

Narova and the Necromancers

The Narova Stories: Book V



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A Werewolf and a Bosmer Walk into an Apothecary

The black-haired Bosmer returned. Bursting through the front door of my apothecary like she owned the place.

She still had those dark, bottomless eyes—like twin wells on a moonless night—but the rest of her face had changed rather dramatically since I saw her last. No longer an immaculate example of elven beauty. Her nose and face had been mashed to pulp and then repaired by someone with an extremely crude grasp of Restoration magic. A snaking scar ran from the bridge of her nose down beside her mouth, and then twisted its way along her left cheek.

The other side of her face still held the remnants of fresher wounds. A few yellowing bruises. Scrapes and cuts scattered around like mud crabs in a pond.

Life goes hard on an assassin, I suppose.

And she brought a massive Nord with her. Silver-haired and massive. His animal stench filled my shop and betrayed his true nature.

I never cared much for werewolves. They're undoubtedly powerful creatures, but I always feel like they're just a hair's breadth away from pissing on the floor. Too much beast, not enough...culture.

But the Bosmer's new weapon was the most interesting thing about her return. Instead of a rusted dagger at her hip, she had somehow acquired an Akaviri katana. Generally, to come by a weapon like that, you have to kill a member of the Blades.

And there are precious few of them left to murder. I should know, I killed a rather significant number of them in my youth.

What can I say? The Thalmor are insufferable but they pay extremely well.

"Morlanus," she said by way of greeting. "Have you learned my name yet?"

I smiled. "As promised, word of Narova Black Hair's dark deeds arrived on my doorstep some time ago. Sujava's...transformation is the talk of Skyrim. It is an honor to have such a creative killer in my presence. I must say, however, I expected you back much sooner."

She shrugged. "Sithis is unpredictable."

When she didn't elaborate, I turned to her companion. "And you must be Arnbjorn, unless there is another lupine member of the Dark Brotherhood I am unaware of?"

Arnbjorn narrowed his eyes—looking at me like I was some kind of snack.

“That’s right, hamshank. I’m the werewolf. And you’re the poison maker.”

“Guilty,” I said, reaching below the counter and pulling the stopper from a Poison of Mass Incineration. Can never be too careful.

“No need for that,” Narova said casually. “We’ve come for your help. Not your life.”

“What a fantastic relief,” I said, leaving the stopper off but setting the bottle down on a shelf behind the counter. It was clear Narova Black Hair was no longer the single-minded seductress I had met before. “Tell me, what do you need?”

She pushed out a breath and placed both hands flat on the counter. “I need to put a Necromancer in the ground.”

I nodded at her sword. “That blade won’t do it?”

“Let’s just say I’m erring on the side of caution for this one.”

“After living your life so fearlessly thus far? What’s changed?”

“This corpse-fucker killed Festus Krex,” she said.

I never liked that wrinkly wizard, but his propensity for murder was undeniable.

“I see.”

As a rule, Necromancers are difficult to kill. People who can raise corpses generally don’t become them without a fight, but everyone with great strength also has a weakness. Necromancers draw their power from the netherworld, so it was just a matter of denying them access.

I started thinking about the ingredients I’d need to put something together—with the proper elements I could create a blockade on the underworld. But I became distracted by the werewolf.

The feral bastard wouldn’t stop sniffing.

“Excuse me,” I said, “but it’s difficult for me to think with you making all of that…noise.”

He literally growled at me, and then took one final, extremely loud whiff of the air.

“You’re not a human,” he said.

That surprised me. Perhaps he wasn’t just a dumb brute after all. It had been a long time since someone had been able to see through my potion of racial malleability.

“Neither are you. What of it?” I asked, although I decided not to wait for an answer. “I can help you with your Necromancer, but it will take some time.”

“How much time?” Narova asked.

“Two, three months. There are some ingredients I need coming in from Hammerfell that won’t arrive until the passes open up again in Dragontail Mountains.”

“No,” she said.

Even for a master alchemist such as myself, four narrowed eyes of Dark Brotherhood assassins is an unsettling sight.

“If you don’t want to wait for the ingredients to arrive from the caravan,” I said carefully, “Savos Aren probably has them as well. Although he is not known for being generous with his personal collection.”

“Savos, the Archmage of the College of Winterhold?” Arnbjorn asked.

“The very same.”

“Not a good idea,” Arnbjorn said, turning to Narova.

She just scowled.

“If we ride hard, we can reach Winterhold in two days,” she said. “What ingredients do you need?”

“Five ounces of Deathgrass, and at least seven strands of Dremora hair. Ten would be better.”

“How will I know it?”

I turned to my bookshelves, grabbed my copy of Flora and Fauna of the Underworlds, and rifled through the pages. It didn’t take long to find the proper entries. Narova didn’t strike me as someone with the patience to wait around while I copied the descriptions, so I cringed and tore the Deathgrass and Dremora hair pages from their home, and handed them to the assassin.

She looked each one over, then folded them neatly and pressed them down the front of her shirt.

“I’ll be back in four days. You best be ready when I return.”

“I always am,” I replied. She nodded once and then turned for the door.

“It will be quite expensive. Don’t you want to discuss the price first?”

“No.”

She let the door slam on her way out.

A Robbery at the College of Winterhold

“I just want to say that this is a bad idea,” Arnbjorn said.

It was midnight in Winterhold—the winds gusted off the water and filled the air with flakes of ice. The Nord’s silver beard was crusted with frozen bits of snow, but he didn’t seem the least bit cold. He never did.

“So you’ve told me,” Narova said. She checked the rope knots on her climbing spikes again, then packed them into a leather satchel on her hip. “Five times already, by my count.”

Above, the great towers and spires of the College of Winterhold rose up until being swallowed by the gray-white storm. More than a few windows still had candles burning, which Narova didn’t like.

Fucking mages. Up all night practicing spells and reading their tomes—makes them hard to rob.

“It shouldn’t take me more than an hour to get in and out,” she said, squinting up at the Arch Mage’s tower. “If I’m not back by dawn...” she trailed off and shrugged. “Come in and save me, I guess.”

Arnbjorn frowned. Took the reins of her white horse. “Don’t make me come in there after you. Mages aren’t good for my digestion.”

Narova glanced at him, saw that he wasn’t joking, and nodded. Then she cast a spell of water walking and jogged out across the cold sea. It was two hundred yards to the base of the tower. The wind stung her face and ears as she ran, like the barbs of some slaver’s whip. It had been a while since she’d scaled a set of walls like this—not since she’d decapitated that Shatter-Shield bitch in Windhelm.

Narova was glad to get the practice. Infiltrating fortified cities wasn’t a skill you let go to shit. Not in her line of work.

She reached the base of the tower, which was cut from jagged slabs of frozen rock that turned into mortar and stone a hundred feet above or so. The entire thing must have been five or six hundred feet tall, all told.

Child’s play. Narova could still remember the trees of Valenwood—a thousand years old and a thousand feet high. A primeval forest where you could travel for weeks and months without ever needing to put your feet on the ground.

Never wanting to, either.

Narova dug her first spike into a seam of the rock, pounded on it twice with her hammer—which she'd wrapped in linen to muffle the noise—and then began to climb.

It was rough going on the slab—frozen and sheer as it was—but once she got to the mortar it was simple. She soon abandoned the spikes and scaled the rest of the tower with nothing but the tips of her fingers for support. The cold wind continued to rip at her skin and howl inside of her elf ears, but she didn't mind so much.

The pain kept her focused. Reminded her she was still alive.

The window to the Arch Mage's quarters was made of colored glass. Blue and caked with frost. There was a time when Narova would have had no option but to shatter the thing and crawl through, hoping nobody was roused by the noise.

Times had changed.

Narova focused her mind and whispered an incantation. The glass rippled and then pulled apart, as if it had some secret mouth that only needed a bit of coaxing to open. Narova slipped through and then ceased the Alteration spell, letting the window close behind her.

Only a few flakes of snow betrayed her entry.

The chamber took up the entire floor of the round tower. Books and shelves of alchemy ingredients lined the walls, and a vast garden grew in the center—bathed in pale blue light from the windows.

The room seemed empty, but Narova cast invisibility to be on the safe side, and then crept over to the indoor garden. She picked through the plants. Lots of mushrooms, some Canis Root, and way in the back growing between two stones was a crop of Deathgrass.

Narova moved quickly, careful not to disturb the other plants, and snatched up the grass. She carefully put it in an apothecary satchel, and then moved on to the shelf of ingredients. There were dozens, even hundreds of glass bottles, all of them labeled in a neat script. Narova flicked her eyes across Frost Salts, Vampire Dust, Void Salts and countless other expensive reagents before finding the Dremora hair on a middle shelf.

There were at least ten strands in the bottle—pale silver and floating in some clear liquid.

Narova reach out her hand, and was halfway to the bottle when she stopped. Sniffed the air. Something wasn't right...there was a trace of sulfur on the air. And brimstone.

Someone else was in the room, also under the cloak of invisibility.

Narova pulled the small ebony dagger from the leather scabbard at the small of her back. She was halfway through a spell for Detect Life when she felt two ethereal chains clamp down on her wrists and ankles.

Then she was thrown into the wall.

She crashed into the stone with a thud, cursing from the pain. She felt the invisibility melt away and howled as her limbs were stretched out even further. Her joints strained to keep her arms and legs attached to her body.

Savos Aren materialized in the middle of the room. A Dunmer in a strange looking cloak. Red eyes burning beneath the shadow of his hood.

"I was rather impressed by the Alteration spell you cast on my window," he said lightly. "But your effort at invisibility is crude at best."

Narova gnashed her teeth together and burned the magic chains away with her mind. She dropped to the floor—landing on the balls of her feet—and then rushed forward, dagger pulled back and ready for murder.

She took three swipes at Savos, all of them killing stokes, but came up empty each time. He didn't dodge her attacks. In fact he barely moved at all except for a thin smile spreading across his ash-colored lips.

But her blade passed through him each time as if the mage was nothing more than a clump of mist sculpted into the shape of a person through some strange form of magic.

When Narova came around for a fourth try, the Dunmer's arm shot out impossibly fast, clamped on to her wrist, and squeezed down so hard that she dropped her dagger on reflex. Savos hopped back a step and then cast a purple, translucent shell around Narova.

"That was even more impressive than the window spell," Savos said happily. "No one has broken my Bound Chain in fifty years. Try to break out of this one as well."

Savos looked on eagerly as Narova frowned, then steadied her mind and tried to crack open the shell. It didn't work, the thing just vibrated a little.

"Pity," Savos said, shrugging. "Seeing you break through that shell would have truly made my day."

Then, he seemed to entirely lose focus for a moment, and drift away into his own private thoughts.

Narova stabbed at the shell once, twice. On the third stroke her blade shattered. Savos looked over at the noise, eyeing Narova as if she was an irritating pet.

"You were robbing me. Why?"

Narova didn't see much point in lying.

"I need the ingredients for a potion. Heard you don't like to share."

“You heard correctly. Deathgrass and Dremora hair...are you trying to suppress a gateway to the Netherworld or something?”

“I’m trying to kill a necromancer.”

Savos narrowed his red eyes at her. “Interesting. He must be powerful, to warrant such a...costly form of preparation. I was under the impression that the servants of Sithis had more or less abandoned the elegant assassinations of their forefathers.”

“Powerful enough to kill Festus Krex,” Narova said, taking a risk. She knew Festus used to be a student at the college.

“Festus...” Savos said to himself, searching his memory. “A cunning wizard, as I recall. Never could get a firm handle on Restoration magic, though. Always leaving behind scars...”

The Arch Mage seemed to wander off into his own thoughts again. Narova was starting to get pissed off.

“Are you going to finish me off, or am I going to be stuck here all night while you daydream?” she asked.

“Your impertinence is...rather insipid, I think. By far the least interesting part about your burglarization of my quarters. What is your name, Bosmer?” Savos asked.

“Narova Black Hair.”

“Of Valenwood?”

“Of nowhere in particular.”

Savos nodded.

“So many lost souls wandering this frozen tundra. It’s sad, really.” He looked at her hard—his red eyes searching for something inside of her own. “I’m going to let you have those ingredients, I’ve decided.”

The purple shell faded away to nothing.

“I remember Festus Krex well,” Savos continued. “He was a prickly one, but I found him to be most interesting. Even if he was rather evil down there in his bones and soul and everything.”

Narova didn’t move. Wasn’t sure if it was some kind of trick.

“Go, Narova Black Hair,” Savos said. “Avenge old Festus for us both, eh?”

She nodded and walked over to the shelf, keeping her eyes fixed on Savos. But he didn’t move. Narova picked up the bottle of Demora hair, then she glanced towards the stairwell.

“I think not,” Savos said, seeming to read her mind. “You shall leave the same way you came in. I should like to see your Alteration at work one last time. It was truly...beautiful.”

Shaking her head, Narova walked towards the far window and began casting her spell.

Fucking mages, she thought.

It's Already Here

"This is it?" Narova asked me.

"What did you expect, bubbles and mist?" I responded. I am all-too familiar with the disappointment people sometimes experience when they see what I have produced for them. The power of my concoctions does not align with their appearance.

It is a difficulty all master alchemists must face.

Narova picked up the small glass bottle. Eyed the light-blue liquid warily.

"It looks like a watered-down magicka potion," she muttered. "Like somebody pissed in it, or something."

"I assure you, nobody has 'pissed' in that bottle."

The werewolf laughed at that, a guttural scoff. He stood by the door this time. I am still unsure what he found amusing about my comment. He continued to eye me suspiciously, even as he mocked me.

Still wondering what I really am, eh wolf? I thought. *Look all you want. Sniff all you want. It will take much more than a beast's instinct to solve the mystery of Morlanus.*

"How does it work?" Narova asked.

"I told you when you brought the ingredients," I said, impatient. "No necromancer will be able to reach into the Netherworld while this poison fills its bloodstream."

"That's what it does. I want to know how it works."

I rolled my eyes. "Shall I explain to you the nuances of Nirn's rotation around the sun as well? Or perhaps you'd like to know the complete history of Dwemer civilization—from the first wriggling dwarf to the great disappearance?"

"Now, there I was thinking you didn't have a sense of humor," Narova said.

It was strange, I'd have thought that would provoke her to violence—at least get her hand moving toward the dagger on her hip a bit. But she just smiled at me, not moving.

The angry wood elf appeared to have tempered her rage. That made her far more dangerous than she used to be. For the first time since I found out who she intended to kill with the poison, I thought she might actually be able to pull it off.

"I need to know how it works, so that I don't use it improperly and get myself killed."

"A fair point," I allowed. "A necromancer uses the potency of his own soul to reach into the Netherworld and draw power. They are like infants sucking at their mother's tits, drawing darkness into their bodies. This poison will...fill their mouths' with wax, or so to speak. They'll suck and they'll suck, but no milk will come out."

"You can do something like that? Without magic?" Narova asked.

"You wizards and nightblades are all the same," I said with a sigh. "Always reaching into the other worlds for strength—bartering with the Gods for your power. It isn't necessary. Everything we need grows in this world—in the shadowy moss between two stones, the tiny ribs beneath a mushroom cap. It's already here. You just have to know where to look."

She considered me with those dark, endless eyes.

"How much?" she asked softly.

"Twenty-thousand Septims," I said. "And that's with the discount I gave since you gathered some of the ingredients yourself," I added quickly.

Without hesitating, she reached up to her neck and pulled an amulet violently from around her throat. Threw it on the desk.

"Do you know what that is?" she asked.

"Sujava's Seal. I might have known you'd use one of his treasures to pay."

"Do we have a deal?"

I nodded.

She scooped up the vial of poison—packed it safely into an alchemist's satchel she kept on her hip. Then she turned to leave. The werewolf was already opening the door for her.

"There's something else," I said. She turned back around. "That amulet is worth forty, maybe even fifty thousand Septims."

I reached underneath my counter, opened an ebony lockbox, and retrieved its contents—a small vial filled with black liquid—and placed it in front of her.

"Your change, if you want it," I said.

She picked it up. Scrutinized it with her elven eyes. "What is it?"

"There is nobody else in the world who can brew this potion."

"Good for you," she said. "What is this?"

“It’s a potion of racial malleability. My specialty. This one will instigate a temporary metamorphoses into a most twisted and depraved race. One that has been enslaved and downtrodden for millennia.”

Narova stared at me, waiting for a real answer.

“It will turn you into a Falmer,” I said. “For about six days.”

“And why, dear Morlanus, would I want to turn into a Falmer for the better part of a week?” she asked.

I leaned forward, pushing myself close to the beautiful creature of death’s face, and spoke softly. “I know who you are hunting, Narova Black Hair. You must travel to a place of darkness to find him. The most extensive pit in all of Skyrim. Maybe all of Tamriel.”

I paused. Searched her face for some sign of hesitation or fear. Didn’t find any.

“When you are alone, and out of options. When there is nothing left beside you except blackness; perhaps the skin of the Falmer—these creatures of the deep—will save you.”

She frowned, considered the vial. “You sure it’s not just poison?”

I smiled. “Farewell, Narova. I very much hope to see you again.”

And it was true. It really was.

Mzinchaleft

Narova slid forward on her belly—inching along the snowy cliff like a black snake. A storm had passed through hard the night before and covered the world in a two-foot blanket of white powder.

Narova was glad for it, even though it made scouting the entrance a pain in the ass. The weather covered her approach.

Arnbjorn was back a ways, getting their gear together. They had slaughtered one of the horses and dried out as much of the meat as they could. The other, they let go.

Lucky and free.

Other than the meat, Arnbjorn had filled a pack with a few horns of mead, seven rolls of bark-tree bandages, two pieces of flint, and two quivers of extra arrows. There was no telling how long they'd be underground, but it was still best to pack light when you were bringing death along with you.

Narova kept Morlanus' two potions, Garland the Green's sword, and all six of her extra daggers strapped to her body. Everything within arm's reach.

The entrance to the Dwarven ruin looked clear. Narova sniffed and picked up the rusty scent of dried blood on the air. Probably from the bandits who were squatting in this place before the necromancers arrived. The blood was at least three weeks old, though.

There was nobody on the surface, and nobody within three or four hundred feet of the door. Not as far as she could tell, anyway.

This ruin was the last known location of Mordred the Puppetmaster—an elusive and dangerous member of the Morathi Covenant.

A real peach, that one. Arnbjorn had given Narova a full report on their ride out to Mzinchaleft.

Mordred had a death-sentence in all nine Holds of Skyrim. Necromancy and mayhem were the general charges, but some of the reports on him were filled with more disturbing details: Children turned in zombies and then forced to murder their parents. A general in the Imperial Legion who lost control of his left arm and tore his own heart out—all the while shouting "Morathi, Morathi, Morathi!" In Riften, he was wanted for casting a spell on a cousin of Maven Blackbriar that drove him so crazy he popped both of his eyes out and tried to sell them to the Thieves Guild for a pair of boots.

Most recently, he had had destroyed the entire town of Tel Mithryn. Left nothing but a small colony of burning corpses.

Festus Krex had tracked him here from Solstheim and then sent a letter back to the Sanctuary before entering Mzinchaleft after him—letting the Dark Brotherhood know where Mordred was in case he should fail.

It had arrived only one day before the assassin's reanimated corpse returned as well. Whatever other darkness was brewing beneath this ground, it was a mystery to Narova. Garland the Green had told her that Mordred's death hadn't been ordered by the relatives of the Tel Mithryn massacre, but the people behind all of this were still a mystery.

But the truth was, Narova didn't really care who wanted Mordred dead, or why. She just wanted revenge for her friend.

Narova scanned the entrance one more time, and then stood up. She turned around and saw that Arnbjorn was done with the pack—he was sitting against a rock, waiting. His great warhammer leaning against one shoulder.

Narova waved him up. He snatched up the pack and hammer. Climbed the cliff with a quick, feral grace.

"Empty?" he asked when he got to the top.

Narova nodded. "Nothing much inside the entrance, either."

Arnbjorn sniffed as well—his sense of smell was far keener than Narova's, along with the rest of his senses.

"Yeah," was all he said. "So what's the plan?"

"I doubt this Mordred will have stayed close to the surface. Why pick a ruin as vast as Mzinchaleft if he didn't want to dig in?"

"Makes sense."

"So we'll just head in. Probably won't be anything besides dead bandits and a few Falmer for a day or two. When we find him, I'll poison an arrow while you go *wulf* and distract him. Once the poison's in, we'll finish him together." She looked up at Arnbjorn. "Then you can eat the bastard's heart."

He was frowning and looking around the scattered towers.

"What?" Narova asked. "You have a better idea?"

"No," he said. Distracted. "It's a good plan, nice and simple. But something's...wrong with this place. Very wrong."

"Dwemer ruins aren't exactly known for their hospitality."

“The smell. The smell is all wrong. It’s...” he sniffed again, “oily and metallic. Not natural.”

Narova took a deep breath. Tried to pick it up. Maybe there was something funny in the air, she couldn’t be sure, though. Mostly she just smelled snow and ice and dead bandits.

“Does it change our options?” she asked.

“No,” he said after a while. “We go.”

Arnbjorn picked up the pack and headed for the entrance to Mzinchaleft.

Narova may have been right about the necromancer being deep below the surface, but she was wrong about the Falmer. Within an hour they started running into the vicious, twisted creatures of the deep. They filled the dark hallways and crumbling keeps. Waiting, watching, guarding.

At the start, Narova killed them all.

She kept her cloak of invisibility up and snuck up behind each one—drew her blade across their throat and clamped her fist down over their mouths while they choked and gurgled on their own rotten blood. For a while, Narova was able to kill them cleanly and keep them moving at a good pace. But it didn’t last.

When it was evening—or what felt like evening beneath the ground—one of the slimy bastards finally managed to twist away from her. The thing died, but his body landed on an old Dwarven pressure plate and set off a trap further down the hallway they’d been moving through. Small poisoned arrows ricocheted off the walls—sending a metallic, twangy echo shuddering through the darkness.

Then there was no hiding.

They seemed to come from everywhere—out of each room and hall and crack in the ground. They even poured out of strange tunnels that were clearly built for Dwarven creations. Twenty, thirty of them at least. Their low snarls sounded like a deranged prayer to some insane God.

Arnbjorn sighed and pulled his warhammer from his shoulder. And they went to work.

It was only the second time Narova had used the Akaviri katana in combat. It was a strange weapon—light and thin, yet perfectly balanced for death. She sprang from one creature to the next—paralyzing as many as she could and cutting limbs from the rest. Stabbing into their hearts and lung and livers.

They were fierce, strong fighters. Without Arnbjorn, Narova probably would have been overwhelmed by their numbers eventually. But the Nord was implacable. He cast his warhammer in wide, cruel arcs of death. Crumpling bodies and smashing skulls. None of them could get close to him, but none could escape, either.

At the end, Arnbjorn pinned a dozen final survivors in a corner and mashed them into a gruesome pile of flesh and bone and meat.

He didn't yell as he slaughtered them, like he had in Broken Oar Grotto. He was too smart for that—didn't want to alert the creatures deeper in the ruin. No, this was quiet, dark work.

As clean as a massacre can get.

When it was over, Arnbjorn was covered in sweat and panting like the wild creature inside of him.

"I think we're safe for now," Narova said, sheathing her sword and double checking the potions to make sure they hadn't been damaged.

Arnbjorn just nodded and sat down in a corner. Pulled a bottle of mead from the pack and drank half of it in four massive gulps.

"You hurt?" he asked her.

She shook her head. "I let the bastard fall on a pressure plate. Sloppy."

"Inevitable. All these fucking Falmer. I've never seen this many in a ruin." He looked around a little.

"Hell, I didn't even think this many still existed. And I *know* you can smell them now."

She could. After a slaughter like that the air should have been filled with the smell of blood and gore. The stink of the dead. But it wasn't there. The entire room was filled with that oily, unnatural smell.

"Astrid always said I was no good at this sort of job," Arnbjorn continued. "Too much of the Companions still in me, I guess. Never could stay in the shadows long."

He fixed his blue eyes on her and smiled sadly.

"We'll rest here for a while," she said, sitting down next to him. "Figure out what's next in the morning."

Arnbjorn didn't say anything, just pulled her close. They couldn't risk a fire, so they stayed pressed against each other—sharing the warmth of their bodies. After a while Arnbjorn slept.

Narova stayed awake, rubbing the top of Morlanus' potion with her thumb. Trying to think through their options and coming to the same conclusion every time:

She was going to have to kill Mordred by herself.

Three days in the bowels of Mzincalef. Pretty sure I'm going to die down here.

The hallways and chambers built by the dwarves go on for miles—thousands of stones and columns that just barely hold this underground city together. But the tunnels dug out by the Falmer, I think those go on forever. I can see the scratch marks where they dug them out with sharpened claws—countless pathways branching off and intersecting again, cutting a maze into the meat of earth.

I've kept my invisibility up the entire time. Festus warned me not to do it—said the fibers of my soul would start to burn like a piece of cloth held over a flame—but what choice do I have? The Falmer are everywhere.

And I never cared much for my soul. Let it burn, I figure.

Everything smells like singed hair and my mouth tastes like rotting flesh. Probably not a good sign. Who'd have thought your soul would reek so much?

Or maybe it only smells that way if you've mortared your life together with lies and murder.

Worse, it's gotten me completely lost. Can't smell a thing besides the burning, but I'll be dead in about ten seconds if I let my invisibility drop.

I've been trying to backtrack to a place I recognize for an entire day. That just got me turned around three times over and now I can't even tell up from down. That fucking marsh I chased Garland the Green through was like getting by pussy licked compared to this.

At least Arnbjorn won't die down here with me. He tried to fight his way through, but it was never going to work. I sent him back up to the surface to wait.

Told him to make sure there was enough mead and ale for me to stay drunk for a solid week.

I could use a drink right about now, that's for sure. All I've got left is a half-skin of water and the two potions I bought from Morlanus. I still think that second one is poison, but I've been thumbing the cork stopper for the last three hours, knowing what has to be done.

I guess the notion of me drinking the thing and then shitting out my own stomach has me a little skittish.

The next room must just be packed full of the blind monsters. Even with my senses all scraped out and ruined, I can hear them grunting and muttering and screwing each other. Gives me the shivers to listen to them all.

There's no sense in putting it off any longer. My eyes are all swelled up and teary, and I'm about to start puking from the smell and taste that fills my mouth.

So I pull off the cork and drink the shape shifting potion in one big gulp.

It tastes thick and salty—like a mouthful of spunk. More like three mouthfuls, really.

Right away I feel it start to work. My stomach rumbles and shudders, and my bones start to bend and shift—expanding inside of me. The potion latches on to my spine and runs up all the nerves in my body. Fills my bloodstream and twists out the Bosmer inside. Replaces it with something darker. Angrier.

I feel a rage grow inside of me.

The bones in my arms are growing, too. Lengthening down towards the ground as my spine turns crooked and hunched. Long, sharp nails sprout from my fingertips—thick and strong, ready for violence. But none of it hurts so far. It's more like getting stretched around so muscles got yanked and pulled that I didn't even know I had.

Then my eyes started to change.

I howl at the pain, double over and puke out some green bile. It's like getting my eyes melted with a hot poker—they get so hot they pop and explode, and get replaced by some kind of dry, sticky crust.

I gasp and sob and spit up some more puke. Wonder if they'll grow back right when the potion wears off.

The world goes black and the pain subsides. I wait. And slowly, ever so slowly, the rooms starts to trickle bag in little blurs of purple shadows. Silver outlines of the columns and doorways.

The other Falmer in the room are interested in me now, all the noise I made. They scramble over in their crooked walk. Sniff at my crotch and lick the side of my face. One of them grunts at me in their crackling, broken language. It doesn't make any sense.

Guess the potion doesn't include a translator.

I figure their underground culture can't work that much different than things to above, so I pick the biggest bastard in the room and walk over to him. Give him a sniff.

Then I tear is throat out.

He tries to squawk out some kind of alarm, but it just sends a powerful geyser of green blood pouring from the space where his neck used to be. The others step back a few paces, twisting their heads with a morbid curiosity.

But they don't draw their weapons. They just keep backing away until they're huddled in the shadowy corners of the room.

Pussies.

I walk into the next chamber, the one that sounds like it's chock full of Falmer. The crooked gait of my bones takes some getting used to, but it's not so bad after a few dozen paces. The skeleton is built for staying low, weight spread out evenly.

A killer's body.

The door opens into a massive chamber built around a pit in the earth. There are bridges and crosswalks that spit out across the chasm like a spider's erratic webbing. The Falmer are coming in droves from four or five of the tunnels overhead—all of them heading in just one direction: down.

I'm so struck by the sheer size of the place that it takes me a second to realize my sense of smell has come back. Except it's clearer and crisper now. Each sniff pulls in more and more hints and whiffs of this underground place. This must be what an eagle feels like, flying above a plain. Everything laid out before it—vulnerable and clear.

Down is where that strange metallic smell grows stronger. Down is where all of these twisted creatures are headed.

So down is where I go.

I can feel them near me.

Their power bends the flames of our torches and candles towards them. My teeth hurt from the steady yank of some dark, strange gravity. And always, I can hear the sound in my head—churning around and rotating like the gears of some infernal machine. Burrowing orders inside of my twisted, Falmer skull.

Dig. Build. We work to fulfill their nefarious plans. That is all there is.

I think that the only thing keeping my thoughts alive are the wisps of my elfish nature that the skinchanging potion left intact.

The others are just zombies. Powerless underneath the iron will of these two...things.

The necromancers took hold of me two days after I'd drunk the potion that turned me into a Falmer. I'd been following the smell of oil and metal—deeper into the earth than I knew you could go—when it clamped on to me like the relentless grip of a god's fist.

And it did not let go.

I have been hauling rubble from a pit that was blasted out by some kind of magic for three days. Piece by piece we move it—broken beams and shattered brick. The necromancers watch our progress from an enclosed platform above the pit.

Two dark, slender shadows. Four purple eyes glowing in the dimness.

I cannot kill them in this body. None of my magic works and my limbs are clumsy and crude. Good for brutality and labor, maybe, but useless for the elegant assassination I require. But I have the poison safe in a satchel on my hip. And I have my sword and daggers tied together and wrapped in a canvas sack that I keep slung around my back.

It won't be much longer now.

I have no idea what will happen when the potion wears off. Hopefully there will be a warning, and I can slink away to one of the vacant burrows that pock the walls of the pit. I think the Falmer dig their own graves before they die, and then curl up inside of them. The living won't go near them after a Falmer has dug one and gone inside.

One hole, one corpse of twisted bones. A perfect place to regain my true form.

Except when the time comes, I don't know if I'll have the will to stop working. I've tried to practice. Tried to pull my feet out of the assembly line and get into a pit. It feels like wading through a raging river—everything about it is hard and wrong. All of my instincts and desires push me in the opposite direction.

I must find a way. I must.

And if that poison Morlanus gave me doesn't work—if I can't separate these two men from their precious netherworld—I am going to be dead in about thirty seconds flat.

On the sixth day I start to feel the shadows of my true nature return. My skeleton starts to straighten, my fingers regain some of their elven dexterity. A single long, black hair sprouts from my green-grey skull.

But on the sixth day, we also finally dig up the blue orb.

I'm down close when it happens—maybe thirty yards away and coming back to refill my small, dilapidated bucket with another pile of rubble. The humming sound that ruled my thoughts and mind for what seemed like weeks grew so loud that I could feel it vibrating in my bones.

The three or four Falmer who were closest to the orb were incinerated immediately—their bodies turned into black husks that dropped to the ground in a meagre pile. The rest bolted. Scrambled over each other trying to get out of the deepest recesses of the pit. I had to kill three workers just to scramble free.

Behind me, the blue orb rose from the earth, propelled by some unseen force.

The other Falmer screamed and cried. Howling in rage at the thing they'd uncovered. A few of them shot arrows to no effect.

And then the Dark Lord descended. It wasn't Mordred, the one I came to kill. It was his master.

I've done a lot of dark things in my life: Stolen every last Septim a poor farmer owns, fucked men and murdered them while they were still inside of me, burned down entire towns and smiled at the carnage, killed people by the wagonload in the name of Sithis.

But for all the pain I've sowed into the fabric of this world, the sight of that man made me feel about as evil as a fucking rabbit.

Each step he took down from the platform pulled seemed to press me further into the ground. The small slices of bone-white skin that showed between his flowing black robes were so bright that they brought tears to my eyes—as if he was made from broken pieces of a burning moon.

But the orb obeyed him. He held up a hand and it stopped rising, stopped grinding out its metallic song.

"Aslam-Go-Grat," the Dark Lord whispered, yet his voice echoed and bounced off the walls of the pit, filling and refilling my ears like a tide washing in and out on the shore.

The blue orb dropped to the ground, sending up a cloud of dirt.

I felt the grip of the Dark Lord's will on my soul once again.

Ropes, sleds, it told me. Drag the orb up to the spire.

He pointed a finger at a metallic spear of metal that rose up through the middle of the platform he had been waiting on. Then he ascended the steps once again and resumed his position, overseeing the work.

At once, the Falmer scrambled to obey—reaching for rope and wood, rushing to build sleds to drag the massive thing higher. To do as their master bid them.

But as the elf began to grow back inside of me, I felt the necromancer's pull on me weaken. His grasp began to slip just little. Just enough so that I was the last one to rush forward and begin my work anew.

When the time came, I would be able to break free.

I knew it.

My elven form came rushing back to me while I was heaving on that fucking orb with the other Falmer. It felt like my entire body took a shit all at once. Stomach turned over, skin got all soft and mushy. Bones felt like they'd turned to troll fat and dropped down to my fucking feet.

I let go of my rope and waddled over the grave-pit I'd picked out two days earlier. My legs hardly worked at all. But somehow I made it, crumpled into the pit and started convulsing.

If losing my eyes was painful, regrowing them again was sheer agony.

They came back like two burning blisters. It felt like they were being seared into my skin with some great, hot brand. And then my blue, silvery Falmer vision slowly melted down. Colors returned, but everything was dim and twisted with shadows.

The bones were the worst. Bending and popping beneath my skin, working their way back into their elven frame. My Falmer hunch straightened out, my claws drew back into my fingers. It felt like giant was using me as his personal fuck stick.

After a time—minutes or hours, who knows—the Bosmer inside of me grew back from all that pain and anguish. And she was ready to kill.

Morlanus had told me that the poison needed to get inside of the necromancers' bloodstream in order to work. That had seemed like no hard thing when the words came out of the alchemist's mouth, but now I wasn't so sure. Those dark bastards wouldn't be so easy to ambush.

But it was far too late to back out.

I picked up my sack of belongings—which had been thrown aside sometime during my transformation—and unwrapped the cloth. The small vial of poison had been cracked, but none had escaped, thankfully. I had left my armor miles above when I'd drunk the Falmer potion, so the only clothing I had was the itchy loincloth I'd picked up somewhere along the way. It did more harm than good, so I yanked it off and let the cool, damp air of the cave envelope my skin.

These wouldn't be the first two men I'd killed naked. Probably not the last, either.

I cut up the cord of hemp rope I'd been using to carry the sack and lashed all of my daggers to different parts of my body. One on each ankle. Another on my left wrist. And the last one I twisted around in my hair so the sheath and handle were barely visible.

Then I walked over to the pile of Falmer bones that were crumpled into the back of the cave and picked out the thigh bone. It hadn't quite finished decomposing, so I had to pick a little bit of green, rotten skin off of it. I used Garland the Green's sword to slice two needles from the bone, each one about two finger-lengths long. It was easy to sharpen them with the blade and then wrap the last of my rope around the base for balance.

Then, as carefully as I could, I dipped both of them into the poison Morlanus made for me, picked up my sword, and cast invisibility on myself.

The comforting, familiar shroud of nothingness fell down around me, and I slowly picked my way out of the pit.

All of the attention was on the Orb. Two dozen Falmer pulled on it with more ropes, and the two Necromancers watched from the raised platform—their backs to me.

Perfect.

I stalked forward on the balls of my feet—a silent shadow. Even if my footsteps hadn't been muffled with magic, nobody could have heard me over the sound of the Falmers' labor and the steady vibration of the orb. I still felt it, although not as strongly as I had while I was one of them—the steady waves of its internal mechanisms rolling over in my mind.

I moved the bone needles to the same hand as my sword and carefully climbed up one of the wooden pillars that led to the raised platform. As I got closer, I could hear the necromancers' voices.

"They have almost found us," Mordred said softly. He said each word with a strange kind of precision. Almost as if he was afraid of breaking them. "Are you sure I should not go above and delay them?"

"Unnecessary," the other one responded. His voice sounded ragged and old, barely human. Like two scraps of paper being rubbed together. "The Orb is almost in place. Once we have it on the pillar, they'll be no way to reverse the process."

"As you wish," Mordred responded.

I knew I'd have to get them both at once. Even a split second delay would be enough for them to burn out my soul and turn me into...whatever it was they'd done to all of these Falmer.

Breathe, I told myself. Nice and steady, like they're just two mudcras camped out in pool.

I put the bone needles back in my right hand, pulled them across my body, and threw them.

They moved silently through the air, straight and true.

I hit Mordred in the left arm and his Master in the back of the neck. They both whipped around at the same time as my invisibility melted away, revealing my naked body covered in a sheen of sweat and wrapped with weapons.

The look on their faces when they tried to reach out and grab their dark power—and instead found nothing but damp cave air that reeked of Falmer shit and mushrooms—was something I'll never forget. I bet the only other way to get the same reaction from them would have been to sneak around and stick my finger up their asses.

I drew my sword. “Keep on reaching for it,” I said. “I’ll kill you both with that stupid look on your faces.”

“End her life,” the Master growled.

Mordred rushed forward—two daggers appearing in his hands from some hidden place in the sleeves. They were long and thin with a wavelike edge—made from some kind of dark, purplish metal I’d never seen before. But as ethereal as his weapons looked, there was no magic behind his attack. Just the graceful movement of a practiced killer.

He held his daggers in a reverse grip and bulled forward, slicing first with his right and then the left. I ducked his first strike, but the second came so quickly I had to parry awkwardly and then backpedal to keep some distance between us.

I wasn’t so good with the sword yet. Stupid to have tried to kill him with it.

He pressed hard, unleashing one vicious attack after the next. High, low, sideswipe, uppercut. It was all I could do to keep ahead of him—parrying what I couldn’t dodge. Attacking when I could, but never anything that would give the quick bastard trouble.

He fought like he spoke: Deliberate and precise. Not a single wasted movement.

I could hear the Falmer gurgling and snarling on the lower level of the platform. I wondered why they weren’t attacking, then I heard the papery voice of the Master at the edges of my mind.

Leave them alone. Pull the Orb to its place.

Mordred kept attacking, pushing me from one side of the circular platform to the other.

He’s just killing time, I realized. He knows the poison won’t last forever.

I wasn’t good enough with the sword to finish him off. And once they could reach into that dark plain again, I’d be dead in about two heartbeats, I figured.

So I let one of his daggers slide off my blade and scrape along my ribcage.

“Guh,” I grunted, dropping to one knee and letting the sword fall from my hands.

He was a true killer—didn’t even hesitate. Just brought that second dagger around in a sweep that was level with my neck.

But I was ready.

I pulled one of my daggers free and jammed it into his wrist about an inch up from his hand—right where all the bones and blood vessels met like the delta of a river.

He grunted, letting the strange blade fall from his ruined hand. But to the evil bastard's credit, he had the other dagger swinging almost immediately.

I rolled out of the way, leaving that dagger inside of him and reaching for another one that I'd lashed to my body. I scrambled to my feet and got a good grip—figuring he'd keep on coming hard—but when I turned around he hadn't moved: one arm dead at his side and bleeding all over the platform.

Just looking at me.

"You're quick," he said. There wasn't an ounce of pain in his voice. "And far better prepared than your predecessor." He moved to the right, keeping an eye on me. "What was in that dart?" he asked calmly.

"Giant cum and pig shit," I hissed, following his lead and trying to decide whether to come at him high or low.

Low, I figured.

"That's an awfully ugly image coming from such a beautiful creature. Why don't you drop that blade, elf? If you make this easy, I'll promise not to rape your corpse." He smiled—mouth full of perfect white teeth.

"Why don't you drop *your* blade? I promise not to stuff your balls in your mouth before I kill you."

Mordred flipped the blade over once in his good hand. "I think not."

His smile faded a little, and I could tell he was trying to pull at the Netherworld again, but still not getting anything.

I sprinted forward, taking four fast steps and covering the space between us. He reacted just like I thought he would—shifting to the left and preparing a counterattack.

When I was two steps away, I hurled my dagger at his face and dropped to my knees—skin burning against the stone platform. The flying blade caught Mordred by surprise, and it was all he could do to twist away from the flying steel. I pulled the last dagger I had from the hidden spot in my hair and crashed into his legs, knocking him over.

Then I stabbed him in the chest five times, caving in both of his lungs and cutting through the ventricles of his heart.

I'd planned out a whole speech for him—dark, evil words. I wanted him to know whose soul I was revenging.

But I couldn't much remember the words I'd planned out. And a promise is a promise.

Keeping one eye on the Master—whose face was stone—I sliced through Mordred’s pants, took his balls in my fist, and then cut them off. He started to make a terrible, animal sound of pain, but I put a stop to that by ramming his own manhood into his mouth and down his throat.

He choked to death on his balls before he bled out, and I smiled down at him while it happened.

“Try raping my corpse now, prick.”

I moved to my left, picked up Garland’s sword. The cut on my ribs was deep—I could feel the muscles pulling apart a little further each time I twisted or moved. Blood was pouring out of it—I could feel that liquid warmth dripping down my side and running along my pelvis, between my legs. Strange feeling.

It was the kind of wound that killed people.

“Dog of Sithis,” the Master said in his terrible voice. “I am going to pull your heart out of your cunt for that.”

He raised both hands, and I could tell he was trying to make good on that threat, but he still couldn’t get at his precious Netherworld. How much time did I have left? Ten minutes? One minute? No way to know.

Stay or run? Stay or run?

“Who are you?” I asked.

The Falmer almost had the Orb in position over the strange spire. They were all on one side, pushing it towards the edge. What would happen when the Orb fell onto the spire?

He twisted his pale face in an odd way—it might have been his version of smile. “Akavarin, the Lord of the Netherworld.”

Fuck it, I thought, I’ll never get to the surface alive anyway.

“Well, I’m going to kill you now.”

Covered in blood and sweat, weak and exhausted, I rushed towards Akavarin. He seemed surprised that I’d do it, as if the mere mention of his name should have made me piss myself. The Dark Lord’s eyes turned into two white saucers of horror, and he made the same stupid face every other bastard made when my blade came down for their life.

I swung Garland’s sword as hard I could—every last wisp of energy I had crushing down on him. The muscles along my ribs pulled apart more. Akavarin put a hand up, like some feeble old farmer might.

The sword cut through skin and muscle and bone. A spray of blood hit my face. His arm bent at an impossible angle and then fell off. The sword kept going—covering that last foot of air between his dismembered arm and his frightened face.

Then it stopped.

One inch from his eye, it stopped. Felt like I'd slammed the thing into the side of a castle.

And then my insides all went to shit and I pissed myself.

Because his eye was glowing a pale, impossible shade of purple. And he didn't look afraid anymore.

A Soul Apart

Narova Black Hair's body went rigid—a terrible current of undead energy searing through her nerves and veins and muscles. The crooked gash along her side filled with the purple pus of the Netherworld. Piss ran down her leg.

Her eyes began to smoke.

Akavarin used telekinesis to pull the dismembered chunk of his hand back towards the stump of his arm—sealed the severed bone back into place with the same unearthly pus that was filling Narova's ribcage. He kept the elf suspended in the air, but turned the rest of his energy to Mordred.

For a man who had lived with such grace, his apprentice had died in a most undignified way—testicles stuffed into his mouth. Heart and lungs filled with holes. Akavarin reached into the Netherworld, trying to find Mordred's soul wandering the Far Plain.

Nowhere. Nothing. Mordred had died while that strange poison still flowed through his veins, cutting him off from the source of his power. He was gone.

All those years of hard work wasted. Mordred was the best he'd ever trained. There may never be another with such talent.

"You will suffer for this, elf," Akavarin rasped. "I'll kill you a thousand times over. I'll let every single one of my Falmer rape you to death. The gods will weep when they see what I've done to you!"

He increased the current of energy flowing through her body—letting it squeeze down on her organs. She gritted her teeth and met his eyes. He could still see the fury burning inside of her, boiling up from beneath the layers of purple energy.

"Fuck yourself," she whispered. Then she spat in his face.

Strange. With that much current, she should not have been able to do that. But Akavarin wasn't particularly interested in necromantic anomalies right at that moment.

He ripped Narova Black Hair's soul out and left her crumpled body on the stone floor of the platform. Then he pulled the soul towards him and drank a small sip of it. It had an odd flavor—like a mossy forest floor mixed with sweat and sex and shadow.

What life had made that taste? Akavarin wondered, in spite of himself. *So brutal and raw. No wonder her rage had burned to the top like that.*

Behind him, that Falmer heaved the Blue Orb forward. He was about to order them to hold—he needed a moment to prepare himself for the activation of the Orb—but the idiot Falmer had gotten the thing's momentum going too strong.

The Orb rolled off the platform and was pierced on the spike.

It made a sound like a giant being stabbed—as if the massive Dwarven creation was a piece of living flesh that had just been wounded. Then the intricate scales that covered the surface of the Orb began to blink. The pattern was frantic and fast—completely different from the gentle hum Akavarin had grown used to over the days they'd spent excavating the thing. The message was clear: panic.

The blue liquid began oozing down the spike that had impaled the Orb, and Akavarin was just a bout to gulp down the remaining bits of the Narova's soul—which he still held inside of his mouth—when the blue liquid reached the ground.

There was a blinding light. Both of Akavarin's ears popped. His jaw fell open and Narova's soul was blown away by a sudden and powerful wind.

Something strange and wonderful filled Akavarin's body.

Akavarin hadn't felt so vulnerable in a thousand years. His skin ached. His eyes burned. He could feel the weight of all those miles of stone and earth above him. The pull of gravity from the core of Nirn, below.

And he could feel, deep down, the ability within himself to change them.

Akavarin took a deep breath and opened his eyes. Everything was different. He could see the souls of every one of his Falmer—their wildness clawing around inside of their brutal bodies like a separate being. He wasn't just ordering them around anymore. He was them. Akavarin could move their hands as if they were his own. Blink their eyes. Gnash their teeth.

Akavarin could see through the eyes of the Falmer further above, too. See the land that would soon be his to rule. Then, something caught his attention from the corner of his eye.

The elf's soul had been thrown against the far wall of the cavern. Somehow, it was still intact. Vague, almost mist-like appendages were stretching out along the platform floor. Whatever it was the Orb had done to him, it seemed to have had an effect on her soul as well.

No one's soul should be able to survive outside the body for that long.

Slowly, weakly, she was crawling back to the naked body Akavarin had pulled her from. The ethereal ropes of purple mist looked desperate but determined, inching forward along the ground.

"You're a stubborn one," Akavarin said.

Her soul ignored him. Just kept moving.

Akavarin's instinct was to absorb her soul again, but when he tried to suck her back into his mouth, he couldn't do it. It felt like trying to stick his head into a lake and drink it up in one gulp.

Fine, he thought. *The other way, then.*

Akavarin crossed the room and picked up her corpse. Dangled it in front of her soul by that neck as if it were a children's toy.

"Do you want this?" he asked. The soul just kept crawling. "Here then, take it."

He flung the body off the platform, where it fell into one of the grave pits the Falmer were so insistent upon digging, and then disappeared into the darkness. Akavarin looked down at her soul. He almost thought he could see two rage-filled eyes looking back at him. Almost.

"Pathetic," he said. "To think you could have killed me. When the last wisps of your soul are dissipating, and you finally realize that your existence is over, know that the best you could do was cause a minor inconvenience."

Akavarin left her there—turned towards the large tunnel leading to the surface. There would be changes soon, very big changes. Skyrim would never be the same.

The world would never be the same.

7 Accounts of the Great Geyser

As the most senior apprentice to Urag gro-Shub at the College of Winterhold, the Arch-Mage assigned me the task of collecting and chronicling all first-hand accounts of the anomaly that took place within Mzinchaleft on Tirdas, 5th day of Heartfire, 3E 389.

The event has since been informally named “The Great Geyser.”

The height of the purple water is estimated to have reached over seven thousand feet in the air, and citizens from Morthal, Dawnstar, Solitude and even Whiterun—which saw unusually clear weather that day—claim to have seen it. I have taken the time to highlight seven especially noteworthy entries herein.

As the days ahead seem to carry little else besides bleak news and dark omens, I wonder at the value of this information. Is the Arch-Mage looking for a clue of some kind? A weakness, perhaps?

Is the key to defeating the necromancer, Akavarin, buried somewhere within these words?

“I was tending to my cows when it burst through the air. Only a morning’s walk from my farm outside Dawnstar. Made a hissing sound, like some kind of snake might. All the next day, my sheep were running down from the hills, hair singed and bodies deformed. Full of evil, they were. At least as evil as a sheep’ll get.

Me and Garba gon-Galak, we are leaving this place. If the sheep have gone bad, what darkness is following behind them, soon to crest the hills?”

-Urksha-Mare, an Orsimer. Former shepherd, current occupation unknown.

Many citizens living near and around Dawnstar, who possessed less foresight than this man, have since met an unfortunate end.

“I saw the thing. What of it, Beef Tip? It’s a plague. The Morathi Covenant come to turn the world black.”

- A Nord, name unknown.

Subject was both physically menacing and terse with his description. But the mention of the Morathi Covenant is noteworthy and was the inspiration for extensive investigation and discovery into the cause of the Geyser.

Incidentally, the massive Nord was searching the surrounding area for a black-haired Bosmer. I could not help him.

“Thing looked like some secret god of the underworld pulled out his cock and took a giant piss on the heavens.”

-Rogvir – An Imperial, and notorious drunk in Whiterun.

Subject was intoxicated during the interview—information is of note due to Rogvir’s distance from the Geyser, not for its content.

“By the gods, it’s inside of me! The burning scrapes as my veins and penetrates my soul. I am...I am...lost!”

- Veralin Kush, a Breton mercenary.

Subject fell into the purple water that now covers the majority of northern Skyrim, yet somehow had the strength to hobble into Morthal, where I took her statement.

“We had several teams in the area at the time, why do you ask? What are you writing? I must asked to see your credentials again!”

- Elenwen, an Altmer sorceress and First Emissary of the Thalmor.

I was able to take this statement under the guise of a different purpose, but was then expelled from the Thalmor Embassy. To date, I have been unable to find any of these “teams” she spoke of, or discover the reasons they were nearby.

“I have been taking in all of the refugees that I can. But my city can only help so many. I have begun asking my soldiers to divert men and women to Whiterun and Falkreath.

- Elisif the Fair, Nord and Jarl of Solitude. The issue of the refugees—and what to do with them until their land is reconquered from Akavarin—remains unresolved.

“The purple waters are the stones with which I shall raise my castle walls. The brimstone smell is the mortar. The Covenant rises, and there is nothing you can do.”

- Shurien Ulil, a psychotic Dunmer I interviewed in the dungeons of Solitude. He claimed to have been told these words by an albino Skeeever.

END.

Thanks for reading. Want to read the next story? You can [find it right here](#).