre of the Guild's seat of power, just did it kill? How is it that only three mages are unaccounted for? And if the shroud is as powerful as Lethalis says, how did they manage to keep it contained in the first place?

"Veyer," you call. "How does this containment work exactly? Do you know?"

Their pace slows. "Not well," they reply, huffing as they scramble up the incline. Their boots scuff the dirt, sending a cascade of gravel rolling down the ditch behind them. "I'm familiar with the theories, but as previously established, wards are not my area of expertise. As I understand it, Umbria and Quirinus were present in the tower when the wards broke. They crafted the initial containment together in a rare instance of collaboration, holding back the shroud while the Guild evacuated."

You frown, brows drawing together, and hurry after them. "You're talking as though this is new to you."

They sigh exasperatedly. "Because it is," they snap, grunting with exertion. The hem of their coat flips out behind them as they clamber upwards. "Diradan Tower may be the Guild's headquarters, but not all of us call it home. I serve Lethalis, but I am an Imperial court mage first and foremost. I was in Erenvor the day of the explosion and only summoned several days afterwards—a summons that, thankfully, aligned with the emperor's designs. I arrived in Velantis a few short days before you."

A bead of sweat rolls down your spine. Pausing to catch your breath, you rub the back of your neck, fingers slipping against your clammy skin, and glance behind you. The sun beats down from a cloudless sky, ascending toward its zenith. You're half-way up the hill, high enough to get a good look at Diradan's surroundings. Compared to the numerous estates and gardens you've seen throughout Oriath District,

the tower is strangely isolated. The closest villas must be miles away, peeking out from a skyline of elegant trees, burnished domes, and decorative rooves.

You mull over Veyer's revelation, uncertain what to make of it. Their position as an Imperial court mage has been mentioned more than once, enough to solidify it as a point of contention between them and the rest of Lethalis. Though Velantis is an Arathian city, it is the crown jewel of its own province. Perhaps the Velantian Guild mages are not pleased to have a mage from the capital meddling in their affairs...

[Episode 3 Sneak Peek #20](#)

[Nov 9, 2022](#)

To list the number of continuity flags in this scene would be too many... This section may not end up looking quite like this when you encounter it in game. ;)



Veyer cracks their eyes open. "It's heartening to know that you have common sense," they say lightly. "I've known too many of your order who had a troubling habit of throwing themselves headlong into danger without a second thought. An admirable trait to some, perhaps, but on the whole, I prefer those with a drive for self-preservation. In my experience, it gets you farther in life."

A faint smile tugs at your lips. "Mine, too."

You hear a snort from across the grove. Aeran's back is to you, but you have no doubt he is scowling.

"You recall what I said last night?" they continue grimly. Their dark eyes flicker upwards, to the tower wall and the black spires beyond it. "Should you confront the shroud directly, take care. It may not behave the way you expect."

You swallow hard. "Don't worry. I'll be on my guard."

"I have no doubt."

Aeran trudges across the grove, pacing to and fro as his apprehension gets the better of him. "Don't listen to them, \$firstname," he snaps. "They're trying to get under your skin and throw you off. I don't know how it benefits whatever game they're playing—"

Veyer sighs. “Believe what you’d like to believe, Kellis, I won’t stop you. But the fact of the matter is that no one understands what we’re dealing with here. No me, not Lethalis. Not even you.”

“Why are you here, Krellion?” he says furiously. “Have to admit, I was quite surprised to see you in Velantis, let alone involved with Lethalis. Guild mage or not, I didn’t think the emperor let his lapdogs run this far free.”

The mocking amusement dies in Veyer’s eyes, their expression growing forlorn. They sigh heavily and lean against the tree, twisting their ring around their index finger. “I suppose I deserve that,” they say. “Were you anyone else, I would give little credence to such pointed comments about my character, but in your case it’s understandable. You have every right to despise me. That we have found ourselves as allies is an unforeseen turn of events. In respect to that... I apologize.”

Aeran pauses, taken aback. He stares at them, eyes narrowed with suspicion, uncertain whether to read their apology as genuine. “Fine,” he grunts after a moment, scratching the back of his neck. “*Fine.*”

Eager to escape this turn of conversation, he stalks across the grove and takes up position on the perimeter. This mutual loathing has left you with more questions than you care to admit—another reminder that no matter how much you care for Aeran, there are many things about him that you do not know.

“What’s the story here, Veyer?” you ask, joining them. “What is it with you two?”

“Ah.” Their smile fades and press a shoulder against the trunk, stuffing their hands into their pockets. “It’s a long story, one that isn’t mine to tell. I meant what I said—Kellis has every right to hate me, I will not argue that. But if you want the truth, it would be best to hear his version of events. I cannot speak to mine.”

“That’s not helpful,” you point out.

“No,” they reply sadly. “It’s not.”

A sober silence falls between you. You cross your arms and glance at Aeran from afar, watching as he crouches in the grass and lays Taraniel beside him. The bow glints in the dappled sunlight, its silver-white curve a stark contrast against the green. Beside you, Veyer casts an eye around the grove, cautiously taking in what must be a familiar sight. They withdraw Malsara’s token from their pocket and roll it absently between their fingers.

“If I may, \$firstname,” Veyer says quietly, meeting your eyes. They press the token into their palm and curl their fingers around it, forming a fist. “I believe we have developed a certain rapport. If it is not too presumptuous of me, I have a request. One that must remain between us. Will you hear me out?”

A cool breeze rushes through the grove, rustling the leaves above. You pause, goosepimples running down your arms. The intense look in Veyer’s eyes is difficult to ignore. Gone are any traces of their customary nonchalance, their acerbic wit, the mocking sarcasm. You’ve never seen them so serious.

1. They are your ally. You have no good reason not to trust them.

2. Whatever game they're playing, you want no part in it. You're already a pawn in too many mages' hands.

[Progress Report 2022.11.14: Dialogue Loops & Dialogue Skeletons](#)

[Nov 14, 2022](#)

Hi friends,

I hope you're having a good November! It is very damp and chilly here, but the bright side is that I get to work from home with a blanket and warm tea. I had minor oral surgery a week and a half ago; I am recovering well and I'm mostly healed from it. Recovery didn't affect my writing schedule too much (though I do question the quality of some of the things I wrote; that will be something to be fixed in the editing process).

Game Updates

Since I'm trying to get out of the habit of discussing the episode's development by using the short hands I have in my notes, I'm going to layout the full structure so you have a better idea of what is being worked on and why Scene 1 is very content dense and why it is taking so long to develop.

Episode 3 Scene 1 covers the events of the morning directly after Episode 2 through to the MC arriving at Diradan Tower. It includes many very important conversations that lay the groundwork for future episodes, including more details about who, exactly, the MC is working for, Aeran's history, and the MC's feelings about the Wayfarer Order.

Currently, this is where Episode 3 Scene 1 stands:

EPISODE 3, SCENE 1

Branch 1 – Aeran Variations

This branch includes content for any situations where the MC and Aeran end Episode 2 in the apartment. This comprises of:

- Romance reconciliation
- Friendship reconciliation
- Breaking off your romance
- Breaking off your friendship

- Low romance variant

Each continuity has its own “morning scene” that takes place in the apartment, then a scene with Malsara, then a scene where the MC, Aeran and their party travel to Diradan Tower. This travel scene is split into two versions: one for where the MC remained hired and one for where the MC was fired.

- The hired version includes a party makeup of the MC, Aeran, Veyer, and Malsara.
- The fired version includes a party makeup of the MC, Aeran, Zenaida, and Malsara.

Finished: Morning scenes for all variations; hired version of the travelling scene

In-progress: Fired version of the travelling scene

Current Word Count: 160,296 (including my notes)

Branch 2 – Veyer Variation

This branch includes content for when the MC sleeps with Veyer at the end of Episode 2. Like the Aeran branches, this branch also contains a “morning scene” and a “travel scene”. The travel scene is split into two variations, one for the hired continuity, one for the fired continuity.

- The hired version includes a party makeup of the MC, Veyer, and Malsara.
- The fired version includes a party makeup of the MC, Veyer, Zenaida, and Malsara.

Finished: Morning scene

In-progress: Fired travelling scene (needs major edits as some details have changed)

Not drafted: Hired travelling scene

Current Word Count: 33,841

Branch 3 – Melchior & Kythera Variations

This branch includes content for any situations where the MC ended up at Melchior's party at the end of Episode 2. This comprises of:

- Smoking dreamweed with Kythera
- Getting drunk (MC with Mel)
- Getting drunk (MC alone)
- Hanging out with Mel (friendship version)
- Sleeping with Mel

Like the other branches, there is a morning scene followed by a travel scene that is divided into two variants.

- The hired version includes a party makeup of the MC, Veyer, and Malsara.
- The fired version includes a party makeup of the MC, Zenaida, and Malsara.

Not Drafted: All the above

Current Word Count: 0

Branch 4 – Misc Continuities

This branch includes content for any situations where the MC ends the night in the apartment alone. This comprises of:

- Leaving Melchior's party and returning to the apartment
- Returning to the apartment from the gallery after talking to Phaedra/Melchior/Veyer, but not having high enough approval with Aeran to unlock either reconciliation scene or enough romance to unlock the low romance variant
- Drunk route (MC was taken back to the apartment by palace staff)

Like the other branches, there is a morning scene followed by a travel scene that is divided into two variants.

- The hired version includes a party makeup of the MC, Veyer, and Malsara [will be merged with the variation from the Mel branch]
- The fired version includes a party makeup of the MC, Zenaida, and Malsara. [will be merged with the variation from the Mel branch]

Not Drafted: All the above

Current Word Count: 0

TOTAL EPISODE 3 WORD COUNT: 194,137 (including notes and copy/pasted + edited sections)

As you can see, there is still a lot of content to get through—however, there are also many repeat or structurally similar scenes. Regardless of what branch you're on, you're always going to have a morning scene and a travel scene—the party makeup and the kinds of conversations you can have are what changes. This is where dialogue loops and dialogue skeletons come in.

Regardless of what path you go down, there is **specific information** that **must** be delivered to the player by the time they reach a crucial bottleneck. For example, in Episode 1, regardless of whether you met Zenaida in the Docks or not, you always end up hearing her full proposition. This is an unchangeable story beat, because otherwise the story can't happen.

Dialogue loops are sequences in an exposition-heavy scene. These are common in RPGs—walk up to an NPC, click on every question until you expire your dialogue options, and proceed from there. My version of dialogue loops are a little more complicated than that. It always bothers me when you're progressing through a dialogue loop and the flow of questions don't make sense. As a player, you end up ping-ponging around an NPC's emotional state, with each question essentially existing in a vacuum. Oftentimes, you can skip the questions entirely and the quest will update as if you had asked them for all that additional info. This makes sense for most video games—it's a QoL feature, letting you skip past the slow parts so you can be on your way.

However, this doesn't work for *Wayfarer*. The game is solely text-based and has the pacing of a novel. The continuity of each choice needs to flow into the next. The game has an established rule that if you

don't ask the question, your character never broached the topic. There's no quick exits here.

This impacts dialogue loops in a major way because sometimes the information discovered in one question can affect the next. Furthermore, because the player can ask questions in any order (otherwise it wouldn't be a loop and it would take away player agency), I need to track what information—or sometimes events, such as the passage of time or different scenery—they've encountered depending on what they have asked.

(As a side note, I highly encourage asking questions out of order! Think about what your player character should be prioritizing, since you never know when an NPC might decide they've had enough.)

Dialogue loops are among the most complex and difficult components I create for *Wayfarer*. The first instance of a dialogue loop is the most challenging to write, but once I have that skeleton down, I can move it around to different parts of the game and edit it to fit the different variations. For example, there is specific information the player can ask Zenaïda during the travel scene. Though the questions and forthcoming information remain the same, the reactions to those questions change depending on whether Veyer, Aeran, or both are present (and also where your approval and/or romance sits with Aeran).

2. “Why did Zenaïda seek Aeran out?...” [-aeran app if aeran bad]

[IF AERAN GOOD]

[if first question asked] Malsara sighs irritably. Clearly, she is not in the mood to answer questions. Beside you, Aeran frowns and shoots you a lot. [else] Aeran frowns and shoots you a look. [/if] You shrug, smiling apologetically, and [if romance] place a hand on his shoulder. [else] bump his shoulder with your fist. [/if] His dislike of the Guild is well known; you've had to navigate it ever since your reunion in Karth. This contract is an anomaly. [if injured in ep 1] The scar on your side / shoulder / forehead is a reminder of that. [else] Your escape from Rona is a reminder of that.

[if veyer interested] “Some, but not all,” Veyer says. They draw themselves upright and lean in, fixing Aeran with a brazen stare. “Your companion's dislike of the Guild may be infamous by now, but I'd wager it's not the Guild in its entirety. Rather, it's certain *specific* individuals. Am I not wrong, Kellis?”

I never code while writing, but I do use colour-coded notes to do continuity and variation management.

Once I have a dialogue skeleton down, creating new content for a different variation becomes less about writing from scratch and more about taking existing material and editing it to fit a new branch. It's very different work from normal writing, and it can be difficult to track what's freshly written content vs copy/pasted content that's been edited.

But shifting a dialogue skeleton around usually takes less time than writing something fresh. This is why I started with the Aeran branch—it has the most variations and small continuity differences. Doing this

work first created the skeleton for almost every conversation the MC needs to have in the other branches, which makes it infinitely easier to write.

Currently, the completed sections of Scene 1 are with my editor. She's going through a massive 90,000 word document right now to isolate the sections that either need to be cut or cleaned up. While she's working on that, I'm finishing the rest of the Aeran branch. I was hoping to have it done by last Friday, but it will take a few more days of work to finish it off. After that, I need to edit the travel scene on Veyer's branch and draft the hired variation of it. Melchior's branch and the Misc branch will merge together sooner than the other branches as they share the same travel scenes. Their unique content hopefully won't take too long to get through as Aeran isn't present in the morning scene on either branch.

I hope this was a fun overview of my work process! We're getting closer to an update, but I'm not in a place where I can properly estimate how long that will be. But what I can guarantee is that there will be a hefty amount of content to dig into, regardless of what path you are on.

If you have any questions, don't hesitate to reach out. As always, thank you all so much for your support. 💕💕

PROLOGUE



CHARACTER NAME

- ◆ PRONOUNS: Entry Here
- ◆ ANCESTRY: Entry Here
- ◆ ORIGIN: Entry Here
- ◆ FAMILY NAME: Entry Here

5

STRENGTH

5

AGILITY

5

PERCEPTION

5

PERSUASION

STORY EVENTS

FIRST FANNARL ATTACK

- ☐ Helped Cenric attack it
- ☒ Used [themselves] to distract it
- ☐ Used the environment to distract it
- ☐ Convinced Marcella & Berand to help

SECOND FANNARL ATTACK

- ☐ Climbed the ladder into the attic
- ☒ Ignored Cenric's advice & left the lodge
- ☐ Followed Cenric's advice & barricaded the door
- ☐ Convinced Marcella and Berand to help

TRAVELLING

- ☒ Rode with Varyn
- ☐ Rode with Cenric
- ☐ Walked with Sero

CHOSEN MENTOR

- ☒ Brissa Varyn
- ☐ Rindan Cenric
- ☐ Amali Sero



CHARACTER NAME

- ✦ NICKNAME: Entry Here
- ✦ PRONOUNS: Entry Here
- ✦ ANCESTRY: Entry Here
- ✦ ORIGIN: Entry Here
- ✦ MENTOR: Entry Here

5

STRENGTH

5

AGILITY

5

PERCEPTION

5

PERSUASION

INVENTORY



5 crowns



GEAR

Alassar sword, dagger, medical kit,
grappling hook, lockpicks



PACK

Wayfarer pendant, bronze sphere



VALUABLES

None



CONSUMABLES

Enhanced Medical Kit: None
Claw Traps: None
Thunderspheres: None

RELATIONSHIPS



aeran kellis

50

50



order of lethalis

50

RECORDS

PASSES

STRENGTH

01

AGILITY

01

PERCEPTION

01

PERSUASION

01

FAILS

STRENGTH

01

AGILITY

01

PERCEPTION

01

PERSUASION

01

COMBAT

INJURIES

01

BLACKOUTS

01

ENEMIES EXECUTED

01

ENEMIES SPARED

01

PACTS

PACTS FORGED

01

PACTS BROKEN

01

PACTS COMPLETE

01

LOCATIONS VISITED



RAT ALLEY



SOUTH ISLE



THE DOCKS



DEADWOOD



EDGEWATER



FLOTSAM GROVE



THE COVE



MARSHWALL



STORY EVENTS

LUTHAIS

- ☐ Robbed by Luthais
- ☒ Caught Luthais red-handed

RAT ALLEY

- ☐ Spared Kane
- ☒ Killed Kane
- ☐ Aeran killed Kane
- ☐ Did not visit

THE DOCKS

- ☐ Accepted Zenaida's contract
- ☐ Declined Zenaida's contract
- ☒ Did not visit

RONA INVESTIGATION

- ☐ Entered the villa through the front
- ☒ Entered the villa through the back
- ☐ Fell off the cliffs
- ☒ Encountered Hera
- ☒ Encountered Madam Grey
- ☐ Returned to the apartment
- ☐ Read Aeran's letters
- ☒ Encountered Aegineta
- ☐ Gave Alina a remedy
- ☒ Visited Emari
- ☒ Visited Myn
- ☒ Visited Thelkar
- ☒ Made a bet with Aeran
- ☐ Broke Drakehand's idol
- ☐ Found a mysterious cube

CONTRACT TAKEN

- ☐ Visited the apartment with Aeran
- ☐ Visited Myn
- ☐ Visited Emari
- ☐ Visited Thelkar
- ☐ Captured by Rhodarth

CHALICE OF OFFERING

- ☐ Returned the chalice to the Count
- ☐ Left the chalice where it was
- ☐ Gave the chalice to the Viridian Lady
- ☐ Tossed the chalice into the ocean
- ☒ Did not find the chalice

ENCOUNTER WITH THE CRIMSON COUNT

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Successfully paid and returned to the town square | <input type="checkbox"/> Defeated the basilisk |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Charmed the Count and was invited inside his villa | <input type="checkbox"/> Defeated the Count |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Given a second offer by the Count | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Shot by Aeran |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fought the basilisk | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Knocked unconscious |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fought Rhodarth's company | <input type="checkbox"/> Rescued by Zenaida, Malsara and Nova |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dueled the Count one-on-one | <input type="checkbox"/> Bargained Zenaida for higher pay |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fought the basilisk underwater | <input type="checkbox"/> Escaped the villa and reunited with Zenaida in the Docks |

THE TOWN SQUARE

- ☐ *Fought Atral*
- ☐ *Aegineta was killed*
- ☐ *Knocked unconscious*

THE COUNT'S FATE

- ☐ Executed by [PLAYER]
- ☒ Killed by Aeran
- ☐ Killed by Malsara
- ☐ Alive

RHODARTH'S FATE

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Alive and free | <input type="checkbox"/> Killed by Aeran |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Alive and in the Count's employ | <input type="checkbox"/> Killed by his blood oath |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Killed by [PLAYER] | <input type="checkbox"/> Abandoned to his blood oath |

ABOARD THE DAREIA

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aeran confessed his love | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Told Aeran about Zenaida's source |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aeran stormed out | <input type="checkbox"/> Did not tell Aeran |

[Wayfarer MC Template - Prologue & Episode 1](#)

[Nov 15, 2022](#)

For this month's bonus content, I designed more character sheets! These are in a similar vein to the [Wayfarer MC Character Sheet](#) I released in July. This time, these are specific to the events of the

Prologue and Episode 1.

You can edit them in Canva (requires a free account).

A few editing notes:

- To add your MC's photo, move the decorative frame backwards one using "Position". Click and drag the photo from your Uploads to add it to the empty square. It will format automatically. Then move it back one with "Position". The decorative frame will go back on top.

Prologue Template:

- If your MC did not change their surname, remove "Family Name."

Episode 1 Template:

- Edit the list with the inventory items you have at the end of Episode 1
- If you're not romancing Aeran, delete the romance bar
- Use copy/paste to switch out to duplicate the squares or checked boxes as needed. Switch them out depending on what story events your character did.
- Use silver (or an alternative colour) and italics to format routes that weren't accessible/did not apply to your playthrough.

All of the elements should be unlocked, so you can change the colours, themes, and/or move things around. If they're not, drop me a note and I'll unlock them.

✨ Links Here:

- [MC Prologue Template](#)
- [MC Episode 1 Template](#)

Feel free to share your edits on social media. Have fun! I can't wait to see what you create!

[Episode 3 Sneak Peek #21](#)

[Nov 16, 2022](#)

Almost at the end of this branch now... *Almost.*



You cross your arms. The Guild of Mages was bad enough with its schism between Lethalis and Solarath, but Lethalis itself has its own fair share of infighting. At least Veyer has the self-awareness to label it as petty. “And the second reason?”

“Is far more serious, I’m afraid,” Veyer says grimly. “Malsara Markal is not part of the Order of Lethalis. She is an Erebian operative, assigned to protect Zenaida Anaxas at all costs. Now, thanks to her ties to her sister and Zenaida, many within Lethalis have turned a blind eye to her origins and consider her their own. Erebian operatives come in all forms—bodyguards, spies, consorts, assassins. But if there is one commonality between them all, it is this: they are staggeringly loyal and put the League above all. Not their friends. Not their lovers. Not their employers. The League.”

Your mouth runs dry. “What are you saying?” you ask hoarsely.

“I’m saying that we are placing all of our faith in Markal with no contingency plans. I question the decision to delegate the transportation of a powerful and highly dangerous artefact to an Erebian operative, and a planeswalker at that. It could fall into the League’s hands before any of us could act.”

A shiver rolls down your spine. You know as much about the League as anyone—which means almost nothing at all. Though you’ve been with her for a month, Malsara has never been forthright about her connections to them. She is so tightly associated with Zenaida that you never considered they would play into this at all.

“What stake does the Erebian League have in any of this?” you ask.

Veyer gives you a flat look. “Use your head, \$firstname. What benefit could the largest covert organization in the world get from claiming one of the most powerful Meissandic artefacts? Sell it, use it, barter it off for political gains. The staff is an augments tied to the sphere of illumination. Illusions may be of no concern to you, but I don’t want to think about what a contingent of spies and assassins could do with that power.”

“And you think it’s safer with you?”

“I can mask its appearance long enough to deliver it to Umbria and Oshiro. You will be paid for your efforts all the same.”

You look upwards, watching the tower, taking in the formidable walls and the broken citadel beyond. Magic pulses around it, so pungent you can almost taste the oily haze and the shimmering wards. You’re here because of Zenaida. She has placed her faith in you, just as she has placed her faith in Malsara.

- 1. Veyer has a point. There’s a flaw in this plan, one Lethalis never considered. The more you think about it, the more Malsara’s League connections concern you.**
- 2. It doesn’t matter to you who the Astral ends up with. There’s as good of a chance of it returning to Umbria with Malsara as it does with Veyer.**
- 3. They’re up to something and you’re not going to fall for it.**

[Episode 3 Sneak Peek #22](#)

[Nov 22, 2022](#)

I'll have more details in my progress report next Monday, but the Aeran branch is now complete! Hopping back onto the Veyer branch for one. I am posting it a day early as I am heading out on a mini vacation tomorrow and won't have regular internet access.



You frown, cautious of this new information. You have no doubt [REDACTED] is capable of such a thing, but there's something about [Zenaida's] wording that gives you pause. "You don't trust Lethalis. None of you do."

"Lethalis doesn't trust itself, \$wayfarer," Malsara says. "Did last night not demonstrate that? Archsage Oshiro all but said last night they are willing to abandon my sister. Radical change came to Lethalis while we were in Rona. There is very little trust remaining among its mages, even those ostensibly united by a common cause. Her Grace has every reason to gather her own intelligence on Solarath."

A shiver creeps across the nape of your neck. Somewhere between the scheming and lies, one thing has become clear: Lethalis fractured before you even stepped foot in Velantis. The explosion at Diradan Tower broke them. This would be as good an opportunity as any for Solarath to eradicate them completely—and Zenaida is willing to break off on her own if necessary.

Once again, you're face to face with the fact that when Zenaida recruited you, you had no idea what kind of mess you would await you in Velantis. While she doesn't bear full responsibility, the holes in her plan are increasingly obvious the more you reflect on it. Though you owe her for saving your life, she should have been straightforward with you from the beginning.

"Turning the tables on everyone, now are we?" Veyer murmurs, running a hand over their chin. "Frankly, Your Grace, you do not cease to surprise me. Is this what we call making the most of a bad situation, or are you a fool?"

Malsara inhales sharply, simmering with anger. Considering how protective she is of Zenaida, it's a testament to her character that she hasn't snapped. If she were anyone else, Veyer may no longer be on this boat.

Zenaida reaches over her shoulder and catches Malsara's hand, calming her. "Perhaps it is both," she says, locking eyes with them. "It would be conceited of me to presume the latter does not play into my decisions at all. All risks are foolish to a certain extent—would you not agree? You yourself have embarked on one right now, have you not?"

A dangerous smile crosses their lips. "Tell me one thing, Your Grace," they say silkily, avoiding her question. "When you agreed that I would be the one to deliver the Astrial to our oh-so-illustrious leaders... was that, in fact, a lie? Considering this newfound stance of yours, I cannot imagine you would let the Astrial go willingly—at least, not until you have used it as leverage."

"Careful where you place your accusations. I may not trust certain individuals within our ranks, but I would never stoop so low as to betray Lethalis itself. I stand by our cause. Mark my words, Savant Krellion: I do not care for the Astrial so long as it remains out of Solarath's hands."

"We are in agreement there."

[Progress Report 2022.11.28: Getting Stuff Finished!](#)

[Nov 28, 2022](#)

Hi friends,

The last couple of weeks have been quite busy! I'm almost fully recovered from my surgery, have made a lot of progress on the Episode 3 Scene 1 material, and took a little vacation last week to reset and refresh. I hit my NaNoWriMo quota last week. I typically write between 45k and 60k words a month, but it's been a struggle over the past few months to get back to normal writing levels after I caught Covid in August. I'm quite pleased to be back to my regular writing regimen.

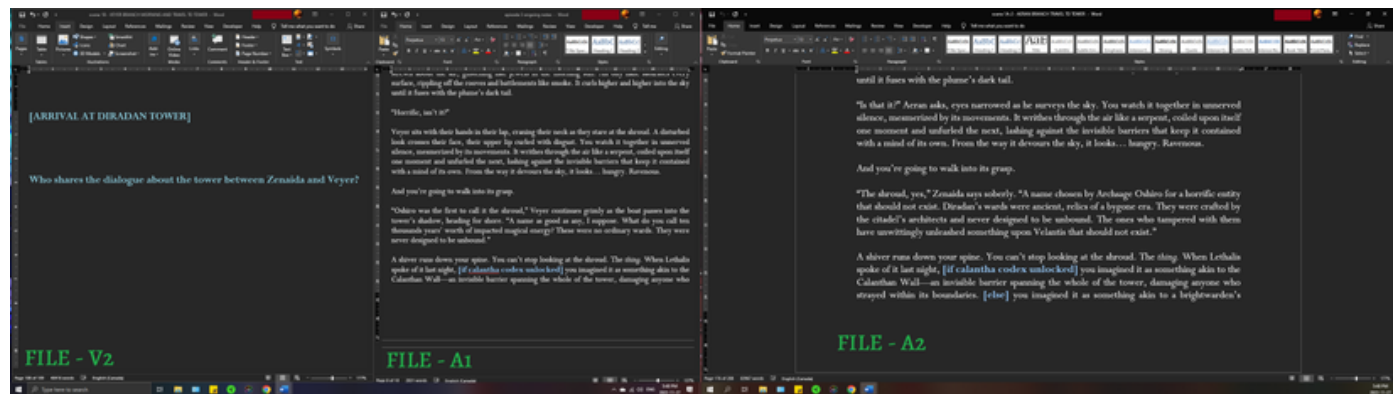
Game Updates

The Aeran branch is (FINALLY!!!) complete. I finished this up early last week before heading out on my vacation. Considering I've been working on this branch since June, it's a relief to finally have it done. Together, there's about 174k words of cumulative content for this branch alone to cover all the variations. Both files have been through the initial editing/proofreading process and are waiting for the second round of edits before I can code it.

I have returned to work on the Veyer branch. Going back to this branch has been a little tricky. It's early content was the first thing I wrote for Episode 3 and it's a very different headspace to be in than the Aeran branch. Because of the direction of some dialogue loops on the Aeran branch, I have had to do significant edits on the Veyer branch to ensure that the player is receiving the same information, albeit

delivered in a different way. I've been doing more editing/re-writing than I have drafting of new material, which will be how the rest of the Veyer branch will progress.

To demonstrate what this looks like:



It helps to have two monitors for this.

Here on my screen I have the Veyer branch file open (V2), plus two variations of the same scene from the Aeran branch. One has Veyer and Aeran present (A1), the other has Aeran and Zenaïda present (A2). To recreate this scene for the V2 variation, I have to remove Aeran from the existing skeleton completely, then merge Veyer's dialogue lines from A1 with Zenaïda's from A2. Because they both deliver similar exposition, I have to decide who gets to say what and how having both of them in the same scene shifts the direction.

I am hoping to have the fired version of the travelling scene done by the end of the week (if not sooner), so I can move on to the hired version and finish off the Veyer branch. I'm excited to move onto the Melchior branch so I can get back to writing fresh content instead of recycling and editing around the skeletons of existing content.

Other Updates

As mentioned earlier, I took a short vacation last week to get out of the city and have a bit of a reset. It was a lovely few days off and it was nice to escape my office for once! November is wet and cold in my region, but even with the grey skies, my partner and I had a good time exploring the coastal wilderness and enjoying the views.









Unfortunately, I still cannot reliably estimate when the next update will be. Moving into December, my priority will be finishing Episode 3 Scene 1. For those in the Apprentice+ and Wayfarer+ tiers, this may mean that you won't get bonus content and/or a short story in December. I cannot guarantee that I will have the time to produce it while finishing the alpha update.

If you have any questions, don't hesitate to reach out. As always, thank you all so much for your support. 💕

[Episode 3 Sneak Peek #23](#)

[Nov 30, 2022](#)

"What's keeping it in?" you ask.

"Numerous containment spells woven over the complex," she replies. "The original enchantments were crafted in tandem by the Grand Archsage and Archsage Bellaris when the citadel's wards broke. They held the shroud back in the moment it manifested, saving many lives while the Guild evacuated. It has been reinforced by engineers from the Arcanists' Lodge and specialists from Seiran College, alongside my mother's personal staff. Even the emperor has sent an expert brightwarden to lend their aid, though I suspect they are conducting an investigation of their own."

Veyer stiffens. Their jaw clenches and they grip their ring, twisting it round and round on their finger until it leaves a mark.

"The emperor's interested in this?" you say, surprised. "Personally?"

"This disaster occurred on Imperial ground. Of course the emperor would take note. Though I have no doubt the Council of Mages would have preferred to handle it quietly amongst the Guild, the thread the shroud poses far exceeds their scope and reach. There are more people who have a stake in this than I can count."

[CHOICE] 1. "What happens if it gets out?"

2. "Then let's hope it stays this way. At least until this is over."

3. Say nothing.

Zenaida pauses and presses her lips together. "Archsage Bellaris briefed me before our meeting last night," she replies. "If her reports are to be believed—and I see no reason for them to be wrong—the shroud will consume all opposing magic and sentient life in its path."

You eye the undulating smoke. The plume fans against an invisible wall to the west, then turns tail and flows across the sky to the east. Now you're closer, you can spot golden flecks shimmering within the vortex, glinting like lightning within a storm. You've seen many things throughout your career as a Wayfarer, but never anything like this. The energy in destroyed wards should disperse once broken, not

manifest with a mind of their own. Diradan's wards predate the Astrandium. Magic from that era is notoriously powerful and unpredictable, a different beast compared to contemporary magic.

You swallow hard. "And how likely is that to happen?"

"I do not know. This is an aberration, one the Guild never considered possible. I doubt even the Astrandium experts have an explanation. This is unknown territory for all involved. However, the containment has held for three weeks. I have faith in those who worked on it; they are among the most skilled brightwardens in Rhesainia. If it has held for this long, it will continue to hold until a solution can be found."

A chill runs down your spine. The destruction the shroud could wreak if it escapes its containment...

- 1. The thought leaves you furious. This makes Zenaida inexcusably opportunistic. She would rather take advantage of this opening to seize the Astrial than put her efforts into protecting Velantis from a very real threat.**
- 2. Whatever the Guild has done has worked so far. This is their area of expertise. It's not your place to judge them.**
- 3. This isn't your business. The Guild made this mess. They can clean it up.**

[From the Vault: Wayfarer, Dragon Age, and the Fan Game Prototype](#)

[Dec 3, 2022](#)

It's a poorly kept secret that I got into interactive fiction development because I wanted to add experience with non-linear storytelling to my portfolio. It's *also* a poorly kept secret that Wayfarer's first prototype started as a Dragon Age fan game.

Now it's been a few years, I still feel a little embarrassed talking about Wayfarer's earliest origins. I think in our current media culture, stories (usually novels, but this extends to other works as well) that started as fan endeavours are looked down upon. With critics pointing to Fifty Shades of Grey (Twilight fanfiction!) and the After series (One Direction fanfiction!), referring to authors taking down their fanfics to "file the serial numbers off" and republish them as original work, there's this overall feeling that anything with a whiff of fanwork about it is automatically cringey, derivative, poorly written, and a cash-cow. And therefore it's something to be embarrassed about.

I don't want this post to become a greater rumination on the value of fanwork, but I mention this because I was a fanfiction writer for years. I probably still would be if I wasn't working full-time on Wayfarer and had time to spare for other creative writing. I have almost two decades worth of fics under

my belt, and I think it's pretty safe to say that I became a good writer *because* I wrote so much fanfiction. The writing courses I took in my BA and MFA programs certainly helped, but writing and publishing is a skill I've honed since I was fourteen and I have fanfiction to thank for that.

There's a lot of good that comes out of fan fiction. There's a community of likeminded people, there's encouraging readers, there's fellow writers pushing each other to experiment and try new things. Fanfiction authors are very passionate about the things they create. Often times, they are creating their own characters, lore, and material to either fill in the gaps or do something completely different from what's presented in the source material. When you take the original ideas that can occur in this context into account, the line between fanwork and inspiration becomes blurred. Where does the fanwork end and the author's original ideas begin?

The fact of the matter is that Wayfarer wouldn't exist without Dragon Age. It wouldn't exist without a lot of things—all my favourite stories and writers, who I've been inspired by along the way. But there's something particularly frustrating about feeling ashamed of Wayfarer's origins because it originated within fanwork. Even though I love fanfiction and I don't regret any of the fics I've written, there's still a tiny part of my brain that says I need to sweep the Dragon Age connection under the rug otherwise...

What, exactly? I'm cringey? A bad writer? Not legitimate?

When I first started experimenting with interactive fiction, I didn't know what the hell I was doing. I hated ChoiceScript and didn't make it very far into using it. Twine was better, but it was challenging: there was a lot to learn, the documentation was confusing, Googling help often wasn't that helping due to the sheer amount of conflicting information online for the program's different iterations and format languages. I don't have a coding background, so getting from Point A (how do you do [idea/function/thing]?) to Point B (the game now does [idea/function/thing]) was a slog.

While I was learning to code interactive fiction, I also had to think about the story I had to tell. There's a lot that goes into developing fantasy fiction and none of it is easy. It's not just about plot and characters, you have to spend a significant amount of time worldbuilding.

It's a lot of work.

At the time, making a fan game was desirable for several reasons:

1. I love Dragon Age and I love its world. Making a fanwork meant that I didn't have to do any worldbuilding. It was a preestablished sandbox I could play in, cutting out what is perhaps the most difficult part of writing sci-fi/fantasy.

2. Audience. Writing in solitary can be very difficult and not a lot of people can do it successfully. You need feedback, you need readers interested in your work—you need an audience. But it is difficult to accrue interest in original works in online spaces, especially fandom-adjacent spaces. By making a fan game, I already had a built-in audience. I was a fanfiction author with a small following of readers who enjoyed my writing, writing fanfic of a

game series. The chances were pretty good that Dragon Age fans would be interested in a fan game.

3. The prototype was intended to be a short, focused story, with a handful of original characters and some appearances from canon characters. I could theoretically use it as a portfolio piece to demonstrate how I worked within the context of an existing IP*.

I can't really speak to the application process for junior scriptwriting positions. Sometimes having a prototype like this is a good thing, sometimes it's not—it depends on the company and what they have asked for. But if you do find yourself applying to be a writer in the video game industry, **do not send them fanfiction as demonstration of your work. Writing fanfic is not comparable to the type of scriptwork writing rooms do. You will not be taken seriously and it is generally considered pretty rude.*

Looking back, I think this was a good instinct. As I worked on the initial concept, some early writing, and continued to learn how to code, my blog gained about 1000 followers, all Dragon Age fans. It had been five years since Dragon Age: Inquisition released and the fan community was hungry for another Dragon Age game, fan-made or not. And people were excited—I had questions in my inbox about my original characters and their backstories, what cameo characters would appear, what the race/class selection system would look like, how many romances there would be and with who. I had folks drawing fan art based on early concepts before I even got a playable prototype out.

But the more I worked on it, the more I realized I had bit off more than I could chew. Interactive fiction is very time-consuming to make. When your gameplay revolves around making choices, you have to create the content for those choices, otherwise it becomes a linear story and at that point your story may be better served as a novel. These games can get very content dense, very quickly, and the player is only ever going to see the tip of the iceberg on a single playthrough.

I think my audience knew how time consuming making this fan game had become. My updates got further and further apart. People started to ask me whether I would open to a Patreon to support the game's development—something I was adamant that I would not go because a Patreon for a fanwork set in an established IP was a huge legal liability, particularly when BioWare already had their own text-adventure game in The Last Court. Having a Patreon to support a fan game was not something I was comfortable doing.

By the time I released my first prototype of the Dragon Age fan game, I was already regretting starting the whole project. It was so much time and so much effort, and because it was a fanwork, it wasn't something I felt I could put my name on and say was fully my own. I was quickly realizing three things:

1. The story I wanted to tell, with the characters I had created, could not be done in the DA universe. I was pushing against established lore, sometimes ignoring it in favour of developing my own ideas. And I was losing interest. The series that had been beloved to me for so many years just didn't interest me the way it used to. There was something else I wanted to do, and it was definitely not this.

2. If I was going to actually make this game, I needed funding. It was too much work to do while working full-time at a physically draining and soul-sucking retail job. I needed either grants or Patreon. And I couldn't do that unless I was making something wholly original.

I stopped posting about my fan game pretty soon after I released the prototype. Behind the scenes, I was starting over—building a new plot, fleshing out the world and the lore, recreating my original character from ones that worked in the DA universe to ones that worked in my original one, taking concepts and game mechanics from the prototype and reworking them into something that actually worked without massively inflating the amount of content I had to write.

I never finished the fan game. It was a test run: mechanics, character creator, action scene, that's it. I never got to introducing all the characters I had planned or the plot I had been eager to explore. I announced I was abandoning it and making an original one in the tail-end of 2019. The response was mixed. I had quite a few messages of people telling me they were unfollowing the project because they weren't interested in original work. But I also had a lot of people who had been following me for almost a year who were unabashedly excited and encouraging. They congratulated me on taking the next step, because, as it turns out, though they came for a Dragon Age game, they were staying because they wanted to see something new.

The seeds of the prototype are all over Wayfarer, in both subtle and obvious ways. The ancestry selection is ripped straight out of DA: there are humans, elves, and dwarves because Dragon Age has humans, elves, and dwarves (which itself is derivative of other fantasy works--this is just a trope at this point). I created melusine and aeda to flesh it out a little further and work with new lore. Rhesainia is in the planet's southern hemisphere because Thedas is oriented that way in Dragon Age and I quite liked that (there aren't a lot of western fantasy stories where the south is cold and the north is warm). Alexia is a Guild mage because she was a mage in her original DA conception. Ren is an elven assassin because that's what he was supposed to be in the prototype. Calla's family's connections to the Merchants' Consortium in Wayfarer come from them being surface dwarf merchants in the prototype. Aeran's established friendship with the player character is there because that's how he was conceived in the prototype. Nova and Malsara used to be Venatori and worked for a mage cult, which is now the Order of Lethalis. Even the player character begins their story in Rona—a backwater town in the middle of nowhere—because that's the type of environment they started in during the prototype. Some names—like Sophia Anaxas, Umbria Bellaris, and Allegra Arantir—carried over, but they are far removed from their original concepts.

The mechanics of the prototype also influenced the game and made it what it is today. The whole concept of Wayfarers as warriors who are immune to magic come from my frustration with writing and coding the action scene in the prototype: it was unbelievably difficult to write an action scene where the player not only chose their class and their weapon, but could also use magic. That in combination with the dice rolls made it so much work to write skill checks because I had to write different iterations based on whether the player character could use magic or not. I hated writing magic into the system so much that my choices were to either make the player character a mage or yeet their ability to do magic out of existence.

... naturally I thought the latter was more interesting, and *boom*, Wayfarers.

At this point, the game is so far removed from its origins that I don't really like saying "it started as a Dragon Age fan game." It's both true and not true—it depends on what stage of development you're looking at. But I do find that when I talk about this publicly, people get the wrong idea, or they take it as an excuse to deride my work.

The game that is now Wayfarer crossed the line from fanwork to inspiration to original work. It's derivative, yes, but so is everything. Writers are inspired by other writers, and that is a natural part of the writing process. Tropes exist as both writing tools and as a system of classification for genre fiction like romance and fantasy. At a certain point, it becomes less about the *what* (genre, tropes, narrative devices, popular ideas) and more about the *how*. How the author constructs their setting and tells their story is what makes it unique.

The Prototype Fan Game

The prototype was released in May 2019 and doesn't exist online anymore. If you're interested in seeing it in action, you can download the HTML file from this post. If you're interested in seeing the prototype in action, I've uploaded the game privately to itch.io.

Link: <https://idrellegames.itch.io/wayfarer-prototype?secret=FV4QnFhBPY1BNXnpHGwRyIFWKQI>

I don't know how playable it will be on mobile as it is not formatted for portrait mode.

Some warnings:

- This was very early days for me and the UI is horrendous. If you prefer dark mode... your eyes will be blinded. Sorry.
- I've left everything intact, including coding errors. If you see an unclosed tag or two, trust me, I know they are there. I'm not going to change them.
- Any fade in/fade out text will take a very long time to load and you can't click through it. I think I got too excited about figuring out the fade-in/fadeout macro and didn't think about user experience.

Prototype Character Concepts

Additionally, here are some early character portraits made in the old Rinmaru avatar creator that never made it into the game. I found them when sorting through some old folders on my PC. This was before Picrews got popular for avatar creation.

Aeran



Alexia



Calla



Ren



Allegra (then Allegría, according to the file name)



Umbria



Malsara



Nova



Sophia Anaxas (well... she changed a fair bit and Zenaida didn't exist at the time)



Original Character Portraits

And, for posterity, here are the original portraits I commissioned from [Rory Yaya](#) of Alexia, Ren, Calla, and Aeran (Melchior, Felix, and Nelani didn't exist yet). These were commissioned when I was working on the prototype. Rory was the first person I told when I decided to turn my fan game into an original work and she was so excited and fully supportive of that idea!

Though these remain their canon appearances (except Calla--parts of her design have shifted a little bit over the years), I don't think I will use these portraits in the game itself. I love them dearly, but it's important to have a consistent art style across the board and they don't fit with the updated portrait series Rory did for me. There's probably a few reblogs of these floating around on tumblr that are still tagged dragon age!

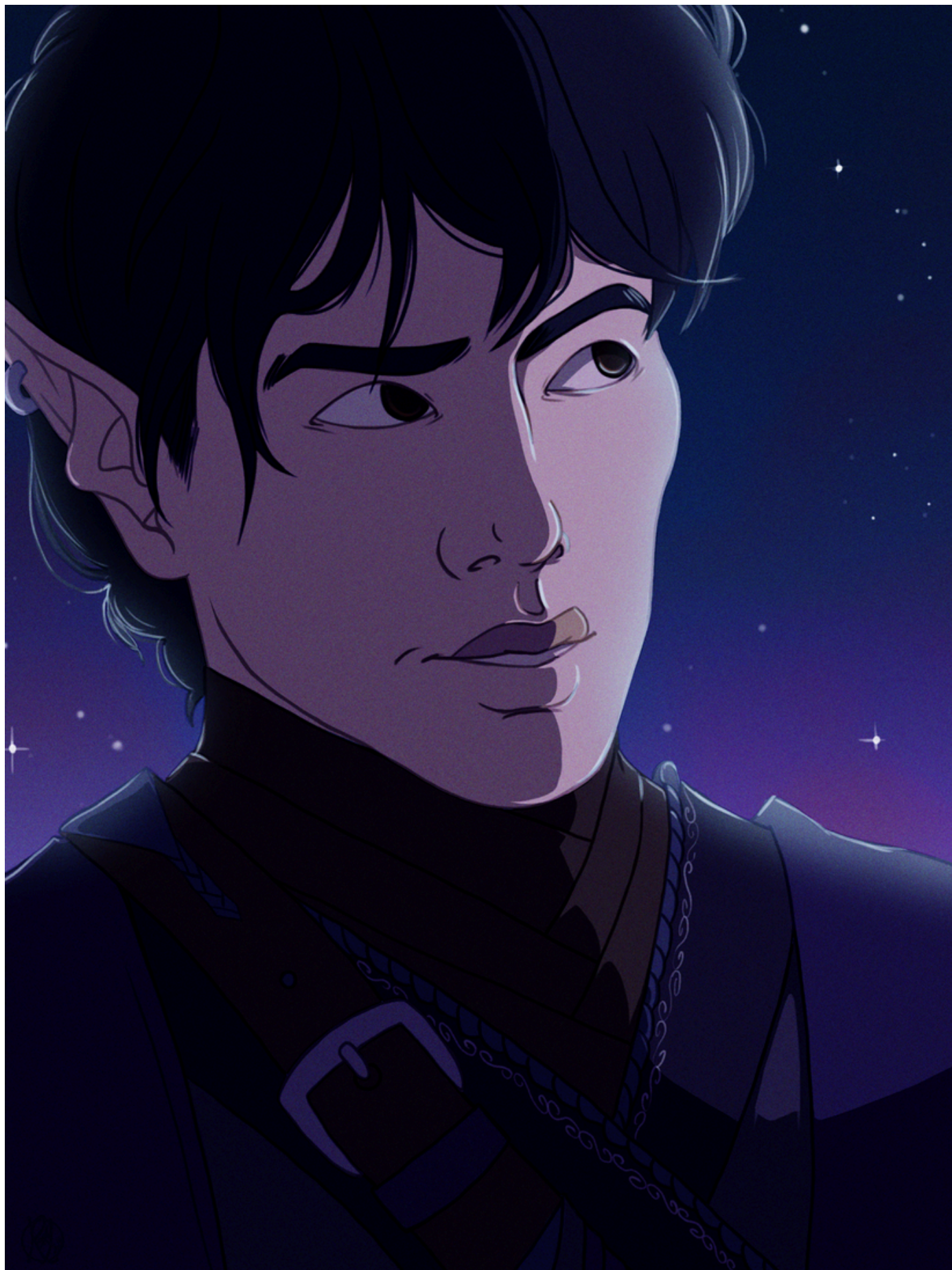
Alexia



Calla



Ren



Aeran



[Dec 7, 2022](#)

This week's sneak peek has a lot of flavour text flags in it, so to summarize what's going on:

- This is from the Veyer branch
- The MC got fired from the mission
- The MC has high approval and romance points with Aeran
- The MC has elected to not feel guilty about their actions



You exhale sharply. “We don’t have time for this,” you say, pushing past a shocked Zenaida. [REDACTED] backs out of the way as you scramble up the path. You grunt as the dirt caves beneath you feet, sending a cascade of pebbles tumbling down the slope. “As pleasant as this little hike has been, we’re on a deadline.”

Veyer curses. “Stand down. You don’t know what you’re playing with—”

“We’ve waited long enough. I’m getting to that tower and I’m getting the Astrial. I’m sure Zenaida can handle the fallout.”

They grimace and double over, hands on their knees. “Trust me on this, \$firstname,” they plead. “If you —”

Something ricochets out the trees, hurtling towards you at high speed, a stream of red light trailing in its wake. You whirl around and draw \$blade, sunlight glinting off its silver-white edge. The object arcs across the road and drops from the sky, halting in the air a foot from your face.

[CHOICE] 1. Strike it down. You can ask questions later.

2. Observe it first. You don’t know what it is.

You lunge, your blade arcing through the air—

Twang.

The object falls from the sky, dropping dead at your feet with a thud. You pause, \$blade falling still in your hand, and crouch down to inspect the object. A sphere no larger than your fist lies in the dirt. Three silver bands wrap around it, layered in such a way that, when activated, one could pass over the other.

A surveillance orb.

"Fuck," you mutter, scooping it up. An arrow strikes clean through its core, an alassar arrowhead emerging from one end and silver fletching from the other. Fractures crack through its dark, polished glass, rippling out from the entry and exit points. Whatever magic lived inside is dead.

A shadow falls across you.

Exhaling an uneasy breathe, you rise to your feet and look upwards. A familiar figure stands at the crest of the hill, garbed in black, silver-white bow glinting in the sun. He towers over you from his vantage point, gazing down at your party with an impassive expression. Despite his warrior's stance, it's easy enough to see his fatigue. He's pale and worn, his blue eyes dull, his hair a tangled, unbrushed mop.

He looks ill.

Aeran meets your eyes and your heart clenches. It's difficult to tell which feeling surpasses the other—the rawness that throbs in your chest at seeing him like this, or the unbridled fury that wells up simply by seeing his stupid face. Of course he would be here—why wouldn't he? Though a part of you had foolishly hoped he had been left behind, you aren't the only Wayfarer in Zenaida's employ. She would never decrease her chances of success by leaving him at Mahanin Palace.

You grit your teeth and sheathe your sword, irritated with the way your \$garb sticks to your skin and how heavy Veyer's coat feels about your shoulders. It won't take much for him to put two and two together. You doubt you can lie your way out of this one.

[CHOICE] 1. "What the hell, Aeran? I had it!"

2. Let Zenaida handle this. It will irritate him to no end to be reprimanded by a mage.

A strange look crosses his face. "And I acted first," he says, lowering his bow. "I won't apologize for that. If you want to be petty about it, do it someplace else."

You grit your teeth. "At least give me a warning before you shoot something out of my face," you snap. "I'd rather not be shot by you again."

He flinches, the colour draining from his face.

Ignoring the phantom pain throbbing in your shoulder, you shoot him a dark look, yank the arrow out of the orb, and thrust it into his hands. You push roughly past him and hike up the rest of the hill, the party trailing in your wake. Zenaida, Malsara, and [REDACTED] converse furiously under their breath, but you ignore their voices.

"What are you doing here, Krellion?" Aeran's voice calls suddenly.

"Helping," they reply witheringly. "Which seems to be more than what you've done. I hope you realize just how *stupid* that fancy show of archery was. Diradan Tower is under close observation by more than the Guild of Mages. Let us hope that by the time whichever organization controlled that orb realizes it is dead, this task is complete and we are long gone."

You slow your pace, rolling the broken orb in your palm. What to do with it?

[CHOICE] 1. Throw it away. You don't know anything about these things. Better not risk bringing it into the tower.

2. Keep it. If someone comes looking for it, you'd rather they didn't find the evidence.

It's dead weight anyway.

You draw your arm back and hurl the orb off the hill. It arcs through the air, its silver bands glinting in the sunlight, and vanishes into a cluster of trees by the riverbank. It will be hidden well enough—you doubt you could find it even if you wanted to.

With a long breath, you turn your back on the river and clamber up the rest of the hill. Aeran tails you, easily outstripping Malsara and the struggling mages.

"If it makes you feel any better, I asked Krellion the very same question," [REDACTED] calls as he passes [them]. "I didn't know about this anymore than you did."

He stiffens at the comment and stalks past [them], taking the lead.

Continue.

[Progress Report 2022.12.13: A Little Something About Burn Out](#)

[Dec 13, 2022](#)

Hi friends,

I hope you're having a good December!

This is going to be a short update for a few different reasons. At the moment, there's not much to write an update about. I'm struggling a lot with a burn out cycle: the amount of content I need to generate in order to get to the next update is, as we know, astoundingly high; the longer I without an update, the more deadlines I blow and the more stressed I get; the more stressed I am, the more burnt out I feel; the more burnt out I feel, the less I am able to write.

Burn out cycles are very painful to deal with as an independent creator. If you're not creating all the time, if you're not releasing a constant stream of content, the drop in engagement or interest hits like a ton of bricks. It can be very difficult to push through to the next stage. However, even artists need time to breathe and time to recoup—it's not possibly to create 24/7 (I say, as I write this post at 1:00am in the

morning because I can't sleep). I am doing what I can to mitigate the negative effects, but after writing over 500,000 words of Wayfarer and Wayfarer related content this year, I am very worn out.

While I am still poking at various Episode 3 Scene 1 branches, I am currently not able to get any kind of significant work on it done, be that writing or coding. I'm hoping that after the holidays, I'll be able to approach the development with some freshness and have more to talk about at that time.

That beings said, the Veyer branch is currently ~74,000 words. Aeran has made his appearance in the branch and is, naturally, causing a lot of narrative strife—it's one of the reasons the back half of this branch has been so difficult to complete. There are many layered dynamics to work into the scene and the MC's dialogue options and mental state. It's more like a tapestry than a straightforward scene, and getting across the finish line for this section has been very challenging.

In non-game news, a community project I've been working on will be announced soon! We've been working on a Wayfarer-themed pin up calendar for 2023. The calendar is digital only and will be available in January, with all proceeds donated to charity. I'll be making an announcement on my game dev blog later this week or next, but I'll be sure to update you with the details here as well.

If you have any questions, don't hesitate to reach out. As always, thank you all so much for your support. 💕💕

[Episode 3 Sneak Peek #25](#)

[Dec 15, 2022](#)

This is from some of the most recent drafts of Episode 3 (and is therefore really, really not edited). There are many, many different variables threaded throughout that I had to remove for ease of reading, but the most important ones for this are:

- This is from the Veyer branch
- MC has high approval and high romance with Aeran, but no confession
- MC went to the gala in a serithan/abberan (\$garb variable)
- MC selected not to feel guilty about the events of the previous night



"Fuck," you curse, releasing your scabbard's straps. Balancing carefully, you slip the embroidered slipper off your foot and shake it vigorously until the offending pebble falls out. Damn shoes weren't made for this. You should have gone back to your apartment. If Malsara had just given you time...

You can feel Aeran watching you.

"What?" you say, shoving the shoe back on your foot.

He exhales a long breath and removes his bow, Taraniel, from his back. "Do you think I'm an idiot, \$nickname?" he says coldly, meeting your eyes.

[CHOICE] 1. "No."

2. "Yes, actually. You've been an idiot this whole time."

3. You know this is about Veyer. He was going to figure it out eventually. Might as well admit to it now.

Aeran's mouth tightens. "You think I wouldn't notice? You're not exactly doing your best to hide it—"

Cold laughter bubbles across your lips. "You don't know what the hell happened last night*, you weren't there,"* you snarl, stalking towards him. "Don't assume you know where I was or what I was doing."

He pauses, his teeth scraping his lower lip as he considers his next words. For a moment you wonder whether your words have caused him to second guess himself. "Then where were you?" he asks bluntly.

So much for that.

"You never went back to the apartment, I know that much—or did you decide to wear a \$garb today for fun?"

You hold his gaze, voices echoing in the distance. Veyer and the others are rapidly approaching.

[CHOICE] 1. [PERSUASION] "Is there something wrong with the way I'm dressed? Maybe I find the fucking thing comfortable."

2. [PERSUASION] [LIE] "I didn't fuck Veyer Krellion, if that's what you're implying."

3. [PERSUASION] "Stop it. We're not talking about this now."

4. "Why don't you come out and say it? Let's not dance around the subject."

5. "Fine. I fucked Veyer Krellion last night. Happy now?"

[PERSUASION PASSED]

Aeran's eyes widen and takes a step back, hands held stiffly at his sides. You stare at him for a long moment, observing him closely, uncertain where this is leading. Though a part of is exhilarated that you've successfully shoved the topic of Veyer far away, you know he knows. There's no way in hell it doesn't. There were plenty of witnesses last night before you and Veyer disappeared for more privacy. If your \$garb doesn't give you away, then the gossip certainly has.

So, why is he giving up this easily?

“I don’t want to fight with you, \$nickname,” he says, his voice hollow. “What you do on your own time is none of my business.”

Something twists deep in your gut. “Is that supposed to be an apology?” you hiss. “This is about more than trust, Aeran. This is about you and your stupid insistence on keeping secrets—”

“Because we’re friends?” he interrupts, meeting your eyes. “Or because it’s *you*?”

You pause, the rush of words evaporating in an instance. You know all too well what he means—and he’s left you nowhere to hide. “No,” you breathe. “Don’t you dare. Don’t you dare—”

“I waited for you, \$nickname,” he says. “I know I fucked up and I am sorry—I truly am. But I honestly don’t know if I can bring myself back to that place. Not even for you.”

The raw anguish from last night returns. Your chest tightens, your heart beating stuttering rapidly within. You can’t bring yourself to look at him. “Liar,” you manage, your mouth twisting unpleasantly as you force the words past your lips. “You were never going to tell me about the Spire, were you?”

Aeran freezes, the colour draining from his face. He stares dully at the ground, unable to bring himself to look you in the eye. But regardless of how hurt he is, you do not see an ounce of regret on his face.

“Think what you want,” he says, turning his back on you. “It makes no difference to me.”

He stalks to the perimeter, leaving you in the centre of the grove. Movement rustles behind you and, a moment later, Veyer appears at your side. They draw to a halt, their lips pressed together tightly as Malsara, Nova, and Zenaida walk by, their shadows flittering in your peripheral vision. For once, their dark eyes hold no amusement, no cheeky delight.

“Dare I ask?” they say.

You chuckle hollowly. “No.”

Veyer sighs and adjust their coat by the lapels, casting an eye across the grove. They linger on Zenaida and the Markal twins as they gather under a large tree, conversing urgently. “It seems we have a moment to spare. Would you walk with me?”

1. Accept. Judging from their tone, this must be important.

2. Decline. You’re not in the mood for talking.

[Episode 3 Sneak Peek #26](#)

[Dec 21, 2022](#)

Since I'm on a break right now, last week's sneak peek brought us up to the end of the newest content I was working on. So, for this, I am going way back to stuff from June/May. A different branch of this scene was previewed before ([in June](#) 😊). This is from Aeran's romance reconciliation branch.

- MC was trained by Varyn
- MC took her surname



You squeeze his hand, a silent confirmation that you're listening.

He exhales a grateful breath. "Have you ever thought what you would do if you weren't a Wayfarer?"

You pause, his words heavy on your mind. Of course you've imagined what your life would be if you weren't a Wayfarer—every member of the order, from apprentice to grand master, has at one time or another.

1. It's a comforting fantasy, one you would pursue if you could. You'd gladly give up \$blade to know another life.

2. The fantasy is far from the reality you face every day. Ever since your inauguration, the journey and the fight is all you know. It's naïve to think you'll be free from it completely.

[CHOICE] 3. A Wayfarer is what you are. Ever since Cenric took you from [country of origin], you have wanted nothing else.

Aeran falls silent, waiting for your response. You can feel his anxiety rising; the longer it takes you to speak, the longer he has to imagine your answer. But you can't bring yourself to soften the blow. This is your life, not his.

"I don't," you say finally. "Not in a way that matters. This is what I am. There aren't many options for magiani in Rhesainia. If it's a choice between being ostracized as a magianis or being a Wayfarer, I choose the latter."

His arms go stiff. "And I can't. I though I suppose it doesn't matter, in the end. Someone will always find a reason to use people like us, to one end or another. Lethalis and the Astrial, the Count and the chalice... They're all the same. Varyn and the others weren't innocent of it either."

You push yourself up, twisting your body around to look at him. The bitterness in his words is tangible. "What do you mean?"

He meets your eyes. “The Order used us, just like everyone else. Haven’t you ever wondered whether it was right for them to take us away? We were kids, \$firstname. We were kids and they brought us into this.”

A uncomfortable knot twists in your gut. “I chose this, Aeran,” you say. “It doesn’t matter how I came to the Order, I know I would have found my way there regardless.”

“And I didn’t. Did you know there was an agreement with my foster father?”

You blink. “What?”

He pauses and rubs the back of his neck, struggling to find the words. “Tyridia was accustomed to visits from the Order,” he says finally. “I saw plenty of Wayfarers on the streets, but it wasn’t until after he took me in that they paid attention to me. I think it was Avennor who approached him first, but... Varyn was the one who convinced him to hand me over.”

“Varyn?” you reply, surprised. This is the first you’ve heard of it, but then again Varyn was always focused on the present and cared little for reflecting on the past.

Two decades may have passed, but you remember the day you joined the Wayfarer Order like it was yesterday. While your tutelage could have been claimed by any of the three Wayfarer masters, Aeran was always going to be Varyn’s apprentice. There were times during your training when that knowledge drove a wedge between you. Though Varyn did not show preferential treatment, it was difficult to stave off jealousy when Aeran was always seen as her apprentice, despite refusing to take after her at all.

“To be honest, I don’t remember much. She assumed I knew and didn’t tell me until years later.”

You fold your hands quietly in your lap, uncertain what to say. He so rarely speaks of his childhood. Considering your own complex feelings on your past, you can’t blame him. In a way, for both of you, life began in that cart on the snowy road from Trost.

He catches your eye, then quickly averts his gaze. Discomforted with the direction your conversation has taken, he disentangles him from the sheets and rises from the bed. You fold your knees into your chest and drape your arms around them, watching from a distance as he pads across the room to the open windows. He slept without a shirt and the sun now warms his skin, making the difference between his pale back and tanned arms all the more stark. The web of old scars laced across his back stand out, some red and lurid, some silver and silent. Others still resemble brands or burns, like the curious mark his lower back—three deep, angular lines etched onto the curve of his spine, faded and stretched with time.

On anyone else this would be the mark of a veteran Wayfarer, not one barely a decade into their career. He’s bruised and battered in a way you never were, battle-hardened not only by the events of the Spire, but everything that came before it. He flinched the first time you touched those scars, as if your caress had uncovered some deep memory he wished to forget. It must be a sign of how much he trusts you—how much he loves you—that he did not shy away later.

Nor does he now.

You pause, uncertain what to do—or how to feel—about this information. “Varyn all but raised us. She taught us everything we know. I can’t say whether it was right or wrong, but she did everything in her power to keep us safe and prepare us for who we are now—”

“I know she’s like a mother to you, \$firstname, but she wasn’t to me. She was my teacher, my colleague... and my superior. Just because she trained us does not make her infallible.”

You fall silent. The bed creaks beneath you as you shift your weight, torn between staying where you are and going to him.

He rests a hand against the wall and stares out at the palace grounds below. “Don’t get me wrong, I am grateful for everything she did.”

“Aeran...”

“But I don’t know if it was right.”

You grip the sheets, twisting the soft silk between your fingers until it becomes a hard knot. When you imagine what your life could be if you were no longer a Wayfarer, you always accept your past before hanging up your sword for good. Aeran, on the other hand, has a different perspective entirely.

The bitterness of his words ring sharply in your ears, far too reminiscent of your fight the night before. He told you that the order was dead, that you needed to let it go. Before, those words had left you confused and hurt... But now, you can’t help but wonder how long he’s wanted to push this part of his identity away.

How long has he resented this life he was forced into without his consent? How much does he hate his own abilities, honed through years of training and practice? And in this past month alone, how much does he hate himself every time Zenaida addresses him as “Wayfarer Kellis”?

It’s not the same for you. You are a Wayfarer. Abandoning your line of work is tantamount to stripping yourself of your identity and abandoning the order for good.

You and Aeran are among the last of your kind. Sirin may very well still be active, but you don’t know what plot she’s embroiled herself in. You may very well be the last true Wayfarer left. Some may call you a glorified mercenary, but there’s more to your work than that. If you give it up now, there will be no one to pass on all the skills, all the knowledge, all the history you know. There will always be magiani, but with no one to train them, the Wayfarers will be gone.

It’s a heavy burden, one you never expected to bear.

1. **“We could rebuild it, you know. Together. Make it better than it was.”**
2. **“You were right. Maybe it is time to let go.”**

[End of the Year](#)

[Dec 31, 2022](#)

Hi friends,

I was hoping to do a little end-of-the-year wrap up, but I caught a cold and don't quite have the energy for anything too complicated. Wayfarer's development has had some very high highs (Episode 2's launch!) and very low lows (Covid and burn out 😊), but it has been a good year. While I didn't hit everything on my 2022 roadmap (far from it—accurate estimations of how long development cycles take is still very difficult), the game has grown a lot and I have learned a lot of things over the course of the year.

Some highlights/things I am proud of:

- Wrote 540,009 words of Wayfarer and Wayfarer-adjacent content
- Completed and launched Episode 2
- Published two Wayfarer [short stories](#) (with more planned for next year!)
- Published two Twine guides, [one for character creators](#) and [a primer for SugarCube basics](#)
- Wrote [two articles](#) on romance as a mechanic and a structure in gaming/interactive fiction

I've taken a couple of weeks off and I'm starting to feel a little bit better about Episode 3's progress. While I did poke at it earlier this week and wrote about 3000 words of a dialogue branch, I decided not to continue forcing the Veyer branch since the tail end has become a little more complex than anticipated. I may need to strip some of the work I've already done and reconfigure the dialogue branches, otherwise they may keep me stuck in a rut.

I am looking forward to getting back to normal next week. I am considering dropping work on the Veyer branch and starting the Melchior/misc branches instead to give the former material some time to rest and go on the back burner while I decide what I can cut and what I can reshape. I'm hoping that if I fill in some of the gaps for the other routes, Part 1 is going to feel like it's closer to completion rather than a giant mountain I'm only halfway up.

Thank you so much for all your support this year. I wouldn't be able to do this without you. I hope everyone has a wonderful New Year, and I'll see you in 2023! 💕

[Wayfarer Pin-Up Calendar 2023](#)

[Jan 2, 2023](#)



Hi friends & Happy New Year!

The Wayfarer 2023 Pin-Up Calendar is now available. This is a community project celebrating the game, its characters, and the game's wonderful community. It has been in the works since September and has finally come to fruition.

Including 18 gorgeous, full-colour pieces, the calendar features Wayfarer characters from current and future episodes, including companions, fan favourites, hot villains, and canonical pairings.

[→ Get it here!](#)

The Details

- 16 month calendar, running from January 2023 to April 2024
- Unique cover page and end page
- Each piece is a full-sized 3500px x 2500px
- Choose the northern hemisphere layout, the southern hemisphere layout, or the bonus Rhesainian layout using the in-universe calendar
- The northern and southern hemisphere layouts come with a character guide PDF
- The Rhesainian layout comes with an accompanying lore pamphlet with new details not yet revealed in-game

- Artwork ranges from wholesome and romantic to sensual nudity. Some pieces may not be appropriate for public spaces, such as the workplace. **Please view with discretion.**

The calendar is digital only. Due to limitations, there will not be a printed version.

Availability

- **Dates:** Exclusively available from January 2, 2023 to March 2, 2023.
- **Price:** Pay-what-you-want

All proceeds will be donated to the Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice.

Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice

Astraea is a public foundation supporting LGBTQI communities and movements worldwide. By working in strategic partnership with foundations, individuals, and governments, they ensure that their resources reach the activists who need them the most and who are best positioned to make transformational impact over time. They support programs and initiatives led by and for diverse constituencies, prioritizing groups led by lesbians and queer women, trans and gender non-conforming people, intersex people, and people of colour.

You can learn more about Astraea and the important work they do at astraeafoundation.org.

Artists & Organizers

Artists:

- Vampiresi | @vampiresi
- Moltentarts | @moltentarts
- Flowerofthewave | @flowerofthewave
- Hannah | @harumeau
- Kaw | @quietsphere
- Ren | @rickety-goose
- Meg | @lilas
- Triflingshadows | @triflingshadows
- Phantasmagoriatime | @phantasmagoriatime
- Fleshacker | @fleshacker
- Rory Yaya | @sunshinemage
- Chloel | @bifurious-rex
- Ash | @unclegoths
- Saph | @srslyarts
- Fey | @exotic-inquiry
- Hampsdesu | @hampsdesu

Logos:

- Clobberinthyme | @clobberinthyme [calendar logo]
- Jessica Roy [Wayfarer sigil logo]

Organizers:

- Meg | @lilas
- Azia | @coldshrugs
- Hannah | @harumeau
- Anna | @idrellegames