

Median Darkthorne

Median the Tyrant King, sailed with his fleet towards the West. They traveled up the coast where they found the kingdom Pacifika the gate to West Ayenee. His fleet went ashore and began to move across the countryside of the island kingdom. They took the capital of Pacifika. They then traveled across the sea towards Atlantica. The king of Atlantica was the brother to the queen of Kul-Nas. He avenged her at the cost of his life. Median vanished from the battlefield after being gravely injured.

Median Darkthorne



Titles:	The Scourge
Gender:	Male
Races:	Tuatha De Dannan
Age:	133
Occupation:	Psychic Warrior
Faction/Kingdom:	Darkthorne/Belathian
Alignment:	Chaotic Evil
Status:	Unknown
Relatives:	Cebrese (father,erased), Adrian(uncle)
Height:	8ft
Weight:	424
Eyes:	Crystal Green
Hair:	White

Biography

Median was a powerfully built psyche warrior, son of Cebrese. He was ruthless, cruel, charismatic, powerful, intelligent, and a master tactician. He tried to conquer the Western half of Ayenee during the Silver Age. Any goal set before him, he would pursue with great determination.

Early in his life, his father Cebrese abandoned him and his mother. He watched as his father left him, never to return. His mother died a year later from the yellow plague. Median would go on to follow the bread crumbs of his father's path. This leads him to the Darkthornes, where he was welcomed. Even among Darkthornes, Median was considered cruel.

Median proved to be more ambitious than any of the Darkthornes of the time. This was before Eseer, before Diago. Manece tried to have Median slain, he felt threatened by Median. Median killed every assassin sent after him and laid their broken bodies at Manece's throne. Because of this Median attracted a loyal following among his peers.

Median did not want to rule the lands of the Darkthornes, he didn't want to crush the Blackthornes. His eyes were drawn to the West, something called to him. He had dreams of a destiny greater than being a king. He was destined to become a god.

Dragon's Peak

Median and his fleet came upon the mountain tribes of Dragon's Peak. Here he united the barbarian tribes of the mountains. He defeated their chieftains making them his submissive slaves as a show of his strength. The wives of the chieftains became his concubines and he would often ravish them before their broken husbands.

The barbarians and the Darkthornes joined forces building more ships for the now larger force. The conquest of the West became Median's goal, he saw it as his destiny to take it. While in the mountains Median found the home to an ancient dragon, once the mount of a fierce war chief. The now dead warrior and his dragon pet sat within a tomb of treasure.

It is here that Median found the ring of the heavens. Upon placing the ring on his fingers, he grew in size and power. The dead rider and his dragon mount arose from their ancient slumber now under his control.

The ring encased Median in powerful enchantments that made him near invulnerable. He found a number of other magical amulets, bracelets, rings, earrings, septum jewelry, and belts. He claimed them all and they increased his powers. Median stalked through the highlands with his new found army.

They found the hidden tombs of an ancient clan of vampires called "sete di sangue". The leader of this clan fought with Median, but was defeated when Median ripped the vampire lord's head from his body and then reached down the neck hole and pulled out the vampire's heart.

Median explained to the vampires that they would now serve him. He then plunged the vampire lord's heart into his own chest. His body adapted and assimilated the heart into his being. Median now had an army that would claim him the destiny he was chosen to hold.

The Blood Waves

As his fleet sailed towards Pacifika a mage by the name of Corvan Reinhart appeared aboard Median's flagship. The mage offered his services to Median. He swore to help Median take the small kingdom of Pacifika if he would allow him to join Median's army. Median agreed and the next night they attacked.

Sorra looked out over the moonlit waves as dark clouds appeared shrouding the sky pearl. Many in her village had retired for the night, some still celebrated on the beach around campfires. Tonight marked the beginning of summer. It was strange for such a storm to be brewing so suddenly this time of year.

The ocean became miles of liquid darkness as the moon's light was finally devoured. The village seemed to become cloaked in an unnatural darkness. The villagers sensed something amiss, many of those sitting began to stand, straining their eyes against the darkness. Then lightning cut like a knife through the darkness. All along the horizon could be seen the masts of ships, one massive ship at the

center of them.

Sorra felt a chill in her bones and ran from the village to some nearby bushes. As if at some ungodly speed, the boats came landing upon the shore. Forms in armor disembarked from the small vessels and stomped through the waves. Everyone they came across was slain without hesitation. The village set ablaze, strange creatures came ashore in larger boats. They followed the armored men eating the bodies of the dead.

The ocean breeze became thick with smoke and blood. Sorra scurried from the bushes heading to the worn road that leads to the next village. She turned and saw a massive demonic figure sitting upon a throne built into a ship. Chained men fell flat in the shallow surf as the figure stepped out upon their backs striding to the shore. The figure was scantily clad and adorned with excessive amounts of jewelry. Atop its head two horns shot up, his hair was white, and his form handsome although terrifying.

Median and his army moved across the island kingdom like a plague of locusts. They left in their wake burning villages, forests either burned or chopped down. They polluted the rivers and lakes with the bodies of the dead. Those who surrendered became slaves pulling the siege machines crafted from the lumber they had acquired. When they reached the village near the capital city, Median halted his army.

Median's Demands

Median planned to conquer all of Ayenee. His first step towards this goal was to become the ruler of the West. Morgan Mindwhisper and Roman Bloodwing, the two most loyal Darkthorne supporters that Median had acquired chose to confront the royal liege.

"M'lord the army that has been marching across our lands! They are at the capital city gates!"

"What?! Already? Prepare the troops, reinforce the capital gates as best as we can. Call my war council immediately!"

"Sire, there are two rather strange looking individuals from the enemy army inside the capital city. They wish a word with you. I think they want to dictate demands on behalf of their leader."

"How did they get through the gates?"

"I don't know your majesty."

"Well find out! Hmmm, have them escorted to the castle courtyard. I'll address them from the royal balcony. Also, have our best archers on the parapets around the castle. Order them to fire if they so much as scratch their asses or break wind."

The King stepped out on the balcony.

Below stood at first glance a very beautiful woman, but after she spoke, he realized she was a he. She wore an outlandish outfit, part traveling attire, part battle armor. She had long raven black hair that curled at the ends. Next to her was a man with spiky hair, an eyepatch covered his left eye and a scar followed his hairline down past his jawline. He had a cat sitting on his shoulder like a pirate would have a parrot. The cat was black and simply sat watching with feigned interest.

"What bizarre people..." the King mumbled to himself.

The eyepatched man wore a long black leather coat and some form of light mail armor, leather trousers, and boots as black as the cat on his shoulder. His hair was a strange pink color.

"Ah, there is the little ruler of this island!" Exclaimed the man in drag.

"Bout time", grumbled Roman.

"His royal highness, King Edward Celtric the Third." The royal page bellowed out over the courtyard below.

The king came into view and the two visitors simply stood there. The archers lined the walls ready to fire at the first sign of hostility. The tintinnabulation of silver bells on Roman's shoes stirred the archers to pull back their bowstrings. He looked up and smiled as if amused, he waved his hands to calm them.

"I wear the bells on my shoes so my enemies hear me coming. I would feel bad if I felt that I caught someone by surprise after all."

The king's eyes widen, the idea that this man was so sure of his fighting skills that he would alert his enemies of his presence. The boisterous nature of that concept. He wondered if this man truly was so capable, if so then maybe he should consider surrender. No, he corrected his inner voice. He would not kneel to any invading army.

These two ostentatious guests were just that. He would show them that they could not just come into his kingdom and make demands of him.

"Guards seize these two, we shall send their heads back to their leader as a sign of our hospitality."

The man in the eye patch smiled and the cat on his shoulder jumped down. It was shrouded in a purple miasma and enlarged into a horse sized black cat-like creature with two curved fangs jutting down from its upper jaw. A white mane like framed its fearsome head and extended down its back.

"Well, Kage looks like you were right. They won't kneel to Median so easily!" Roman tossed off his leather jacket, revealing bandoliers of throwing knives crisscrossing his chest. He began to toss them with such speed and ease, each toss a killing or crippling blow.

"Ha! Too easy!" He jabbed at the guards filing into the courtyard.

Kage the cat-like creature had already taken down a handful of guards. While Morgan hands raised in the air repelled the arrows that shot down at them.

"I tire of these gnats." She sighed as her eyes glowed a brilliant yellow. The arrows halted in the air and then turned around and shot back at those who had fired them. The arrows on the ground rose up and followed suit.

The guards no longer filed into the courtyard and many of the archers lay wounded, or behind cover with no intention of rising out.

"Boring!" Roman yelled picking up his jacket and putting it back on.

"I told you I should have brought my sword, Morgan. It would have been much more fun that way."

She sighed and looked up where the king had been standing. He now hid on the balcony.

"You have three days..no. You now have one day. You and your queen shall exit the capital city. You shall kneel before Median and submit to his rule and become his slaves. Otherwise, your city will fall, the might of your army shall be broken by ours. You shall still kneel before Median, but he will break even more for your defiance than he will for your surrender. His rule is destined, it is inevitable for he is a god."

Kage transformed back into a black cat and climbed up Roman, perching back on his shoulder.

"I really hope they try to fight," Roman said as the two of them walked towards the courtyard exit. Morgan thrust her hand in front of her and the locked door of the courtyard exploded into splinters.

"They always fight dear Roman. They never do anything resembling a smart decision."

And with that, the two messengers were gone. The king called his council, trying to get the people back behind him. The people were already angry with him before this army marched in. However they loved the queen, she was always championing some cause to better the lives of her subjects. She was also the sister of the king of Atlantica and if he could get them to send ships of reinforcements then they might just beat this force.

The royal mage of Pacifika, Creed Halcyon entered the council chambers late as usual. The white haired human had a presence about him that always commanded the attention of those who saw him. He pulled back his hood and stroked his white goatee, his blue eyes looking to the king.

"We can win this war. Ask for reinforcements from Atlantica they will grant them of course. As for the people's resolve. We shall have the queen appear on the city gates. She shall tell this army of Pacifika's defiance to the commands of tyranny. The people shall rally, reinforcements shall flank this army and we will squeeze them in a vise. There is nowhere for them to flee, we know the island better than they do."

The king raised a hand. "You did not see the skill with which his men fight. I...don't know if those two are the only ones like that. If his whole force is made up of such individuals, well we can't stand against that."

Creed raised a hand and smiled. "Of course his whole force is not like that. It was just a display to scare you into kotowing to his demands. I will deal with the two power characters, I have something that should make them inert." Creed continued to smiled and poured himself some wine.

Pacifika's Defiance

The Great Western Wall of Ayenee. A wall built by the border kingdoms of Western Ayenee along the mountain range, creating an impenetrable wall. They had never considered a threat from the sea. Pacifika the gate to the West had always pushed back any naval force that had thought it could invade from the sea. In the many years since the building of the wall, only one force had ever tried. The ocean floor was littered with their ships and remains. This new threat had somehow avoided the deadly reefs, and under the cover of a magical storm arrived unhindered upon their shores.

Pacifika was and had never been prepared for a land invasion. The queen stood atop the city gates. The sun beamed down rays of warmth and golden light. The light reflected off her crown and the many jewels adorning the many pieces of jewelry she wore. She stood proudly, head raised in

defiance. Her light blonde hair blowing in the sea breeze.

"If something should have to the queen it shall spur the people to back you and give their lives in vengeance for their beloved queen. It shall ensure that aid comes from her beloved brother the king of Atlantica." Creed smiled at the king who slowly nodded his head. He had been seeking a younger queen.

"Creed you are a devious person, but you are right. Elaine could not give me any heirs, should she die. I could then find a queen that is fertile and not barren."

"The kingdom of Pacifika has heard your demands Median Darkthorne. We defiantly inform you that we shall not kneel before any tyrant. We instead inform you that you have one day to vacate our island. Return to your ships, and sail back whence you came!"

The crowd behind the gate cheered. Suddenly the gate cracked and the queen fell forward. She flew down towards Median's armies. The guards were called back from trying to retrieve her. It was too risky to open the gates.

Median's army passed the Queen through their ranks until she fell before a large golden staircase. Seated on a gold throne, say Median, wearing mere silks and jewelry. The sun casts a shadow over his form. She was urged at spear point to move up the stairs. As she got closer she could see him more clearly.

"You were given a chance to avoid hostilities. Why would so foolishly choose to defy me?" Median said in a very deep voice that sounded as though he were truly confused by their defiance.

The Queen looked up and raised her head. "You think we shall kowtow to your demands? You are invading our kingdom, we hold the keys to the West. You will not pass, this is as far as your dreams of conquest go."

Median stood with such speed that Elaine had little time to even notice he was standing. He towered overhead, a giant, his hand came at her with such force and speed. She flew back falling down the steps. She looked up and already he had descended down to stand next to her. His foot came speeding into her abdomen lifting her up three feet in the air. She must have laid there on the dry dusty earth for hours. The sun scorched her skin and Median still stood above her.

"You see those miserable groveling dogs!?" He pointed up the steps to a group of men and women in chained collars that all knelt on hands and knees. Their eyes held something in them she had never seen, absolute terror, mixed with a broken soul. "You shall be broken and your people shall see what awaits them if they defy the will of a god!"

His massive hand came down gripping her by the jaw. Her eyes met his and she felt every fear she had ever known come to life. The world around her burned, vermin crawled over her. The rotten corpses of her family hung from makeshift gallows. She felt herself being crushed by a massive weight.

This agony seemed to go on for hours, when suddenly from the sky. She could see a pair of golden eyes looking down, casting rays of warm light. Median's voice spoke to her, "Do you see? I have the power to end all of this. All you have to do is call out for me, bow to me, worship me!"

She didn't want to. Suddenly her body creaked as she felt her arms being twisted, snapping, muscle,

tendon, and vein ripping. She screamed, tears falling down her cheeks. She felt darkness consume her. In the dark, eyes watched her. Wolves came from the shadows, their fangs tearing her flesh and ripping her guts from her as she simply lay there unable to scream, to blink, to move.

The pain was real, she thought that soon she would die, but they continue to eat her. She continues to feel every chunk of flesh they tear, every bone they broke. She began to pray for death, her mind on the verge of madness.

"I can make it end. Worship me! Call out to me, beg for me to end your pain! Beg for me to take your freedom, to make you mine!"

She felt her voice rise up from the depths of her torn throat. "Please make it stop! I will do whatever you want!"

She could see his smile. She quickly took part of herself and secreted it away. She buried it in a part of her subconscious where he could never find it. She felt him now searching her mind, an invading presence picking through her thoughts.

She awoke, his hand still gripped her jaw. A second had not even passed since she looked into his eyes. The torment she had felt was held in the blink of an eye. She felt herself kneel at bare feet, kissing them, her hands stroking the gold chains and jewelry that adorned his feet and calves.

"My king! My God! I am yours!" somewhere a part of her looked away ashamed. As if sensing this, she felt his mind push into her's once more. An intense migraine shot through her head. Her body trembled as she feared the visions returning.

The soldiers stood atop the gate and watched as a giant of a figure strode through the army. They could see their queen beside him. She stood before him and removed the silk loin cloth. She took his manhood in her hands and began to put it in her mouth.

One of the soldiers looked back at the crowd with shock on his face. A civilian called up, "What is it?! What's going on?!" The soldiers looked to the other soldier on the gate. The other soldier shook his head.

"The Queen is sucking his co-" the soldier didn't finish his sentence as the other soldier punched him hard in the face.

The people below could hear the queen's moans echoing up to the city. Disgust filled their faces, they began to feel free creep in.

"The Queen has betrayed us?" "The Queen is a whore!" "What do we do?" "We're doomed!" The soldier raised his arms. "Silence you all. This is surely dark sorcery. The queen must have been brainwashed with magic!" Suddenly the soldier was hit with an orb of black and purple churning energy. He fell from the gate his armor melting from his body.

"Tell your King we await his surrender!" yelled the queen's voice.

The Song of Destruction

Median stood upon the golden staircase the Queen of Pacifika sitting beneath his throne her hands on the floor. Before him, a battle raged. Siegfried Van Lorean the skyknight and red dragon rider scorched Median's forces with fire from the sky. Siegfried had a handful of dragon riders at his

commander.

Morgan and Roman led the charge against Pacifika's forces. The two of them were cutting a swath through the ranks of the defenders. Median was preparing something for the dragon rider. He sent out his psychic tendrils urging the skyknight to come out him. Siegfried unknowingly complied. The undead dragon knight that served Median came down from the clouds above Siegfried.

"You reign of terror ends here!" Siegfried cried out flying straight at Median. He was snatched off his dragon then tossed through the air, falling to his death on the battlefield. His dragon soon fell with him. Median called out and large ballistas were brought out. They fired onto the dragons that came in to avenge the fallen skyknight leader.

Morgan and Roman were suddenly engulfed in an orb with a mirror like reflective surface.

Morgan raised her hands to dispell the orb. Nothing happened. She realized the orb somehow cut her off from her patron's link. She tried to call upon her magical powers but found little mana to draw on in the orb.

"I can't do anything! This orb is sapping me of my powers!"

"Hmm maybe I can break it?", said, Roman.

Morgan began to think and realized perhaps he was right.

"If I can't find enough mana inside the orb, maybe instead I should simply use the magic of the orb. I'll drain an area of the orb of its magic and then you use your sword on it."

Roman laughed and stood ready.

"So I do get to break it!"

Creed stood there looking at the orb he had trapped the two most powerful combatants in.

"They will eventually die from lack of air. I doubt the witch will be smart enough to figure out a way out."

The king stood there in his battle armor. "Can't you just kill them now?"

Creed sighed and said, "Fine ruin all my fun." He raised his hands to cast a spell to drain the air from the orb. Suddenly he sensed a magical attack heading towards the king. He turned and quickly raised a magical shield, deflecting the lightning bolt.

"What was that?!" Shouted the king. Creed and the King both stared as the smoke of the battlefield cleared and Reinhart emerged.

"Always glad to see one of my failed pupils are still able to find work." Said Creed to Reinhart.

"I found more than work old man. I found someone with as much ambition as I do. "

Creed chuckled, "All that ambition wasted on a fool."

"You are the only fool. You think I am not good enough to be your pupil. I'm here to show you that you

are wrong. Dead wrong.”

“You have only dreamed of the mysteries of the universe. I have seen them with my own eyes. It's not too late Reinhart, you can still be my pupil.”

“Save your self-righteous and narcissistic attitude for someone who cares. You and your magic can kiss the mole on my left testicle!”

Creed frowned and shook his head, “Oddly specific. As you wish, don't think I am going to take it easy on you boy!”

A stone fist shot from the ground and grasped Creed in its fingers. Creed smiled and the magic began to build around him. Reinhart summoned more mana from the people and land around him. He formed the physics of his spell and then uttered the words. The spell shot from his hands, black bolts of lightning ripped the land and darted towards the stone fist that held Creed.

Creed was covered in a blue miasma and he winked at Reinhart vanishing from the fist and appearing behind Reinhart.

He threw out his hand sending an explosive blast at Reinhart's back. Reinhart, however, jumped aside and the blast hit the ground sending chunks of earth flying about.

The stone fist shattered as the lightning hit it. The blast caused the king to fall, sending him rolling down the ridge they had been standing on.

Creed turned and headed in the direction where the King once stood.

Reinhart sent a bolt of frozen ice at Creed. A magical shield appeared on his arm. The ice shattered on the magical runes.

“I haven't the time for your little emo temper tantrum! I'm trying to win a battle here.”

Creed began to summon vast amounts of magic from everything around him very fast. Reinhart could sense the depletion and the growing aura about Creed made it very transparent. Reinhart had been working on a new spell, now was the time to try it.

Waves of blue tinted energy shot forth towards Reinhart. “What don't take some time to think about how you've been a very bad boy?”, said Creed.

Reinhart cast his spell creating an invisible wave of energy that acted like a wave heading towards a beach. It met with Creed's magic causing it to fold back in on itself. Reinhart had to put all his energy into matching Creeds. Creed sensed what was going on and began to pull more energy from around him trying to force the spell through.

The mirrored orb shattered and Roman's feet slid across the ground. He stood there looking back at the orb and Morgan. Morgan had drained the magic from one side of the orb, but she had felt the caster reapplying energy to keep it stable. She had been draining with all her might when suddenly the reinforcing energy stopped.

She could see the bastard that trapped them up on the hill. He was locked in combat with someone else. She summoned a bolt of green necrotic energy and sent it flying at the mage.

“Hey, you! Wizard in the blue robes!” Roman called out charging up the hill trying to get the mage's

attention.

Creed turned and sent bolts of lightning shooting forth from his eyes. Roman stabbed his sword down into the ground and fell behind it. The lightning hit his sword going into the ground shocking Roman still, but not as badly as it would have been.

Creed took one of his hands away from his battle of will with Reinhart and put up a shield dispersing the necrotic energy aimed at him.

Kage came charging in and was quickly hit with an explosion of concussive force, sending the cat flying back into the air.

Morgan sent out black tendrils of shadows towards Creed. He simply brought down a wall of light behind himself shredding the shadow tendrils as they got close.

Unfortunately, he had been putting his energy into these new attackers. His push on Reinhart's counterspell was breaking. Before he could regain control the wave of energy came washing back over him. Creed found himself moving and thinking as such a slow speed that the world around him seemed to disappear. A dagger stuck into his chest and Creed died.

Reinhart stood over the corpse of his former teacher. He was angry the others had aided him in defeating Creed. He was happy though that his spell worked.

Morgan and Roman threw the king down before Median.

"You have halted my divine progress for too long. You will get no mercy."

Median placed the king into his own worse nightmare and sealed it within the king's mind. The King would live a thousand lifetimes of torture in every breath.

"Now we march on the West." Median said watching his armies dispatch the remaining Pafician troops.

Lana and the Light

Lana Firebloom awoke aboard the airship "Skycutter" shaken from her pleasant slumber by a nightmare. She had seen her entire kingdom, her family, her people, all of them were burning. It had been the same dream since the first full moon. Her father had stated that women of the Firebloom family were prone to visions and awareness.

She walked out onto the deck of the ship and looked out over the night-shrouded world. The bright moon illuminated the deck in a white glow. There on the horizon was the kingdom of Atlantica. The ancient empire of the west, the lands all around were called Eden. She looked to the South and saw the sails of ships, a terrible specter descended from the dark clouds. It rode atop a skeletal dragon, shadowy smoke clung to its shape and tendriled behind in its wake.

The crew of the ship had gathered at the prow, looking at the army coming towards Atlantica. Across the sea in Pacifika fires burned lighting up the horizon like a glimpse of the abyss itself.

"It's spotted, gods be damned! Shite its coming, boys to your stations, sorry princess, but this is no

place for a lady. You can go down to your cabin below deck, will take care of the big nasty.”, said the captain, a burly fellow with a thin beard clinging to his bulbous face.

The princess did as instructed, not because she was a lady. She had been trained in various different weapons and was skilled at using light magic. She went down below decks so that she would not distract them crew from protecting the ship. Their worry over here would only endanger and distract. She hoped that they knew what they were doing.

An hour later she clung to the railing on the ship as it descended like a falling star. The deck was wreathed in fire and the bodies of the crew that had to fell in battle slid about the deck like dolls. Those who still lived screamed or prayed to whatever god they believed in. The ship began to list, now caught in a spin rolling. The world became a blur to her as her stomach begged to release its contents. She watched as one by one those that clung to the ship were peeled off and flung from it. She felt her own grip loosening and above the mad specter of death watched.

She went flying into the air, the world suddenly seems to move in slow motion as she drifted down. She could see the shining surface of Lake Calahend below. It was touched by the moonlight glittering waves like jewels. Suddenly her body was shocked as it crashed into the watery surface. She felt needles of pain all through her body. Suddenly a hand grasped her pulling her head above the water.

“Lucky we are, eh princess?”, came to the voice of the captain pulling her along with him as he swam to the shore. She awoke from her stupor, her eyes going to the sky where the ship finished its plummet. The village of Green Meadow was its final destination, power in the ship's hold ignited and an explosion ripped through the darkness of night. Screams rose up like a cacophony of some hellish pipe organ.

They reached the shore and lay there on the beach, the captain catching his breath.

“They name's Haile, George Haile your highness...”, he said between breaths. His clothes saturated clung to his portly form.

“I am sure glad I did not go on that diet, the extra weight kept us a bit buoyant eh!?”, he said laughing as he slapped his belly. “Ooh ooh that hurts..” he lifted his hand up and spied the blood, black as oil in the night.

She quickly got up in a kneeling position next to the captain and put her hands over his wound. A bright light emanated from her hands, going out to shine over the wound. The torn flesh began to move, reattaching after a few moments the wound was healed.

“Thank goodness you can do that. I think I would have died. Well I guess we're even.”, he said with a wink turning over and standing up. He extended a hand to her, helping her up.

“We should go help the village out.” She said to the captain.

“My mission was to make sure you arrived home safe, not going to give up on that now that fate gave me a second chance.” He started walking in the direction of Atlantica.

“No! These are my people I will not just walk away!”

“I am very appreciated of your help with my wounds, but we're going back to your parents and the capital.”

She had already started walking towards the village.

"Daft girl!" he said trying to catch up with her.

She stood in the village, a fire raged all around. A storehouse exploded sending flaming oil about the surrounding buildings.

She ran into the center of the town and helped a woman and her child up.

"Run and don't look back!"

"lilii Wiiiiii Kkiiii Yooouuu!" The voice seemed to drift on the wind all around her.

The flapping of leathery wings echoed and suddenly a thunderous crash of a massive form landing on the ground causing her to turn. The undead dragon knight and his steed crashed down into the village crushing a building beneath them. The dragon reared back and let loose a bellow of dark flame.

"I can kill, but I will never die!" the dragon knight said dismounting.

"Varmosnyxx kill everyone in the village, leave only ash!"

"C'mon Princess nothing we can do now."

The dragon knight strode through the fire, it seemed to part allowing him to pass. The horned helmet hid his face, but the tattered armor and visible bones spoke of its death like visage. The fire's light was not strong enough to tear away death's shadowy mask. The dragon knight extended a hand towards the princess and said, "join me in death. Together with me child of the Titan blood, we can rule over all of Ayenee."

"No! I will never join you monster!" She yelled back pushing Captain Haile away.

"Not in this life will I ever give into the darkness that surrounds."

The shadowy specter seemed offended by her stern refusal.

"Median will see your kingdom and all kingdoms turned to dust. I was once of the Firebloom line. I fought to help forge this entire kingdom. I gave my life for this land and in my last breath, I was cursed. The ghost of all the families I killed in forging this kingdom and defeating its enemies. They came for me in my last moment of life. I have seen death, delivered death, and been denied the solemn comfort of its everlasting embrace."

"It's not too late to change your ways! You can save these people and end the cycle of death that has imprisoned you."

The princess understood why the knight could not find peace, he had dealt death and become death in return. In order for him to rest, he had to protect life not deliver death. She had studied curses in Vanguard.

The knight looked at her and shook his head.

"Median controls me. I can do only his will."

The dragon knight began to move towards her and she raised her hands up. A golden light shot from her hands, wrapping about the knight. He fought and struggled to continue towards her, his

momentum slowing.

"You can't stop me!"

She drew upon the good memories of her childhood, the moments of laughter and how the sun felt on her skin in fields of sunflowers. The miasma of light surrounding her hands grew and now the light began to enter the knight's armor. It found what remained of his soul and caressed it with the purity of the light she summoned. The knight cried at as though he were mourning a dead lover or a beloved child.

"What are you doing to me!?"

"I am showing you what it means to be alive. I am showing you what you should be protecting, what you took from those you killed."

The knight fell to his knees and his eyes looked to the light surrounding him. He tried to turn his eyes away from it, but the brilliance held within it memories. Memories of everything that made life so precious.

He bellowed out another cry.

"Stop! I can't take anymore! IT HURTS!"

She felt her legs buckle as the strain began to take its toll. Captain Haile placed his arm around her waist and steadied her. He looked at her with assurance in his eyes.

"You've got this princess! Make him remember."

She felt the hand of the woman and her child against her other side. A tear of pride and happiness fell from the Princess's eyes as she saw more coming to lend their strength.

The light now moved through the knight and shot out towards the lumbering form of his dragon, paralyzing the undead creature.

"Every life you took had a destiny, had a reason for being! Even that reason was small compared to others. They all were threads in the weave of destiny."

The knight felt the loss, the agony, the sadness, he relived the memories of the lives he took. He watched as the person he loved died hundreds of times, experienced the loss of his children, again and again, he clung hopelessly to the final strands of life. He begged for life, he cried for loss, he wished that none of them had to die.

An explosion of light and everyone were knocked off their feet. The fires died out and the knight and his dragon seemed to vanish in the blink of an eye. Haile looked down at the princess and she smiled, "I did it."

"Yes, you did." He smiled and watched as she drifted into sleep.

The Grave Brothers vs. General Thane

The hills were covered with tall green grass swaying in the mountain breeze. Rice terraces dotted the landscape as well as other farms and livestock corrals. There looming over it all like a watchful parent

was the capital city and above that the royal castle. There were gates seven each representing a tenant in the teaching of the golden path. Each gate was an element that one had to master in order to bring harmony to the soul and find inner peace. Maples, Cherry, and Oak trees made a thick forest around all this. In the distance, the Great Western Wall of Ayenee rose up amongst the mountains towards the heavens. Two pillars on each side of the gate one with a jade serpent coiled about it and the other with an ivory one.

King Kang stood looking through a lens that hung over one of the castle windows. He could see the vast armies pouring from the ships onto the beaches of Atlantica. His ancestors had come to this land as would-be conquerors as well. They had fought the natives long and hard, but over time they came to learn the secrets of this land. They became protectors, building the Great Wall to protect the Valley of the Ancients. His brother-in-law had grown too complacent. Pacifika had come to depend on the magic storms and fog that shrouded the Western Island and coast. The reefs had taken many explorers to their doom, many armies. The wall had prevented any land threat. Somehow an army had arrived and now the secrets of this land were in peril.

"Have the citizens take refuge in the city or flee to the caves in the north to hide. Have our infantry divisions and their commanders on the field. Let us give them a fight."

The infantry moved out of the capital gates forming row upon row of armored force barring entrance.

Median lounged atop his golden dais as Morgan and Roman looked on the mounting defense of Atlantica.

"M'lord they are taking the field, they are intending to fight," Morgan said dispelling the spell that allowed her to scry from a distance.

Median plucked another grape and tossed it into his mouth.

"Have the Grave brothers prove their worth. Let us see if science has any place in this new world I am destined to rule." Median snapped his fingers ordering one of the pages to go and fetch the two strange siblings. The former queen of Pacifika knelt in submission beside Median's throne listening.

Grand Artificer Mortis Grave and Grand Alchemist Rigor Grave wore black robes and skull-like masks. Their race was unknown, their faces had never been seen. They kept to themselves and held everything they made as secrets only for their eyes and the slaves that served them.

"God-king Median we shall prove to you that science has its place in your new kingdom. I shall show you how my alchemy can visit death upon all your foes." Rigor said giving a deep bow.

"And my artifacts shall grind your enemies kingdoms to dust." Added Mortis giving an equally deep bow.

"Stop wasting words then and go. Prove your theories on the field and we shall applaud the spectacle. Fail me and we shall witness your deaths." Median waved a hand ushering them to go.

"1st through 4th divisions stand with me!" shouted General Ko as the four groups of soldiers moved in behind. They began to march down the hill towards the encamped invading army.

"Let us show these invaders the way back to their ships!" A cheer rose up as they sounded off. Shields and armor glinted in the sun, swords reflected the light in bright bursts of white light.

A green fog suddenly came in from the east. The army halted as General Ko raised a hand. The fog crept closer shrouding the ground and the invaders camp from view. Ko and his men marched into the fog thinking it merely a diversion. "Stay close together, watch each other's backs!"

As the fog moved in around them the air was filled with a strange smell. Ko reached up and grabbed his throat, his mouth, eyes, throat, and nose all burned. He fell to his knees as he began to choke. Those behind him fell as well. As he lay grasping his throat the general looked up seeing a black shrouded figure moving in, its face the visage of death. It began to toss shuriken and taunted his army. Those that were outside the fog began to back up, heading back up the hill.

"Load the tubes and put them on the belts! Now! Behold my greatest creation! The Gatling cannon!" Mortis sat on a seat that was attached to a giant barrel, at the center of which was a large cog shaped piece that had a conveyor belt of tubes. Behind the devices, slaves manned a crank that turned the gear and pulled in the tubes. To the side of this slaved took up brass tubes stuffing a black powder and oddly sized cannon balls. They then placed them onto the rigged belt to be conveyed up to the device. Where a hammer like part controlled by some internal machinations then slammed into them igniting the powder and sending the ball down the tube.

Cannon fire rained down on the retreating army as Rigor laughed gleefully. The ground exploded and bodies flew into the air, along with gore and debris. The entire 1st through 4th division were annihilated. General Thane watched in horror. "5th through 9th divisions forward!" he cried. They reluctantly complied. Thane marched with his men down to the same green fog as the artillery fire ceased.

He raised his guan dao and began to spin it calling upon the air creating the wind that parted the fog. Shuriken suddenly came flying at him. The front line of troops ran and crouched down in front of him, their shields raised blocking the projectiles. A vial came flying through the air towards the crouching troops. Thane turned his guan doa and hit the vial with the end of the wooden hilt sending it flying back the way it came.

"You can't stand there all day!" came a voice from the concealment of the remaining fog. A metal orb was tossed from the fog, smoke trailing behind it. It landed amongst them and exploded. The soldiers shielding Thane were slain, Thane felt shrapnel lodged in his right leg.

Soldiers rushed in. "Make sure to scatter when you see one of those damn things! Help me up!" The soldiers pressed on. Thane hit back another vial and as it broke on the ground the green fog rose up from it. There was a strange hissing noise from the right. "Shields up!" Thane shouted as a liquid splashed on the shields causing their surface to hiss and melt. One soldier did not raise his shield quick enough and now lay dead his face bubbling and melting.

Thane knew he just had to get sight of this assassin and he would be able to deal with him. Thane watched as another metal orb came hissing from the fog. He vaulted with his weapon and kicked it sending it back towards where it came. It exploded and there was a shriek from the fog. Thane created another wind and as the fog blew back the crawling form of a black robed figure was seen on the ground. He wore a mask that allowed him to breathe and see in the fog, he wore some sort of covering beneath his robes that protected his skin.

The grenade had barely caught him, a large jagged piece of metal jutted from his ankle. Thane gave an order and three of his soldiers ran over and thrust their swords down into the man's body. A small sliver of smoke rose up and Thane was about to shout, but it was too late. An explosion flared brightly and his soldiers were nothing more than slag, gore, and bone.

He awoke on the ground, the commander of the 6th Division slapped him. She yelled, but his ears rang. Behind her, the ground exploded and shouts rose up. He shook his head and stood. The cannon on the hill across the valley was once more firing on them. "Charge!" he raised his weapon up. The soldiers followed his orders moving in behind him.

He watched as the cannon slowly began to swivel towards their direction. It moved very slowly he realized, that might be their only saving grace. "To the left!" the order was cried back and the army moved to the left. The figure atop the cannon shook his fist and started yelling at the slaves below. He fired a few shots taking a few of Thane's men, but he had to stop firing for the cannon to be turned.

Thane waited for the right moment and gave the order "To the right!" They moved as one, but the figure atop the cannon was smart. "Halt!" he yelled to the slave below and began to fire as the army was in the middle of transitioning.

"Divide! Divide!" Thane yelled as the army split into two charging sections. There were a lot of casualties. A lot more than Thane would have liked. They were nearly to the hill. That's when Thane realized something else. In order for the cannon to fire down, it required another group of slaves to move another crank to lower the weapon. This also required the weapon to be still otherwise the crank would take out the slaves trying to turn it.

Thane asked for a dagger and tossed it towards the seated figure. The figure ducked down as the army reached the hill. They were met by a small force of the enemies forces. Thane took out a special torch lighting it up and tossing it on the field behind him. Red smoke began rising up to the sky. General Kain watched and signaled for the 10th and 13th divisions to move forward behind them were the archers and mounted units as well as siege units.

They began to cross the field while the cannon was distracted. Thane climbed up the cannon as his men fought off its defenders. He thrust his gaun dao at a figure that was garbed similarly to the assassin below. The figure drew something from his robe and aimed it at Thane. There was a loud boom and Thane felt something tear through his shoulder. He flew back off the cannon and hit the ground in pain. The figure stood on the steps of the ladder leading up to the seat.

"You fool! I shall avenge my brother's death! You will pay for this embarrassment and then I shall level your city walls!" He fumbled with the strange weapon and pointed it back at Thane. Thane knew this was it. There was a click and the weapon did nothing. The figure turned it over in his hands and suddenly it exploded in his hands. The figure tumbled smoking onto the grass near Thane. Thane rolled over and grabbed the figure. He fought, but Thane managed to get his hands around the figure's neck and snapped it.

He stood and helped his soldiers fight the last of the group of defenders. He orders them to pull the cannon back to the capital. They would be able to use it in the defense of the kingdom. As they did this they were pursued by more soldiers from the invaders. Kane and his troops moved in covering their flank and giving them the time to pull it across the field. Thane explained to Kane how to operate the device, having watched it be fired and loaded as he crossed the field. He hoped it was good enough for him to be able to use it.

Thane turned and continued to fight, falling there on the battlefield.

The Mountain Honru vs. General Dance

"I want every scrap of parchment those two had in their tents, every device, every scrap, every powder, and any diagram! They may have failed, but they have single handily halved the amount of infantry. They walk now in the eternal light of my holy kingdom! Honru! Finish what they started!"

A shadow covered the soldiers and Median. Something crashed down on the ground and then suddenly another loud crash. The earth shook with each sound. Soldiers poured after the shadow to join the battle in the valley.

"Do you understand it?" General Kane looked to General Dance who studied the strange device that had cost so many lives.

"From what you explained I think I can get this thing working for us. This black powder is dangerous. It is not unlike that used with a regular cannon, but I think it is much more volatile. Be careful with it. We already have over four hundred casualties and wounded. We don't need to add to that total." Dance looked out over the battlefield that already looked bad. The wounded were being pulled from the field, bodies of the dead or dying had to be left behind. They feared another attack by the invaders may occur any second now.

The remaining infantry had retreated after pushing back the first wave of attackers after the two cloaked figures had died.

"So many died by this and for this. I hope it proves useful." Dance said to himself looking at the Gatling cannon. From over the hill came a roar as new invaders charged down into the valley.

Over the ledge, something else came. It lumbered towering over the soldiers into the sky. It was a giant, its exposed chest was covered in scars. It wore a dragon skull for a helmet and carried a large club with swords pinned into it. It wore crude wooden armor with a few pieces of crude metal attached by ropes and chain mail here and there.

"What the hell is that!?" Dance shouted as it took the ridge. Carts of boulders were drawn up beside it and it didn't take long for it to toss one in the air and bat it with its club. The boulder soared over the battlefield crashing into the city wall. Defenders flew from the parapets and crowds screamed as a cabbage and turnip vendor's stall was crushed by the boulder. Some would say it was no great loss, but others said it was too close for comfort.

"Damn it all! We have to stop that bastard!"

"Archers would do little, they'd have to get across the field. Infantry and mounted would be pulp from the club. Our siege engines have to be moved to even be used and they are too inaccurate. Shit! I really wanted more time to study this damn device before using it." Dance ran over to the cannon and climbed up the ladder, jumping into the seat he yelled, "Man the cranks! Man the ammunition belt! I need it adjusted to these coordinates!" He scribbled onto a piece of parchment and looked down the barrel at the circle mounted in the middle serving as a way of aiming. He handed the scrap to one of his soldiers and turned to General Kane.

"You're going to have to take the field again. Take my archers with you widdle down their numbers as best you can. I'll take care of the big guy!"

General Kane nodded and the troops began to move onto the field. A handful of boulders came flying towards the capital. They tore into the siege engines and city walls. Dance began to wish they had

moved the cannon behind the city gates. He could only imagine a few of these mounted on some towers over the gates. If he survived this battle he would have to propose the plans to build such mounted turrets.

"Okay almost in positi-" he was cut off as a hail of boulders came crashing down on the cannon's location. The cannon lost its stability and lurched to the right on its side. This caused the belt to bunch up and made it where Dance would only get a few shots off before it jammed permanently.

"I need it realigned he yelled." He cursed that nothing could simply work easy without a hitch. More boulders came down on the gun causing it to move. Dance looked through the aiming circle and saw that it had moved to be under the ridge that the giant stood on. Dance had an idea. "Alright stand back!" he whirled a crank in front of him and the hammer came back and fired. Just then the field was hit with a barrel of burning oil. It exploded amongst the archers and sent volumes of burning fluid out onto the masses. The ridge was hit and the giant lurched as he threw something else.

"Okay...okay..." he looked down the barrel, but plumes of smoke clouded his vision. He just needed a few more shots. A sea breeze hit the smoke and moved it enough that he could see the giant had slid down the ridge. "Smile bastard!" he whirled the crank and fired a shot that hit the dragon helm cracking it in the center. He fires three more shots before the gun jammed one of the cannon balls was embedded in the giant's forehead blood trickling down its now visible face.

"Yeah!" He raised his hands and looked around at the chaos around him. There was a strange man with an eyepatch and a cat amongst a pile of bodies. The man hefted a sword onto his shoulder and smiled tossing a lit cigar amid the barrels of black powder. "Been a blast! Got to go!"

The cannon and the ridge which it was upon, exploded. Dance's form was consumed by the explosion and never recovered. Roman jumped in the air coming down in front of the gate. Defenders closed in around him, he laughed the sound of steel meeting steel, quickly followed by the sound of bodies hitting the dry, hard, rock packed earth.

"Halt!"

Roman looked up as a figure in light mail and white cloth jumped down landing near him. The figure had black hair and had cloth wrapped around his face. He brandished a strange sword that Roman had never seen before.

"No one enters the gate of storms except through me!"

"Fine by me, I was getting bored anyway." Roman scratched the stubble on his face and shrugged lowering his sword. "Keep things even Kage."

The cat leaped down and began to enlarge into a sabertooth tiger like form. "I'll make sure no one bothers you, but be quick."

Janyru vs. Kroin of the Jade Serpent

Roman vs. The Seven Swords of Destiny

Morgan vs. Priestess Emerald and King Kang

Median vs. The Prince of Atlantica

The Fall

Weapons, Relics, and Weakness

Abilities

ITEM:

ITEM:

ITEM:

ITEM:

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Quotes

Trivia

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