Foreword/Disclaimer:

Despite being featured prominently in this story and in practically all his other works, in real life the author does not condone deadbeat parenting, sexual promiscuity, marital infidelity, public displays of indecent exposure, racism (against halflings), sexism, or harems.

Also, the events contained in this story are completely fictional. In no way shape or form did the author, either in-game or out, ever sleep or cyber with any of the characters or players mentioned in the story. Contrary to popular belief, the Morituus Girls are NOT a harem, but a sophisticated group of female gamers with a fun sense of humor.

Additionally, although great effort was made to remain consistent with official EQ lore, there were certain circumstances where information regarding characters, locations, and historical events were either unavailable or undesirable. In these cases, the author took certain creative liberties and basically made things up to suit his needs.

Please note that this story is incomplete, and will remain that way because I am lazy. Originally conceived as a 500 page novel spanning all 16 EQ expansions, it has been massively overhauled and trimmed down to a fraction of that due to the relatively short time frame of the contest. Entire chapters were removed and many of those that did not get dropped completely were simply given brief summaries, or a combination of summaries and actual story.

Since the contest, I’ve gone back and filled in most of the missing chapters for the first half of the story (with the exception of the Xegony story line – which actually had it’s own unique plot originally, but when I started writing the missing chapters I determined that it just worked better as is). The general plot and main events/characters for the second half of the story (after the fall of Firiona Vie) have already been determined, but the chapters and specific details are still unfinished.

Finally, I’ve sprinkled the story with lines from some of my favorite books, songs, movies (tons of Star Wars), and web comics. First one to find them all and correctly name the sources wins a cookie. And a free t-shirt.
The Untold, Yet Completely True*, History of Norrath That “The Man” Does Not Want You To Know

* See Disclaimer

By Saint Morituus the Censored, Legend of Norrath
Dedicated to...

My wife – First and foremost... always. You are the love of my life. When writing the mushy stuffs, I was thinking of you. Promise!

My guild leader – In-game, you turned me into what I am today. You have no one to blame but yourself.

My cousin – Even though I didn't follow a single piece of advice that you gave me, your encouragement and support kept me going.

The Morituus Girls – I originally had you all in here, each with prominent roles, but due to time constraints this novel is only a fraction of what should have been. If you were edited out or had your role reduced, I apologize – you still hold a special place in my... well, not heart, but somewhere else in my body, I guess.

My friends – See above. Except most of you are jerks anyway, so you don't get an apology.
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In the beginning... before the fame, before the fortune, before the endless harem of women, Morituus was just another high elf wizard living a simple life in Felwithe. Every morning, he would wake, wash, eat, and get dressed, then head out to his 9 to 5 job at The Amethyst Palace to do the bidding's of the Keepers of the Art. This all changed
the day he met a beautiful high elven maiden by the name of Amnerys.

Coming from the cultural elite, Amy was forbidden from socializing with the likes of a commoner such as Morit. In those days, arranged marriages were common place, especially for those fortunate enough to be in Amy's lofty social caste. However, the forbiddeness of their love only fanned the flames of passion in Morit's heart, and they continued their courtship long after Amy's own forced marriage was consummated.

Knowing that if they were ever caught he would be forever expelled from the place of his birth, Morit soon embraced his new rebellious lifestyle. Constantly living life on the edge, the once humble and demure high elf soon developed an attitude of cocky, even brazen confidence.

This change did not go unnoticed amongst his peers. Although his new found courage served him well at his job with the Keepers, some individuals began to resent his sometimes blatant audacity. However, he did not care much about what others thought, for the only one who's
opinion he valued was that of his fair Amy.

One fateful day, his accession within the ranks of the Keepers would come around to forever alter his life. The abomination known as Mayong Mistmoore had been a thorn in Felwithe's side for many years, and King Tearis Thex had determined that he needed to be rid of this blight upon his kingdom. Tearis himself called a meeting of the highest ranking members in all the guilds of Felwithe and Kelethin, for he needed a champion.

Many names were bandied about, but one in particular struck the King's fancy... a brash, up and coming wizard named Morituus. Possessed with the rare combination of extraordinary magical and physical gifts, along with the type of bold and arrogant demeanor that was very rare amongst their race, the King realized that this individual was the type of elf who just might be able to pull this daunting task off. And if he wasn't... the city of Felwithe would have lost very little, as outside of his profession, Morit was not as well known as some of the other candidates who were being considered for what many
believed to be a suicidal mission.

Morit was summoned to appear before the King, and when informed of what his charge would be, the young wizard laughed. “March into the very heart of the fiend's lair, fight through his endless horde of freaks, then slay the demon himself?,” he asked. “Surely this was someone's idea of a bad joke!”

Tearis was not amused with the insolent wizard's harsh critique of his personally conceived plan, and was on the verge of expelling the handsome young elf from his domain when The Queen interjected, requesting that both Morituus and Thex reconsider their positions.

Morit bowed in deep respect for the wisdom and patience displayed by her royal highness and proposed a compromise: He would not be able to completely exterminate all of Mistmoore's numerous creations, but the wizard did have a plan that he believed would rid the King's lands of the vile creature himself.

The King was intrigued, and agreed that this would be acceptable. Morit then shocked those in attendance by
requesting a reward for his service.

As a member of the Keepers, it was naturally assumed that he would graciously perform his duty simply for the betterment of Felwithe and his King. However, the same arrogance that had elevated Morit from the other candidates in the Tearis' eyes was now coming back to haunt the King.

Morit argued that the task at hand was much greater than had ever been asked upon from any of Thex's subjects, and that the reason for his request was pure and just. Thex agreed with the wizard's assessment as to the enormity of the quest, but then asked the young elf what it was that he would be requesting as a reward.

Morit returned the question with one of his own: “What would it be worth to the King of Felwithe to truly be rid of Mistmoore's presence in the Faydark once and for all?”

Tearis smiled broadly as, for the first time, he seriously considered this possibility....

Thex immediately granted the young wizard anything in the kingdom that was within his power as king to give...
with the exception, of course, of his throne and crown. Morit assured the king that he desired no such thing, and bowed deeply before taking his leave.
Chapter 1
“Life in Felwithe: Part 1”

As he prepared to depart, Morituus brought with him only two things: his closest friend and confidant Ambien, and a simple wooden chair.

They left the city to no major fanfare, for the king did not wish to lower the morale of the citizens, should Morit
fail in his task. But as they passed, members of the FelGuard and Emerald Warriors silently saluted the pair, although more than a few seemed to give Morit a confused look as to the choice of his weapon...

Once outside the confines of the city, Ambien broke the silence. “Ah Morit... are you sure about this?” the wood elf asked his friend.

“Of course!” Morit replied without hesitating.

“You do remember the original cause of Mistmoore's curse, right?” Ambien persisted, obviously uncomfortable with speaking the unholy lord's name. “Are you sure it's wise to challenge him in that way?”

The high elf smiled confidently and said, “Oh, I haven't forgotten.” Then he added, “And I'm counting on the fact that Mayong hasn't forgotten either.”

Ambien winced. “Must you speak so casually about him?” he inquired as he glanced around nervously. “He has
eyes all over the Fay."

But it wasn't his minions that concerned Morit, it was the creature itself. Despite his apparently endless confidence, deep down inside Morit knew that his plan had a fatal flaw, and he silently prayed that Mistmoore still respected, or at least feared, the ancient ways.

As they moved in closer to Mistmoore's domain, Ambien's nerves seemed to settle and he became more irritated than worried.

"Why did you have to bring me along, anyway?" he bristled.

"To carry my chair."

"Why can't you carry your own chair? I got a family, what about my wife and kids?"

Morit shuddered at the through of his friend's hell spawn. "I think I'm doing you a favor."

Ambien ignored the insult, and it wasn't long before they reached their destination.

"Castle Mistmoore," Ambien observed. "Why I let you drag me to this crap hole, I'll never know."
“It's because you love me,” the wizard answered sarcastically. “Now give me my chair.”

The druid did as he was told before adding, “We're gonna die... you know that, right?”

Morit nodded in agreement, then continued onward into the castle grounds.

Although they had traversed the woods without incident, they did find themselves confronted with a few of Mistmoore's weaker creations once they entered his domain.

As Ambien easily dealt with the pawns, Morit stepped forward to issue his challenge to their king.

“Mayong!” he yelled. “My name is Morituus Maurader, and I have come for your phat lootz!”

Hearing his own name, along with the traditional Norrathian greeting that he was becoming all too familiar with, Mayong became eager to see who his next victims would be. As he stepped out onto the balcony overlooking the courtyard in which the intruders were standing, his smile widened as he laid eyes on his two challengers.

“Oh how sweet,” he sarcastically announced, “my dear
friend Tearis has sent me another peace offering.” He paused to lick his lips before adding, “I do hope you are as delicious as the last ones.”

Ambien shot his friend a worried look.

“That's not funny, Morit.”

The wood elf glanced around, taking inventory of a new group of creatures that were approaching from the east. “Hurry up and do your thing so we can get out of here, please.”

Morit ignored his friends request and stood his ground, he needed to wait for the right moment or the vampire would see through his plan and wipe them out.

Mayong, meanwhile, had noticed what Morit was carrying. His smile faded and his eyes narrowed.

Realizing that this was his opportunity, Morit took a deep breath and bellowed, “In the tradition of the elder gods, I challenge you to a match of Jankenpo!”

This second challenge was so ancient and sacred that the mere mention of it caused Mistmoore's remaining subjects in the courtyard to flee. Even Mayong himself had flinched
upon hearing the words.

“How DARE you!” he chastised.

Morit smiled as a small halfling suddenly appeared in the courtyard between him and the dark lord's balcony – he had won.

“That's right, Mayong,” Morit gloated, “I went there.” Mistmoore clenched his fists, but did not respond.

“Now what are you going to do about it?” Morit taunted, pressing the issue, “I have my chair right here, will you face me?”

He casually swung his seat and placed it on the ground in front of him before walking around and mockingly sitting down.

Again, Mistmoore didn't answer, but the anger, and fear, was apparent in his eyes as he alternated his glance between Morit and the halfling.

After what seemed like a lifetime, Mayong made his decision. Without saying another word the vampire slowly disappeared into the shadows of his castle, never to be seen within those walls again.
With Mistmoore's apparent retreat, the halfling shook his head and said, “Oof...” before departing as abruptly as he had arrived.

Morit breathed a huge sigh of relief and turned to face Ambien. The wood elf was smiling from ear to ear.

“What?” Morit asked his friend, who was still giving him a goofy grin.

“I love you, man.”

Morit laughed before mockingly blowing him a kiss.

“I told you so,” he pointed out. “Now make yourself useful,” he said as he tossed the wooden chair to his friend.
Without their master, the minions of Mistmoore were thrown into disarray. Morit and Ambien could already feel the difference within the forest as they made their way back home.

“So we actually did it...” Ambien remarked, still having a
hard time believing they had succeeded.

“What's this 'we' crap?” Morit interjected. “I did all the work, all you did was carry my chair.”

Again, the wood elf ignored his friend's insult.

“So you're actually going to do it, then?” he asked, changing the subject. “You're going to have Thex allow you to marry Amy?”

“That's the idea,” Morit replied, smiling at the thought. Ambien smiled too. He was happy for his friend.

“You got some balls, I'll give you that!”

“That's what impresses you?” Morit laughed “Defeating Mayong wasn't enough?”

“Considering the circumstances... yeah.” replied Ambien, not even noticing Morit had used Mistmoore's common name.

When they reached the gates of Felwithe, Ambien bade farewell to his friend.

“You sure you don't want to come with me?” implored the wizard.

“Nah, all I did was carry this, remember?” his friend
replied, handing the chair back to Morit. “Besides,” he added, “I don't want to be around when Thex hears about your reward.”

The two elves embraced as friends and Morit headed into town. Noticing the guards' gaze following him and his chair, Morit gave them a thumbs up to which they replied with a hearty cheer.

As he made his way into town, he noticed that word of his victory was already spreading fast. Citizens were out in the streets celebrating and apparently Tovanik's was commemorating the occasion with a huge block-party entitled 'Morituus Day'.

Morit did his best to avoid the crowds, and luckily for him most of the parties seem to be concentrated on the lower part of town. When he reached Amy's residence on the upper side, he used the chair he was carrying to help him scale a small wall. Using a combination of jumping, levitation, and invisibility spells, he made his way up the complex, carefully avoiding any patrols.

When he reached Amy's window, he gave the usual
knock, then waited. It wasn't long before the window opened, and he made his way inside.

It took his eyes a second to adjust to the darker interior of her room, but it seemed more like an eternity to Morit, who was anxious to see his future bride-to-be. After crawling through the window sill, he straightened up and saw her standing before him. He smiled broadly before taking her into his arms.

"I didn't think I was going to see you again," she cried.

"I know," he said, soothingly, "But I'm back, and now we can be together forever."

She pulled away to look him in the eyes.

"You can't be serious!"

"I am," he reassured her.

She threw herself into his arms again, but sobbed into his chest. "It's forbidden... you, me... us. They'd never allow it, and you know that."

"I entered a sacred pact with the king," he insisted. "I fulfilled my end of the bargain. The king is obligated to fulfill his."
He gently kissed the top of her head and took in the sweet aroma of her hair before continuing.

“Anything in his kingdom that he has the power to give,” Morit reminded her, “with the exception of his throne or crown...”

He pulled back and softly caressed her face with his hand.

“...and I chose you.”

With that, Amy could not contain herself any longer. She grabbed her lover and violently threw him on the bed.

Taken aback, yet strangely turned on, by the suddenness of her actions, Morit scrambled to sit up. Amy watched him, smiling. She slowly walked around to the side of the bed and gently sat down beside him. It was her turn now to caress his face with her fingers.

Morit closed his eyes as she began singing him a soft tune, fully taking in the moment. It was her natural gift of music, unique amongst high elves, that led to their first meeting many years ago. He genuinely believed she'd have made a wonderful bard, had she been given the chance.
“Mori...” she whispered.

“Mmm?” he responded, eyes still closed.

“Do you love me?”

He smiled, opening his eyes to look at her.

“I hunted down and banished the most feared demon in Faydwer for you. I'm about the defy my king for you,” he pointed out. “Of course I love you.”

She smiled as he closed his eyes again. That was exactly what she needed to hear at a time like this.

As she paused to find the right words, she ran her hand down his chiseled chest. From his subtle movements, she could tell he was enjoying it.

She sighed to herself, then spoke the words she had been wanting to share with him for a while now...

“I'm pregnant.”

Eyes still closed, Morit's relaxed smile immediately disappeared. Visions of Ambien's multitude of children danced in his head – drooling, screaming, pooping... then getting their hands in the poop and spreading it all over themselves.
It started as a low rumble, not even audible to the precisely tuned elven ear, but soon grew in both volume and frequency until the sounds coming out of his mouth were no longer coherent words:

"...nononononononononononononono
NONONONONONO!
ONONONONONONONO!AHHHHHHHH!

AHHHHHH!AHHHHHH!"

Morit's screaming became uncontrollable, and it didn't take long before the door burst open and an elven guard entered the room with his sword drawn.

"Queen Amnerys!" he shouted, before reaching back with his weapon to strike down the still screaming wizard.

"No! Stop!" The Queen ordered.

She turned to Morit, who had stopped screaming, but was now trembling to the point where he was practically convulsing. The wizard broke free of her grasp and
scampered to the far wall.

“Mori... please!” she pleaded.

He looked at her with terror in his eyes and shook his head frantically before uttering the last words he would ever say to his first true love...

“Nope! Not mine!”

He then began casting a quick evacuation spell and was soon gone from her life forever.

Amy collapsed onto her bed, sobbing. The guard quickly re-sheathed his sword and knelt by her side.

“My queen, are you injured?” he implored.

She shook her head, wiping away her tears as best she could.

“No Galeth, I'm alright.”

She turned to face him and their eyes met...

She paused for a second, then told him, “You'll do...”

“Woot!” he cried as she grabbed him forcefully by the collar and threw him on the bed...
And so began Morit's exile from Felwithe. In the many centuries that followed, he roamed the world of Norrath freely. Over the course of his travels, he met many individuals both important and insignificant to the development of Norrath's history.
Countless adventures, countless wars, and countless other “conquests” marked this period in his life. He made his living using a variety of different skills, as each of life's unpredictable situations demanded: a butcher, a baker, a candlestick maker - he did it all, baby. But more than anything, he was a lover, through and through. Spreading his seeds of happiness wherever his adventures took him.

We now rejoin our hero many, many, years later. While traveling through Nektulos Forest, on his way to visit a couple of 'his girls' at the Temple of Solusek Ro, he ran across a pair of halflings in a bitter argument, and a traveling spell salesman who just wouldn't take 'no' for an answer.

While Morit is distracted by the bickering couple and the persistent salesman, all four are ambushed and captured by a band of Teir'Dal soldiers and taken back to their master's lair deep within the Third Gate of Neriak.
“Guards... leave us!”

Reluctantly, the thugs obeyed their tyrannical master's orders. As the last one shuts the door behind him, Zatozia the Torturess turns to face her newly captured prey.

“So... let's see what they've brought me today.”

She menacingly paced in front of her bound prisoners, carefully inspecting each one.

“Two halflings... two wizards...” she paused as she passed in front of Morit, allowing her eyes to trail down to the high elf's nether regions. “…and one snake,” she continued with a smile and a wink. “I'm gonna have some fun with this one.”

She moved on.

“So what's your story?” she asked, stopping in front of the other wizard. He was lean and tall, and when they had first met, Morit was actually impressed with the man... right up until he opened his mouth and started talking.

“I am Norrath's greatest wizard!” the erudite started...

Morit coughed, “Bull-**censored**!” The high elf paused to sniff his nose, before apologizing, “Sorry, sinuses acting up.”
Clearly annoyed, the taller wizard turned back to face his captor.

“Perhaps you've heard of me? My name is Al'Kabor.” Morit started snickering, but was ignored by both parties.

“Ah yes...” Zat replied, sounding rather unimpressed, “I've heard of your... spells.”

“Yeah, they're like extra **censored** on an **censored**-cream sundae...”

The words had barely left Morit's mouth when suddenly his head was viciously knocked to the side by the ball at the end of Zatozia's mace.

“OW!” he protested, “That hurt!”

“It's supposed to hurt,” Zat replied angelically, “That's what 'torture' is all about.”

She sashayed over to the high elf and kissed the open wound on his cheek, causing it to slowly heal as she pulled away.

“There, all better?” she asked, almost sincerely.

“Cleric chicks are hot,” he replied, “Especially ones with
huge knockers, like yourself."

**WHAP!**

"AH! Gah!" Morit gasped, "That was a compliment!"

"I know..." Zat replied, bending over to kiss the new gash she had made, "That's how I say 'thank you'."

She smiled as his wounds healed again.

"I can do this aaaaall daaaay," she added, while shaking her endowed bosom at him. "So just keep it up!" she snapped, no longer flirting.

She walked over to one of the halflings and knelt down.

"And what's your name, little one?"

The small man averted his eyes, refusing to speak.

"Oh... that's too bad!" she said, raising her mace to strike, "I'll show you how I deal with tough guys..."

**BAM!**

"AHHH!" Morit screamed. "WHA-WHA... WHAT WAS THAT!? That wasn't even me!"

"Ooooh, I knooow," Zat taunted, talking as if to a baby. "But you're so much more kissable," she confessed while planting a big wet one on his face. "There... good as new!"
She took a step back and bit the tip of her finger. “I don't usually put out this much on a first date,” she said with mock innocence, “You're a lucky one.”

“It ain't worth it...” he muttered under his breath.

Her eyes opened wide as she brought her arm back low...

“NOT THE CROTCH NOT THE CROTCH!!!” Morit blurted.

Zat relaxed her stance slightly.

“Oh, don't worry. I would never do anything to damage something that... magnificent.”

POW!

Zat threw an uppercut with her mace, catching Morit square on the chin and sending him slightly airborne. He landed with a crash on the table behind him, and the momentum carried him over to the floor on the other side. He didn't even scream this time.

Al looked over his shoulder. “I think you killed him...” he said, with just a tinge of hope.

Zat peered over the table that Morit had landed on, mildly concerned.

“No, I don't think so,” she said, before dismissively
casting a stronger heal spell. The others immediately heard Morit groggily start cursing.

“But perhaps that is enough for now…”

She turned and started for the door.

“I'll be right back.” She snapped her fingers and a soft humming sound filled the room. “Be sure not to touch anything…”

The magical restraints that had been binding their hands were lifted, but other powerful traps throughout the room had been activated in it's stead.

As the door closed, Morit staggered to his feet. As soon as he regained his bearings, he marched over to the halfling who had previously refused to give his name.

“Look you little **censored**!” he yelled, “Name, rank, and number – you're allowed to give that!”

He took a step back and sized up the large rodent.

“From the looks of it, you can't have much of a rank and no self-respecting woman would ever ask for your number, so just give her your **censored** name!”

The high elf then took a seat on a nearby bench,
rubbing his jaw.

“Vorp.”

“Eh?” he looked up at the halfling.

“My name is Vorp.”

“Well look at that, the little **censored** can speak common.”

Vorp uttered something in native halfling, to which the other one chuckled.

“That would be you're momma,” Morit replied, to the surprise of the two halflings. “That's right,” he added, “daddy speaks **censored**-ling, so watch yo mouth.”

“Okay children, are you done arguing?” Al interjected.

Morit turned to look at the erudite in disbelief, “They started it.”

“We need to find a way out of here,” the erudite continued, ignoring Morit, “that woman is going to come back, and sooner or later she's gonna accidentally kill you and start working her way towards me.”

“Yeah, escape... I'm working on it,” Morit replied as he formed a small ball of ice in the palm of his hand.
“How's that going to help us escape?” asked Vorp.

“It's not,” he answered, pressing the ice against his cheek, “It's for my face. That witch didn't heal it right.”

Vorp sighed and grabbed Morit's head.

“Hey!”

“Stop struggling, let me take a look,” the druid scolded.

“Here, this should help.”

He began casting a spell, and soon Morit felt much better.

“Hey, thanks Ugly. You're alright,” he said, sounding genuinely grateful.

“Aw how sweet, they bonded,” Al mocked. “Now how about we focus on a plan to get us out of here?”

“Already got one,” Morit replied.

The erudite cocked an eyebrow in mock interest, “Do tell…”

“It's pretty ingenious, actually. You see, we got 2 wizards, a druid…” he stopped and pointed at the other halfling, “I never caught what you were.”

“Your plan is stupid,” Al interrupted.
Morit snapped his attention back to the erudite, “Oh really?”

“Yes, really. You see those stones over there?” the erudite pointed to two periwinkle colored spheres at opposite ends of the room.

“The anchor stones that are being protected by her security barriers?” Morit answered bluntly. “The ones that are preventing us from porting? Yeah, what about them?”

“Uh...” the erudite was at a loss for words.

“Well, as I was saying... we got three porters, and two anchor stones to take out. Aside from the stones themselves, the security in this room seems to be attuned to her, so if I can distract her enough to disrupt that connection it should allow you three to take out the stones, then any one of us will be able to gate the group to safety.”

“And how do you plan on distracting her when the second she walks in she'll bind our hands again?”

“Glad you asked!” Morit replied. “Before she get's back, I'll take off all my clothes...”

At that, Al muttered something religious and buried his
large forehead in one of his hands.

“...and do my patented crotch dance,” Morit continued. 
“Provided she's really a woman, it should distract her enough to free yourselves from the bindings and destroy the stones!”

“There must be a...” Al began, before hearing a disturbance outside.

“No time!” Morit said, as he quickly undressed.

Just as he got the last of his clothes off, the humming in the room eased and the bindings around their hands returned.

Instinctively, the four adventurers lined up again in anticipation of Zat's arrival.

As they waited, Vorp stole a glance over at Morit.

“Are you sure about this?” the halfling asked.

Morit closed his eyes and smiled. He'd heard those words addressed to him so many times over the course of his life. It was a good omen.

He turned to the halfling and winked. “I like you.”

Vorp diverted his eyes, wishing the high elf wasn't so
naked when he said that.

Just then, the door swung open and Zatozlia walked into the room. As she entered, she noticed the pile of robes on the ground and immediately looked up to see her four prisoners lined up on the far side... one of them completely naked.

The sight was so comical and so unexpected, that she couldn't help but giggle.

Barely able to hold in her laughter, she began, “Do I even want to know what was going on here?”

But Morit was not in a laughing mood.

There was a new look in his eye. A cold, powerful, sexy look. As if drawn to the beat of some unheard European techno music, Morit's legs started swaying, and his head started nodding, and his waist started pumping, and his crotch started dancing.

Again, Zatozia was caught off guard.

Morit continued, gyrating his body to the delight of his dark elf captor. He took a few steps forward to test the waters, and when his head wasn't met with the blunt end of
Zatozia's mace, he jumped on the large table in the center of the room. With her back now turned to the others, Morit kicked his dance up a notch.

The others could feel the strength of their bonds ebbing and flowing along with each thrust of Morit's crotch.

Al muttered to himself, “By the gods, it's actually working!”

Suddenly, Morit's hands burst free of it's bonds. But instead of making a move for the anchor stones or trying to subdue the cleric, he started pumping his arms in sync with the rest of his body. Given the full version of his dance, Zatozia squealed with giddy delight and threw her arms in the air in a wild dance of her own.

The surge of ecstasy from Zat was enough to free the others. Quickly, Vorp ran to the nearest anchor stone, but found that the barrier protecting it was also fluctuating with the dark elf's hormones, making it impossible for him to safely reach. He turned to Al'Kabor, but the wizard had already noticed the problem and was positioning himself directly behind Zatozia for an attack.
Just as the wizard was starting his spell, the other halfling in the group yelled a warning, “Mistress Zatozia, look out!”

“Force Spiral of ME! Huzzah!” the erudite forcefully yelled.

Having heard the halfling's warning, the evil cleric had started to turn towards the commotion, but it was too late. Instead of being hit from behind, Zatozia was hit square in the chest by the full force of Al'Kabor's mightiest spell. The attack ripped off part of her clothing, exposing more of the bosomed dark elf's cleavage, but otherwise leaving her unharmed.

With the jig up, Morit took the opportunity to pause and stare at the glorious new view while pointing out, “Hey Al, that one could almost be useful in some circumstances…”

“GUARDS!” Zatozia began shouting.

“…but not this one – Vorp!”

Although Al's attack had failed to incapacitate their captor like he had originally planned, it had succeeded in distracting the dark elf long enough for Vorp to get to one
of the anchor stones.

With not enough time left to get to the other side, Vorp launched his stone across the room in a desperate attempt to hit the other. As the gods would have it, his aim was true and the two stones shattered upon impact.

With the translocational anchor field down, Al immediately began casting an evacuation spell. Knowing he was out of range, Morit nakedly pushed his way past Zat, careful to sneak a feel in the process, and blindly dove for the already closing portal.

He landed with a thud atop the hard stone surface of the ruined Nektulos portal spire, and again momentum was his enemy, causing him to tumble over the side and roll end over end down to the forest floor.

With his head throbbing again, he picked himself up and stumbled back to the top of the spire to see if his companions were alright. When he got back to the top, he saw Al holding the unnamed halfling in the air by his feet. Vorp was on the ground yelling viciously at his former companion.
“How could you Prathun!” the druid bemoaned, “If you tricked me into coming here, how many others have you betrayed! All of Rivervale shall hear of this!”

“What's going on?” Morit demanded.

“He's a spy!” the erudite exclaimed, glancing in the high elf's direction, “Probably not even a true halfling. I'll bet he's a member of the Ebon Mask in disguise!”

Seeing an opportunity, the shady rogue secretly reached into his pocket and quickly threw a clump of white powder at Al's head.

“Amnesia Dust in teh face!”

“Ah, my eyes!” the erudite screamed in agony, dropping the halfling – or whatever he was – in the process.

As the slippery rogue scampered off into the forest, Vorp rushed to Al's aid. He fingered the powder with a confused look before turning to Morit and saying, “It's just baking soda.”

The high elf rolled his eyes. “That's too bad.”

As soon as he removed the last of the powder from his eyes, Al'Kabor ported himself away without another word,
leaving Morit and Vorp alone in the forest.

“So... uh... I can give you a ride to Misty if you want,” Vorp offered, feeling uncomfortable about the fact that Morit was still naked. “I know a guy there who can make some clothes that will fit you.”

“Yeah, thanks,” Morit said. “It is a little chilly here.”
Chapter 4

“This Way to the Lake of Ill Omen”

Their mishap in Neriak set into motion a chain of events that eventually lead Vorp and Morit to forge an everlasting friendship. In time, the two friends would go on to form their own guild (named after Morit's crotch) and recruit some of the most talented men and women of their era.
However, as we rejoin them now, they are traveling to the newly (re)discovered lands of Kunark.

One of the many stories that have come from this place is that of the fabled outpost of Firiona Vie – where the citizens never wear clothes. Morit convinces Vorp and their new friend Vind to join him on an adventure to see if the legends are true.

Porting into the old Combine ruins, Morit and company take a few wrong turns before figuring out the correct route. They eventually find themselves in the Frontier Mountains, where they run into a fellow traveler who is even more lost than they are.

As the three adventurers made their way across the mountain range, they spotted a lone iksar running at them waving his arms wildly in the air. At first this alarmed them, as the iksar race wasn't exactly known for their hospitality. But as the lizard drew closer, his pace gradually declined
and his flailing arms became less and less animated, until he came to a stop just a few yards away from the trio.

“Hail and well met, friends,” he offered as a greeting.

The three friends turned to each other and exchanged a slightly puzzled look. After a short pause, Vind, being the most personable of the three, offered a timid “Hello…”

“I'm glad you asked!” replied the iksar, not noticing that his odd response only increased the confusion amongst his new 'friends'. “My name is Arishkogol, and this day is not going very well for me. You see, I was instructed by my master to go to the Lake of Ill Omen, by way of the the Warslliks Woods, Overthere, and Frontier Mountains. This area here is the Frontier Mountains, however, for the life of me I cannot find the pass that leads to the Lake of Ill Omen.”

Realizing the reptile meant no harm, Morit stepped forward before Vind could reply, “Today is your lucky day, Ash! We just happened to run into a sign not too long ago pointing the way to the Lake of Ill Omen.”

“We did?” Vind asked.
“Sure we did!” Morit replied quickly before adding, “Don't you remember? It said, 'This way to the Lake of Ill Omen'.”

“Oh praise Cazic!” proclaimed the lizard. “Would you be so kind as to show me how to get there?”

Morit brought a hand to his chin and started stroking a non-existent goatee, acting as if he was deep in though. “Well, I don't know exactly where this lake of yours is... but I can give you directions to the sign!”

“Oh yes, please. Any help you can give would be most appreciated!”

“Okay, from here you need to turn around and head back the way you came.” Morit put an arm around the young iksar's shoulder and pointed to the north, “You see that mountain pass waaaaay over there in the distance?”

“You mean the pass to go to the 'Overthere'?” the lizard inquired.

“Yeah, that's what I said, the pass over there” Morit answered, sounding a little irritated. “Anyway, you go to that pass...”
“But I don't need to go to Overthere,” the iksar interrupted.

“Yes you do.”

“No, I need to go to the Lake of Ill Omen.”

Morit took a deep breath before responding. “That's right,” he said slowly, sounding a more than a little irritated now. “But to get there, you need to find that sign I told you about. And to find that sign, you need to shut up and follow my directions or I'm just going to say '**censored** it' and make my wife a new hand bag.”

“I don't know what you mean” replied the lizard, honestly.

“It's better that way, kid,” Vorp chimed in.

Ignoring Vorp, Morit went on to explain, “It means don't talk while I'm talking, because I'm the only one that matters here.”

“Okay” Ash answered, still sounding confused.

“Good! You're smarter than you smell,” Morit said cheerfully.

Vind exchanged a quick glance with Vorp and mouthed
the words “That doesn't even make sense,” to which the halfling only shrugged. Morit ignored them and continued giving directions to the lost lizard.

“Now, first thing you do is go to that pass 'over there', like I said 10 minutes ago. From that pass, you need to walk due south until the terrain becomes too tough to walk on. At that point, you turn around and start heading due north til you see a tree on your right that is significantly taller than any others around it”

“But why do I have to go all the way south and then head back the way I came again when I could just do it while I'm heading south the first time?” the iksar inquired.

Morit turned and gave him another irritated look before explaining, “Cause if you didn't, the tree would be on your LEFT instead of your RIGHT, and that would screw EVERYTHING up.” He paused deliberately, to stress the importance to his next statement: “Now shut up.”

“Sorry.”

“K, when you see the tall tree, go to it. Then head due south again.”
Ash raised his hand.

“No.”

The iksar silently lowered his hand.

“Head south until you see a tree that looks like the head of a gorilla, and go to that tree. Then wait til EXACTLY 3pm, or 3:30pm, and then run towards the direction of the sun. Depending on whether you went at 3pm or 3:30pm, that may or may not take you to the sign,” Morit paused to take a quick breath before concluding, “Just don't miss it, or you'll have to do all that all over again.”

“Great! That shouldn't be too hard to find,” Ash replied, sounding relieved to be allowed to talk again, “Thanks a lot!”

“No problem. I'm glad we could be of help to you!”

The iksar bowed to the wizard then turned to Vorp and Vind, who couldn't bring themselves to look him in the eye, and waved farewell before running off towards the Overthere pass.

The three of them stood and watched him for a few seconds before Vind broke the silence. “Why do you do
that?”

   Morit shrugged, “It's my nature.”

   “It's your nature to be an **censored**-hole?” Vorp asked, sounding as if he already knew the answer to that question.

   “Life's more fun that way...” replied the wizard.
Finally making their way to the city of Firiona Vie, Morit, Vorp, and Vind discover that the legends were all true – all the normal citizens were care free and clothes free. High elves, half elves, and especially wood elves... all completely naked. Morit is in heaven.
Vind stood silently with his mouth slightly open, while Vorp simply shook his head.

“I’d never have believed this if I wasn’t seeing it with my own eyes,” he said, turning to face Morit. But the high elf had dropped to his knees and tears of joy were streaming down his cheeks.

“Are you crying!” screamed Vorp, clearly disgusted by Morit’s lack of self control.

“It’s true... everything they said, it’s all true,” sobbed Morit, ignoring the halfling’s question.

“Hey Morit,” Vind interrupted, “why does that giant statue over there look like you, except in a dress?”

“Probably because they were supposed to name this place after me, but Tearis threw a fit so they had to change it to something else,” Morit replied, sounding like he honestly believed what he was saying. “It doesn’t matter,” he continued, wiping away a tear from his eye, “this is still
the greatest place in Norrath!”

Just then a half elf paladin on a giant white steed rode up to the three travelers. She was armed with a long lance, but aside from her weapon she was butt naked like all the other citizens they had encountered so far.

“Hey! We don’t serve his kind here,” she shouted, lowing her lance in their general direction.

“What?” Vorp replied, slightly confused.

“Your drow,” she clarified, nodding towards Vind. “He’ll have to wait outside. We don’t want him here.”

Vorp turned to Vind, “Listen, why don’t you wait out by the ruins. We don’t want any trouble.”

“Nonsense!” cried Morit, once again on his feet, and finally in full control of his emotions.

The paladin quickly pointed the tip of her lance against his chest.

“Easy there, sugartits,” Morit calmly replied, “The inkie’s with me, as is the midget.”

Vorp winced as soon as the words came out of his friend’s mouth, positive they were about to have a skewered
high elf. But the paly just laughed and lowered her weapon.

“And I’m supposed to know who you are?” she asked sarcastically.

“No, not really,” Morit replied. “I’m just a simple man trying to make his way in this world.”

“Then why should your word count for anything regarding who is allowed inside our fine city?”

“Because,” explained Morit, “judging from the dress code around here, I’m assuming you people properly appreciate true greatness.”

The half elf cocked an eyebrow, and a faint smile began forming at her lips. “Go on...” she encouraged.

“You know how humans have the saying ‘hung like a horse’?” Morit began.

At this point Vorp let out a loud groan – he had heard this line many times before and knew exactly what was coming next.

“Well,” continued the wizard, ignoring his companion, “Horses have a similar saying. It goes: ‘hung like a Morit’.”
And with that Morit abruptly disrobed. The sight of the wizard’s enormous man-piece startled the paladin’s horse and it was only with great effort that she managed to avoid being thrown off.

Once she regained control of her steed, the half elf dismounted and smiled broadly.

“Please forgive my rudeness earlier, I was unaware of your impressive credentials.” Still smiling, the paladin bowed in deep respect before continuing, “My name is Thurisa, commander of the Bareback Riders – the FV Militia’s cavalry division.”

Vind started snickering, but quickly stopped when Vorp gave him a sharp elbow to the thigh.

“I’m pretty sure I can speak for everyone here when I say that any friend of yours is a friend of ours,” Thurisa continued, ignoring the two morons. “Welcome to the outpost of Firiona Vie.”
Thurisa gives the trio a personal tour of the bustling port city. The cavalry commander’s high social status allows the new visitors to mingle with some of the town’s more influential citizens, and it doesn’t take Morit long to
fit in with the locals.

Against Vorp’s advice, Morit decides to buy a modest house in one of the suburbs, giving the nomadic wizard an actual place to call “Home” for the first time since his exile from Felwithe. The wise and sexy high elf quickly became a pillar of the community – respected by men and revered by women.

On the night of their arrival in Firiona Vie, Morit, Vorp, and Vind went to the local tavern to celebrate the success of their long journey. There were many beautiful women at the bar that night, but it was a particularly stunning erudite that caught Morit’s eye. And although the two would eventually go on to share a special bond, this woman proved to be one of the most difficult marks in Morit’s long and illustrious career.

“This Kunark Fried Cockatrice is excellent!” Vorp marveled, stuffing another piece into his already full mouth.
“Can I have a wing?” Vind asked.

“Yeah, sure,” the halfling mumbled, grabbing another piece for himself before passing the plate over to the dark elf. “The drumsticks are my favorite,” he informed them cheerfully.

Morit winced, noticing that Vorp was accidentally sending small chunks of half-eaten meat flying across the table with each word.”

“Hey Mori,” Vind said excitedly, “Ugly’s right – you gotta try this.”

Vorp shot the necro a dirty look before taking the plate away from him.

“Ah… that’s alright,” Morit said hesitantly, “I’m a ‘breast’ man, myself. You guys enjoy.”

“Your loss,” Vind shrugged, snatching the plate back from Vorp.

“That’s what you think,” the wizard thought to himself, noting that several of Vorp’s projectiles had landed on the plate.

“I’m craving something else,” he informed them, nodding
towards the other side of the room. Both Vind and Vorp stopped fighting over the food for a few seconds and turned to take a look at what Morit had found. A tall and beautiful erudite had entered the tavern and was seating herself at the bar.

“Niiiiiiice,” Vind observed, nodding his head in approval.

“She deserves better,” Vorp pointed out dryly, while grabbing another drumstick.

Still nodding is head, Vind agreed, “That too.”

“We’ll see about that...” Morit said with his trademark smirk. “You two have fun with your KFC – come tomorrow morning I’ll be sleeping with the gods,” he taunted as he made his way out of the booth.

“Waaay out of your league, flyboy!” Vind called out as the wizard was about halfway to the bar.

Not appreciating the extra attention, Morit turned and inconspicuously gave his friends a rude gesture, to which they both laughed and gave each other a high-five.

“Can I buy you a drink, or do you just want money?” Morit asked as he slid onto the stool next to the sexy
erudite.

It never failed – every time she came to this place some dumb drunk would try to hit on her. She didn’t mind it so much if they were a little creative, but this loser’s pick up line was particularly bad. Without turning to look at him, the erudite rolled her eyes and slammed her drink on the counter.

“Whoa, easy there baby,” said Morit, not sure if that was a 'yes'. “No need to get all excited.”

“Getting hit on by you is hardly enough to get me excited,” she snorted before taking another sip from her drink.

Not liking the way the conversation was heading, Morit decided he might as well swing for the fences since it looked like he was about to strike out soon anyway.

“Well, I don’t know how to put this,” he responded, “but I’ve got kind of a big deal... down there.” He paused slightly to let her think about it a little before adding, “A real... ‘big’... deal.”

Intrigued, she turned to face him for the first time...
“Hmm... handsome face... dreamy eyes... and a smile to die for,” she secretly thought to herself. “This guy is too good to be true.”

She then let her eyes trail down to his...

“Wow!”

“Excuse me?” Morit asked innocently.

“Huh? I didn’t say anything,” she quickly denied.

“Yes you did,” the wizard insisted.

“No, I didn’t,” she replied firmly, desperately trying to regain her composure, but seeing her become even more flustered only made Morit’s smile broaden.

“So what’s your name? What you drinking? I think I know what you’re thinking,” the wizard persisted. “So... baby, what’s your sign? Tell me yours, I’ll tell you mine.”

She let out a deep sigh, but her lips betrayed a slight smile and Morit knew he was in.

“My name’s Deadgirl,” she finally said, “but my friends just call me Dead.”

“So what should I call you?” Morit inquired, playfully.

“I don’t know,” she said, still smiling. “I guess that
depends on how well things go tonight.”

Morit quickly jumped up and called out to the bartender, “Check please!”

“Whoa, whoa – not so fast, cowboy,” Dead cautioned. “What happened to ‘tell me yours, I’ll tell you mine’?”

Morit blushed slightly and lowered himself back onto his seat. “Of course, how rude of me,” he apologized sheepishly.

“Tell me,” pressed the erudite, visibly delighted to once again have the upper hand, “are you always so quick to jump to conclusions?”

“Conclusions? No, no. I’m afraid you misunderstood my intentions,” Morit stalled, desperately trying to come up with an excuse. “It’s just that I mistakenly thought you would already have known who I was, considering how respected I am around these parts.”

Dead looked at him skeptically, “I’ve never seen you around town before. How long have you lived here?”

“Oh, about 6 hours,” he answered.

“Then how would I... OH! Are you famous? Are you that
Al’Kabor guy?” she asked excitedly while clapping her hands.

“What? Al’ka- what?!” he stuttered, “No, I... NO! Hell no! Wh- why would you even think that?”

“I’m sorry,” she laughed, “I was just teasing. It’s just that I can tell from your staff that you’re a wizard.”

Confused, Morit looked down at his crotch. “You can?” Dead sighed. “No, your Epic staff.”

“Yeah, I know;” he said, still staring at his crotch, “How can you tell just by looking at it?”

The erudite rolled her eyes. “Your Staff of the Four,” she explained, nodding towards Morit’s epic that he had set on the counter earlier.

“Oh...” he replied, clearly disappointed.

A brief period of awkward silence followed before Dead finally broke the ice again. “So... you gonna tell me your name?”

“Yeah, sorry;” Morit apologized. The whole Al’Kabor comment had distracted him, and he was clearly not at the top of his game anymore. “My name is Morituus. Most
people call me Morit, but my friends usually call me Mori or Mor.”

“So what should I call you?” Dead sarcastically replied.

“Daddy,” Morit answered with a smile.

“Okay,” she sighed, finishing off the last of her drink as she stood up to leave, “this conversation is over.”

“Hey wait,” the high elf pleaded, “What’s wrong? Was it something I said?”

Just then a bald halfling that had been sitting on a table nearby walked up and punched Morit in the nut sack, causing the wizard to drop to his knees in pain.

“Stay the **censored** away from my sister!” he screamed, attracting the attention of most of the tavern’s patrons.

Despite being in a tremendous amount of pain, Morit was still able to make out the distinct sound of Vorp and Vind laughing hysterically from their booth on the other side of the room.

Deadgirl winced and knelt down next to the fallen wizard. “Sorry about that... ‘daddy,’” she told him
sympathetically as she gently ran her soft hands through his ruffled hair, “My brother, Jamp, is a little over-protective sometimes.”

She stood up again and started for the exit, but paused after a couple steps and turned to look back at Morit, who was still on the ground. He still hadn’t caught his breath, but she could tell from the perplexed look on his face exactly what he was thinking.

“I was adopted,” she explained. Then with a wink and a smile, she turned and left with her brother.

Still chuckling, Vorp and Vind grabbed Morit and helped him back to their booth.

“Crash and burn, eh Mori?” Vind teased as both he and Vorp turned their attention back towards the KFC.

The wizard started forming a large ball of ice in the palm of his hand. “It ain’t over yet,” he reminded them, his voice still a few octaves higher than usual. “Just give me some time and she’ll be mine.”

He paused briefly as he positioned the ice under his crotch, then continued, “Oh yes... she will be mine.”
“Wanna bet?” Vorp interrupted, once again spaying bits of cockatrice across the table.

Vind frowned, finally noticing that their hairy friend had been sprinkling the food with a special blend of saliva and bolus.

“Plate lunch?” Morit smiled – both at Vind’s revelation and at the opportunity for a free meal.

“Of course,” the halfling replied.

“Done,” Morit agreed as the two shook hands, sealing the deal.
Exploring the frigged lands of Velious, Morit, Vorp, and their increasing band of misfits and troublemakers find their way to the hidden enclave of Siren's Grotto. While there, Morit engages in establishing diplomatic ties with the natives and encourages the group to go on without him.
However, his friends are reluctant to leave him behind in what they still consider to be ‘hostile territory’. As Morit prepares to part ways with his friends, Vorp and Vind pull him aside and attempt to change his mind.

“They can’t be trusted, Mor,” Vorp implored. “Even you must realize that.”

“Don’t worry, I’ll be fine,” Morit reassured him.

“Fine? You think you’ll be fine?” Vorp grabbed the wizard by the collar and pulled him so close that their noses were practically touching. “You saw those ships outside – you know what they did to the sailors, don’t you?”

Morit rolled his eyes.

“They ate them!” Vorp hissed, “Does that sound ‘fine’ to you?!”

“Um, Vorp…” Vind interjected, pointing to a trio of sirens standing a few feet away. “I think they can hear you.”

Vorp ignored the dark elf. “They are cannibals, Mor,” he
continued. “If we leave you here by yourself, they’ll be feasting on you within a day.”

Morit smiled at the thought. “Oh, I’m counting on it,” he muttered to himself.

“What!” the halfling blurted out.

Morit hadn’t realized he had said that out loud, but he quickly laughed the comment off.

“First of all, I appreciate your concern for my well being – I really do. But cannibals eat their own kind,” Morit pointed out. “So although these lovely ladies might have a slightly more... ‘exotic’ diet than you’re used to, they’re not cannibals.”

“And secondly...” Morit paused to wink at the three sirens Vind had warned them about, causing them to giggle, “there’s more than enough ‘meat’ to go around.”

Vorp threw his hands up in disgust while Vind averted his gaze and nervously started scratching the back of his head. The sirens had begun happily licking their lips at Morit’s last comment, and the sight of their sharp teeth made him even queasy.
“Ah... I’m gonna go wait with the others,” he said, clearly uncomfortable with the situation.

As Vind left, Vorp turned back to his friend. “Look Mor, I know this is like a wet dream come true for you, but let’s be realistic here... even if they all wanted to sleep with you – which is stupid, btw – there’s no way you could possibly have sex with every single one of them.”

Morit cocked an eyebrow. “Wanna bet?” he replied.

Vorp shook his head. “Mor, stop screwing around. It’s just physically impossible.”

“Plate lunch?” the high elf offered.

Intrigued by the opportunity to break even, the halfling reluctantly gave in and the two shook on the deal. Vorp let out a deep sigh before telling his friend, “Just make sure you live long enough to pay up.”

Morit smiled and turned to join his three female escorts.

The rest of the group gathered around Vorp, and as Morit was being led down to the sirens’ inner chambers he turned to his friends and, grinning from ear to ear, gave them two thumbs up. Realizing that he was either the
luckiest or stupidest man in Norrath, they collectively gave Morit a one-fingered salute as his smiling face disappeared around the corner.
Chapter 8

“Too Much of a Good Thing: Part 2”

After exploring many dangerous new locales, the members of <Snakegod> return to the Grotto to inquire about the progress made by their old friend. What they find instead is a cavern full of pregnant sirens but no sign of Morit. With relations with the locals contentious at best,
Vorp decides to set out alone to find their friend while the others guard the escape route.

“This is the best you could do?” Vorp asked flatly. Vind looked uneasily at Redd, who just shrugged.
“I mean... seriously guys. This is sad, even by our low standards,” the halfling continued, shaking his head.
“If it’s worth anything to you, I think it’ll work,” Ambien chimed in.
Vorp turned to his fellow druid. “It’s a dead fish!”
“It looks good on you,” the wood elf replied.
Desperate, Vorp turned to the last member of the party. “Tynk you’re a friggin’ enchanter, can’t you just cast an illusion on me?”
The gnome shook his head. “Anything good would wear out too fast, Vorp,” he explained.
“It doesn’t have to be ‘good’ – it just has to be better than ‘this’!” the druid countered, pointing at the large, dead
fish that Redd had brought them.

“Actually, I agree with Ambien – you do look pretty convincing in that costume,” Tynk replied.

“It’s not a costume! It’s a **censored** dead fish!” Vorp reminded them, practically screaming.

“A really BIG dead fish,” Redd pointed out. “I don’t think you appreciate how difficult it was to get one that size,” the dwarf pouted.

Vorp turned to glare at him, but didn’t say anything.

Ambien put a sympathetic hand on the dwarfs shoulder. “Don’t worry. I was impressed, bro,” he said, comfortingly.

Vorp began opening his mouth to insult the pair when Tynk interrupted and tried to keep the group focused on the problem at hand. “Well, the only illusion spell I have on me that they wouldn’t attack at this point is ‘Illusion: Tree’,” the enchanter said flatly.

“Unfortunately, it’s self only,” he continued, realizing that Vorp was seriously considering the option. “And I ain’t going down there with you,” he quickly added before Vorp could get any ideas, “I barely even like the guy.”
“Well, I love Morit like a brother,” Ambien spoke up, “and I would charge down there in a heartbeat if I thought doing so would save his life.” He paused for a second before shaking his head. “But I have to admit, this doesn’t look good at all,” he noted, nodding towards the two sirens guarding the entrance to the lower chambers.

“They do seem considerably more irritable than they did when we were last here,” Vind noted.

“And fatter,” Redd added.

“Are you serious?!” Vorp moaned. “‘And fatter’ and ‘it’s a really big fish’ – that’s all you can add to the conversation, Redd?”

The dwarf just shrugged again.

“Well, in his defense,” Vind interjected, trying to defuse the situation, “he’s right on both his points.” Vorp stubbornly crossed his arms as the dark elf continued, “That is a really big fish, and the sirens do have a noticeable bulge in their bellies.”

Redd smiled triumphantly and nodded his head in agreement. “Yup, yup – definitely fatter,” he gloated. But
after a few seconds, the dwarf’s smile faded and his eyes widened. “Do you think it’s from Morit?” he asked, looking genuinely concerned his friend had been eaten.

Vorp shook his head. “Yes, but not in the way you’re thinking.”

Coming to the same conclusion, Ambien pointed out, “That’s not good either, Vorp. You better get down there.”

Vorp shot him a dirty look.

“What?” the wood elf responded with a smirk. “You’re the only one that can fit in the costume,” he explained, to which Tynk and Redd quickly nodded in agreement.

“It’s a dead… fish…” Vorp growled through clenched teeth. “And we all know I’m not the only one who could fit in it,” he continued, turning to glare at his fellow midgets.

Vind stepped in. “Tynk’s not gonna do it, and Redd…” he trailed off, not wanting to insult their good-natured “special” friend. “You’re the most qualified,” he continued. “And Morit would do it for you in a heartbeat. You know that, Vorp.”

“Yeah… he would,” Vorp agreed as he reluctantly got
back into the dead fish. “But the difference is that I wouldn’t be stupid enough to get myself into a ridiculous situation like this.”

“And yet, here you are,” Ambien teased as he handed Vorp a rebreather.

Trying not to think about where the thing had been previously, Vorp put it in his mouth, flipped Ambien the bird, and wadded into the water without another word.

Vorp made his way down, careful to avoid all of the grotto’s various creatures. With great effort, he was able to make it, undetected, into a system of tunnels that ran below the main chambers.

In one of the rooms, he found what he was looking for – a half-naked high elf sprawled out on a pile of mats, unconscious. Vorp pulled himself out of the water and made his way to his friend’s side.

“Mor! Are you okay?” he cried.

Barely responsive, Morit turned to face his friend.

“I… can’t… see…” he said, weakly.

Recognizing the spell that had been cast on his friend,
Vorp explained reassuringly, “Your eyesight will return in time.”

Confused, the wizard continued to ask questions. “Wh... where... am I?”

“Siren’s grotto,” the halfling patiently answered.

Morit reached up to touch his rescuer’s face, but his hero’s skin felt slimy and unfamiliar.

“Who... are... you?” he asked, slightly alarmed.

Vorp pulled off the dead fish costume and held his friend’s hand. “Someone who loves you.”

Morit’s faint smile quickly faded.

“Say what?”

Vorp slapped his friend’s head and yelled, “It’s Vorp, you idiot!”

The smile on Morit’s face returned, and with the last of his strength he pulled Vorp’s head closer to his mouth and whispered into his ear, “Dude... you owe me another plate lunch...”

And with that, the wizard fainted.

Vorp tried casting an evacuation spell, but nothing
happened. Alarmed, he began looking around for an explanation. It didn’t take him long to spot the source of his problem – a rather large anchor stone located in the main chamber.

He turned to look at his unconscious friend. “Looks like I’m doing this the hard way,” he sighed.

Focusing all his strength, he grabbed Morit’s limp body and slung his friend over his shoulder. The high elf probably weighed close to three times as much as him, but Vorp willed himself to carry the burden and started making a run for the exit.

Unable to carry Morit back through the way he had come in, Vorp chose to make a break straight through the heart of the sirens’ lair. Naturally, the pair didn’t get very far before running into a batch of sirens, who gave a loud screech as they began their pursuit.

Luckily for Vorp, they seemed to be naturally encumbered by their growing bellies. And although it was by no means easy to escape while carrying Morit on his back, with the help of snare he was able to just barely stay
ahead of the ever increasing pack and start making his way up towards the other members of their group.

Not knowing where he was going, Vorp made many wrong turns, with each one leading to more and more angry sirens joining in the pursuit. After what seemed like an eternity, Vorp finally found the correct path up and began calling out for help.

Hearing his cries, Tynk quickly sprung into action by mezzing the two guards. With sword and sticks drawn, Vind, Ambien, and Redd gave forth a furious battle cry as they charged into the tunnel leading down into the sirens’ lair.

They ran past Vorp and Morit with the intention of making a glorious stand to cover their friends’ escape, but quickly reconsidered once they saw that the halfling had managed to aggro the entire zone. Now in a full retreat, Vind and Ambien grabbed the wizard while Redd picked up the exhausted halfling.

Charging out of the tunnel in a blind panic, group flew by the two mezzed guards and their enchanter friend
without even realizing it.

“Hey wait!” Tynk began to call out, but before he could run after them, a horde of angry mobs – no less than the entire population of the lower grotto – came pouring out of the tunnel.

With no time to think, he instinctively cast the first spell that came to him – Illusion: Tree. His quick reflexes saved his life, but the mistress of the deep was furious about losing Morit and issued an order increasing the number of guards stationed in his area, leaving him surrounded by a pissed off group of sirens.

Meanwhile, the others were able to get far enough away from the anchor stone to gate back to safety. They safely delivered Morit to his home in Firiona Vie where Vorp slowly nursed him back to health. Eternally grateful to his friends for saving his foolish life, Morit promised to never again endanger the lives of his comrades in that way ever again. To prove his sincerity, the wizard voluntarily took a vow of chastity... which lasted until about two days.
Chapter 9
“Old Friends: Part 1”

This chapter finds our hero exploring Norrath’s moon of Luclin, along with his ever trusty best friend forever, Vorp, and the sexy half-elf paladin, Riker. During their adventures, the three friends eventually find themselves at the stronghold of Sanctus Seru.
Displaying an uncanny knowledge about ancient Combine traditions, Morit surprises his friends by managing to secure them lodging in the normally xenophobic city. Despite their unique position as rare guests of the city, Vorp and Riker soon grow weary of their new environment and wish to leave, but Morit is strangely persistent about remaining for the time being.

In an unusual coincidence, their arrival coincides with a rare appearance of the city's founder, Lord Inquisitor Seru. Unseen by his people for many years, Seru has emerged from his Arx temporarily, and a grand banquet is being held in his honor.

Using some slightly nefarious methods, Morit is able to acquire invitations for the trio to the exclusive luncheon. To the horror of his companions, Morit stands up to confront Seru during the festivities. After a terse reunion between the two old rivals, Morit challenges the infamous leader to an ancient and familiar duel...
Seru was no longer amused.

“You have no further business here, wizard,” he said, dismissing his guest with a wave of his hand. “I suggest you leave while you still can.”

Morit held his ground. “In the tradition of the elder gods, I have come to challenge you in a match of Jankenpo.”

A collective gasp escaped from the mouths of the guests in attendance. Riker turned to Vorp and whispered, “A match of what?”

“Jankenpo,” the halfling replied impatiently. He realized they were witnessing history in the making, and the half-elf's incessant questioning was starting to get on his nerves.

“I heard what he said! I meant what the hell is...” she began to ask, but the halfling quickly shoved the palm of his hand into her face as Lord Seru stood up to respond to Morit's challenge.

“Very well...” Seru replied, his voice calm and viciously calculating. “I accept your challenge, Morituus,” he said,
 eliciting a surprised murmur from the crowd, which quickly subsided as he continued to speak.

“A challenge from any other fool would be an insult, but your prowess in the ancient art was well known throughout the Combine Empire... I eagerly await the opportunity to face the only man who had ever gone the distance with Tsaph."

He sat back down, then smiled to himself before adding, “It's a pity that you will be facing the only man who has ever beaten him...”

“TRAITOR!”

The guards immediately converged on Morit, ready to strike down the wizard where he stood, but Seru's bellowing laughter halted their advance.

“You always questioned my methods,” he bemused before taking a more serious tone, “but everything I've ever done was in loyal service to the Empire. Those vile creatures were a blight upon our great nation, and as brilliant a man as he was, Tsaph was just too blind to see it.”

“Yes, his only real weakness was his insistence on seeing
good in others, even when there was none,” Morit admitted. “I always said his trust in you was misplaced.”

“Oh, you are hardly the one to lecture anyone about betraying the man's trust, Morituus,” Seru insipidly mocked.

He paused, turning to look directly at Riker. Seru's gaze felt uncomfortable, and she was visibly relieved when he turned his attention back to Morit.

“What was the reason for your absence that fateful night again? I seem to have forgotten…” The wizard didn't answer, causing Seru's smile to increase to a broad grin.

Riker turned to Vorp again and whispered, “What was the reason for his absence?”

As if reading her mind, Seru chimed in, “Ah yes! You were banished. Not exactly on Tsaph's good side at the time, now were you?”

Trying to be more quiet than the last time, Riker whispered, “Psst. Why was he banished?”

The druid quickly replied, “I don't know, stop asking me questions, woman!”

She didn't believe that for a second, but her anger at
him quickly dissipated when she realized that their commotion had caught the attention of Seru.

In a flash, his expression went from sinful joy to that of utter contempt as he turned to face the source of the disturbance, causing those around Riker and Vorp to squirm.

Then, just as quickly as his temper had risen, Seru snapped his focus back to Morit. “Well, I can take a guess at what your demands will be…”

“Your sword.”

“Of course,” he laughed. “And I know you are well aware of what else comes with that?” He paused to let Morit acknowledge his assumption, but Morit remained silent and unmoving.

Disappointed, Seru continued, “Well then, if you're going to take something of that much value, then so will I.”

He slowly brought his gaze back around to Riker, “I choose your friend…” Riker's mouth dropped open as Vorp silently shuffled a few steps away from her, “…and you,” he smiled, looking back at Morit. “Again, I take it you know
what I'll be doing with those lives when I win.”

For the first time, Morit's face betrayed an hint of emotion as he stole a worried glance at Riker. He quickly realized his mistake, however, and turned back to face his nemesis. “Rules,” he stated.

“Although you are the one who issued the challenge, I'll defer and let you decide on the details.”

“Classic.”

“Ah, no Spock or Lizard?”

“No, I hate Trek.”

“Doesn't everybody?” Seru agreed. “Classic it is, then. I guess it IS most fitting that way, under the circumstances. As for time and location... does 8 o'clock back here work for you? I'd like to return to the Arx by 10... I'm not as young as I used to be.”

Morit nodded. “Are we done? I need to prepare.”

“Yes, yes, of course. I shall attend to my business as well.”

Morit immediately turned and left the room, not waiting for his two companions.
“What the hell just happened?” Riker asked as she and Vorp made their way to the exit.

“Dunno,” he replied, sounding unusually cheerful considering the circumstances, “but it looks like this time I somehow managed to stay clean when all the **censored** started flying.”

Riker shot him a dirty look, but he defended himself, “Hey, when you've been around him as long as I have, you'll realize that's no small feat.”

When they finally reached the exit, Morit was already halfway down the hall. Riker and Vorp ran to catch up with him and as they neared the wizard, Vorp eased to a walk to fall in behind them while Riker reached out and put her hand on Morituus' shoulder to slow him down.

“Wait... You KNEW Tsaph Katta?” But he simply shrugged her hand off and continued walking.

“How old are you?!” she persisted, but the high elf still didn't answer.

Riker stepped in front of Morit and planted her finger deep into his chest, bringing all three of them to a dead
stop. “I said: How old ARE you!”

Morituus looked her straight in the eye and simply said, “Age is just a number, it means nothing to me.” He brushed her hand aside and pushed on ahead before adding, “A person is as old as they feel.”

She turned and watched as he continued walking away, “Then how do you FEEL!”

“Pretty **censored** sexy!” he yelled back over his shoulder without stopping.

Vorp began chuckling to himself, causing Riker to turn on him.

“YOU!” she yelled as she pointed a finger at his bald forehead. “You knew, didn't you?”

“Knew what?” he replied, spreading his arms in mock innocence. “Knew that you were... how can I say this gently... 'with' an old man?” he smiled while making a slightly obscene gesture with his fingers.

“YES!” she screamed as she threw up her hands in disgust.

At this point, Vorp was absolutely beaming. “Over the
course of our travels together, he might have mentioned to me which Age he was born in,” he said cheerfully, as he started walking again.

“Then exactly how old IS he?!” she exclaimed, just wishing someone would give her a straight answer, for once.

“Dunno...” replied the halfling, as he continued to walk, “...can't count that high.”
Chapter 10
“Old Friends: Part 2”

With Morituus locked away in his room presumably preparing for the upcoming struggle, Riker started to get anxious. Under the circumstances, she didn't feel much like walking around the city, so she went over to Vorp's room to see if she could get some answers from the shady halfling.
When she got to his room, Vorp seemed to have a better grasp of the situation and although he was still very pleased with himself, he was no longer on cloud nine.

“So what do you want to know?” Vorp asked while sitting himself down on the edge of his bed.

“Everything.”

He laughed. “Riker, you're going to have to be more specific than that.”

“I just... I don't know. So much 'stuff' just came out about his past that I had no clue about.”

She paused and looked down at her feet before adding, “And the way that he's been acting since we got here... It just got me thinking about if I even know the 'real' him at all.”

Vorp sighed. “Morit and I have been together a long time, and I can tell you that he hasn't changed much over the years.”

“That's not what I meant.”

“I know, but as far as 'who he really is'... you're putting way more thought into it than you should,” he said, shaking
his head. “You're with him every day – the way he walks, the way he talks - that's him.”

She turned to look back at the halfling. “He just seemed so different when he was talking to Lord Seru…”

“You know how he always makes fun of halflings?” Vorp asked, apparently changing the subject.

“Yes?” she answered hesitantly.

“How we stink, and how we have hair on our feet, and how the hair on our feet stink?”

“Yeah, he says you're ugly a lot, too... I just figured it's how you guys bond.”

“It is,” Vorp agreed. “And that's typical Morit, right? Smarmy, cocky, lazy, and proud of the fact that he's all three of those things?”

“Yeah.”

“Have you ever heard of the battle of Bloody Kithicor?”

“Of course, who hasn't?” Riker responded, sounding a little irritated. She wasn't sure what this had to do with what just happened between Morit and Seru.

“Well, at the time we were traveling with a few Snakegod
guildies. Couple guys, Ambien and Vind, who were with us from the beginning, and also a girl named MJ who had joined us a few months earlier.”

He smiled briefly, recalling fond memories of his friends. “They were good people,” he added, before his smile started to fade.

“When the call for help went out, we all dropped what we were doing and joined the fight,” Vorp continued, his smile now completely gone.

“We were stationed with the Dragonheart Regiment initially, but when I found out about what happened to Rivervale, that my family had been captured... Morit just grabbed me and said 'come on, we got some **censored**-lings to save'.”

Vorp paused to look down at his hands, and realized they were beginning to tremble slightly. He straightened up his back and put both hands on his knees to stop them from shaking, then raised his head to look at Riker again.

“Our commanding officer thought we were suicidal. We ended up leaving the others behind to cover for us and
snuck into Rivervale, just me and him. We grabbed everyone we could find and started fighting our way back out... then all hell broke loose in Kith.”

Riker could see the the sadness in the halfling's eyes as he re-lived the events of that day in his mind.

“Our friends... they were strong and talented fighters. Had Morit and I been where we were supposed to have been that day, we would have shared the same fate as them... we just happened to be somewhere else when that blast hit.”

Riker remained silent, unable to think of anything to say that would comfort the old man.

“We were both devastated, but Morit took it especially hard,” Vorp continued. “He had known Ambien long before he knew me... all the way back to the life he had in Felwithe, actually. And Vind... The three of us, Morit, Vind, and I, we usually went everywhere together in those days. The only reason he didn't come with us to Rivervale was because Morit wanted him to look after MJ if the main attack happened before we got back.”
“She and Morit were... close,” he explained, looking up at Riker before adding, “and he always tries to look after his girls.”

“How close... and what do you mean 'his girls'?” Riker interjected. It had been a while since she had spoken, and the sudden sound of her voice startled the halfling.

Vorp shook his head. “You're missing the point.”

He paused, taking a second to re-collect his thoughts.

“After the battle, when we found out what had happened, that none of them made it out... 'alive';” he said, pausing before he spoke that last word, “THAT was the first time I saw the Morit you just saw today.”

“I don't understand.”

Vorp didn't answer at first. Instead, he sighed heavily and crossed his arms in front of his chest, diverting his eyes away from the half elf.

“Ambien, Vind, and MJ are now at peace,” he finally said, pausing to look Riker directly in the eye. “Morit made sure of that.”

He looked down at the ground again and rubbed his
bald forehead with one of his hairy hands. Recalling those unpleasant events had dampened his previously jovial mood.

“What else do you want to know?” he asked bluntly.

Riker paused to think. She wanted to know more about that girl, but it was obvious the halfling was done talking about that. “What was all this talk about him being banished?”

“Oh, that...” Vorp snickered, feeling a little better.

“So you do know!” she said, with just a hint of anger.

“Well, not any juicy details, but I got the general idea of what happened,” he responded, either not noticing or just not caring that she realized he had lied to her earlier.

“So why was he banished?”

Vorp hesitated before giving Riker a sideways glance and apparently deciding to go ahead and tell her the truth. “He slept with Lcea.”

“Who?”

“Katta's wife.”

“What!”
He just spread his arms. “Hey I just tell it like it is, baby. You're the one that asked.”

“Well, I think maybe this was a mistake.”

“Oh, I know it was a mistake,” he said, leaning back to lay on his bed. “I told you so too, when you came in here.”

Re-living Kith had put him in a sour mood, and he had determined that the only cure was a good pre-fight nap.

“Now if you don't mind, I'd like to get some sleep before the fight – it's gonna be a good one.”

“What's this “Jankenpo”, anyway?” she asked, grateful that the subject had shifted away from Morit and his apparent harem.

“It's an ancient game, real old-school,” he explained. “Legend has it that the gods themselves created it to settle disputes.”

Noticing that she still wasn't leaving, Vorp turned to look at her and made a gesture towards the door with his head.

“I'll explain it to you before the fight,” he promised. “If I do it now, you're just going to forget. I don't want to be bothered with your questions while I'm trying to watch.”
“Fine, I'll see you in a few hours,” she said as she stood up and started for the door.

As she was leaving, she turned back to the halfling. He was laying on his back with his hands behind his head, staring at the ceiling.

“Thanks Vorp,” she added, to which the halfling responded to by closing his eyes and giving her a dismissive wave of his hand.

When she closed the door, Vorp opened his eyes and glanced at where the half-elf had just been standing. He'd seen it many times before, and recognized the tell tale signs.

“This isn't going to end well,” he sighed.
As the appointed hour for the match approached, Morit finally emerged from his room. The three of them made their way through the compound. Along the way, Vorp broke the silence.

“You sure about this?”
“Pretty sure,” Morit responded.

“Look, I know you're good, but if this guy beat Katta... you told me yourself that you lost to him.”

“Seru poisoned Tsaph. That's how he won.”

“He wouldn't have dared! I thought you said the gods...”

“No,” Morit interrupted. “The gods don't care if one mortal kills another.”

Morit paused as they passed by a couple guards before continuing.

“From what I heard, Tsaph was poisoned before they even set up the match,” he explained. “It was only supposed to be a 'friendly' exhibition for the guests at his banquet, a last minute addition that was actually Tsaph's own idea.”

“I see,” Vorp said, lowering his voice as they neared the entrance to Seru's chamber. “So poisoning Katta and then later winning the match were two separate things in the gods' eyes, hence why he never was subject to their wrath - he wasn't actually cheating to win.”

Morit stopped and turned to face the halfling. “Yes. Isn't
that basically what I said?” he replied, clearly irritated.

Vorp simply shrugged and motioned towards Riker. “I was just trying to make sure she could follow the situation.”

Morit glanced at Riker and immediately felt guilty. This wasn't her fight, yet he somehow had gotten her dragged into it. To make matters worse, she had been so quiet that he had forgotten she was there.

He sighed. “I'm sorry I got you into this mess, Riker.”

She started to open her mouth to respond, but before she could think of anything to say, Morit had already turned back and was heading inside.

Once inside, Riker was surprised with how much had changed since the banquet. There were still guards stationed throughout the room, but in place of the huge dining tables there were now several rows of cushioned chairs lining each of the walls. In the center of the room were two plain wooden chairs facing each other, positioned just a few feet apart.

Morit turned to Vorp. “I'm gonna go talk to the ref. You two go find some seats. I'll see you when it's over.”
And with that, he left.

Vorp didn't appear to hear him, however. He was too busy looking around the room, trying to take everything in. Apparently, the realization the he was going to witness an official Jankenpo match was causing him to once again be as giddy as a schoolgirl.

“Hey look, there's Mr. Clean!” he yelled.

“Who?” Riker asked, but Vorp had already moved on.

“Aw man, all the good seats are taken!”

She looked around. He was right, the room had filled up rather fast in just the few minutes they had been there. She saw some open seats near where they had entered, and a horrible thought entered her head.

“Let's just sit there,” she pointed, “Maybe we can make a quick exit, just in case Mori does lose.”

Vorp shot her a serious look. “Fine, sit down,” he said, no longer in a cheery mood. “I forgot, I still need to explain the rules to you.”

They took their seats, which weren't all that bad, and Vorp started the long task of explaining the history and
rules of the game.

“Okay, Jankenpo was a game that the gods themselves created to settle disputes, and every time a match between the gods is held, the history of Norrath is affected,” he began.

“I think you told me that already, Vorp.”

Ignoring her, he continued, “Over time, this game was passed down to mortals with the strict condition, given from and enforced by the gods themselves, that they must honor and respect it. Anyone who tries to circumvent, violate, or bend the rules suffers the combined wrath of the gods.”

By this point he had flailed his arms wildly in the air. He brought them down and looked her directly in the eye while wagging a single stubby finger in her face. “That is why, you should not even think about trying to escape if Morit loses.”

“And what would happen if I did?” she asked, defiantly.

Vorp glanced around nervously. He was not comfortable with the way this conversation was heading.
“Just don't. Whatever Seru does to you would be nothing compared to what the gods would do.”

He turned to face the center of the room. “You see Mr. Clean over there? The one Morit's talking to?” asked the halfling, pointing to a large, bald human dressed in a white tunic and matching pants.

“Yes... I take it he's the referee.”

“Yes,” Vorp confirmed. “For every official match, the gods send down an impartial representative – an avatar to observe and enforce their collective will. This representative acts as the referee for the match, he mediates any discrepancies and monitors the match to protect it's integrity.”

Riker shook her head. “So what you're saying is that if Seru or any of his men tried to cheat, Mr. Clean would wipe the floor with them?”

“Or worse.” Vorp said, smiling.

“Is that really his name?”

“No,” admitted the halfling, “I just call him that cause he looks like him. I believe this guy is one of Quellious' goons.”
Riker chuckled in disbelief.

“It's not a laughing matter. The last mortal who violated the rules of Jankenpo was Mayong.”

The mere sound of his name cause Riker to shudder. “I know the lore surrounding that freak, and I've never heard any mention of any Jankenpo.”

“The gods work in mysterious ways,” Vorp shrugged. “It may not have happened AT the match, but from what I've been told…”

“Wait, told? How do yo know all this anyway?” she interrupted.

“Morit told me.”

Riker rolled her eyes and threw her arms up in the air.

“Oh for the love of Erollisi!” she yelled, attracting the attention of those around them. “That explains that!”

“No, I'm serious!”

“Vorp, you of all people should know better…”

“I know what you mean,” the halfling smiled, “but this time he was telling the truth. I've researched it myself, and everything I've found matches with what Morit has told me.”
Riker was still shaking her head and having a hard time believing any of it.

“Morit has never lied to me about anything regarding this game,” Vorp persisted. “That alone is a testament to the importance of Jankenpo, in my mind.”

She looked down, waving her hand casually in front of her face. “Fine, fine, I believe you,” she said, even though she didn't. “So how do you actually play this game?”

Vorp's face lit up again. Riker realized that he was a completely different person when discussing the game, and she found his enthusiasm more than a little disturbing.

“Well, you have two players,” he began, “and the referee will say 'Jun-Ken-Po', and on 'Po' the contestants will then show one of three hand gestures: a closed fist, an open hand, or a fist with two fingers sticking out, like this.”

He began showing her an example using his own hand with his stubby pointer and middle fingers sticking out.

“Wait...” she tried to interject.

“Each gesture beats one of the other gestures, but will lose to the third,” Vorp continued.
“Rock, paper, scissors?” she asked in disbelief that the 'game of the gods' that she'd been hearing about all day was just a glorified version of the game she used to play as a child in West Freeport.

“Well yeah, but it's a little different."

“Okay, please explain to me how it's different,” she asked, rolling her eyes.

“Well, the way we play it: 'rock' smashes 'scissors', 'scissors' cuts 'paper', and 'paper' covers 'rock','” he explained. “You might do it once, or two out of three, or maybe even best of five, correct?”

Riker just nodded, she was well beyond the point of caring how weird this day could get.

“Well, with Jankenpo, the two contestants will sit on those two chairs over there,” he said, pointing to the two chairs in the middle of the room, “and each time a player wins a hand, that player is allowed to attack the other player with the weapon he won with.”

This part was new to her, and she found herself slightly alarmed at the fact that she was becoming mildly interested
in what Vorp was saying.

“If you won with 'rock' you get to punch your opponent.”

He paused.

“By the way, I should point out that in standard rules, attacks are limited to the waist and above.”

“That's good to know,” she replied, honestly sounding relieved.

“If you win by 'scissors' you get to pinch your opponent,” he continued, “And if you win by 'paper' you get to slap them.”

“That actually sounds kinda interesting,” she admitted, immediately felt guilty for it.

“Oh, it is!” exclaimed Vorp. “We've played many games of rock, paper, scissors, without all the punching and pinching, and he is really good. But I've never had the privilege of witnessing an official match of Jankenpo, and to have my first experience be one with players of such legendary caliber...” he struggled to find the appropriate words before just settling for, “Wow!”

She rolled her eyes at the idea of Morit describing
himself as 'legendary', but aside from that, the game of Jankenpo was starting to grow on her.

“So what happens if they both show the same hand?” she asked, honestly interested.

“Same thing that happens with a regular game – nothing. They just go on to the next hand.”

“Oh…” she replied, disappointed that the answer was rather anti-climactic.

“Anyway, they keep going at it for one hour until one of them either voluntarily leaves or involuntarily gets knocked off their chair. And if both players are still sitting at the end of one hour,” Vorp continued, “then they go to 'sudden death'.”

She frowned at the mention of 'death'.

“Oh, but sudden death isn't actual death, it just means the next hand wins,” Vorp explained when he noticed the worried look on her face.

But then he added, “Well, actually, in this case it probably does mean actual death, but normally it doesn't.”

When that didn't seem to ease her concern, Vorp threw
in, “And they get to use magic on a sudden death attack to make it exciting for the audience.”

At this point, Riker was starting to have second thoughts about this game being such a good idea.

“And you say Morit's good?” she asked hopefully.

“He said the only man he ever lost to was Katta, and that he made it to 'sudden death' before losing. He was the only one who ever lasted that long, and Katta spared his life because he proved to be such a worthy opponent.”

“And they were playing for Katta's wife, right?” she inquired.

“Uh... yeah. I believe so...” Vorp said, hesitantly.

Riker frowned, then looked away

“So anything else I should know about?” she asked, eager to change the subject.

“Ah, yeah, actually. I forgot to mention that they disrobe and play naked.”

She looked over at Morit and shook her head.

“Typical.”

Just then a loud gong sounded and everyone turned to
the far side of the room where Seru was making his entrance.

Dressed in an elaborate robe, he made his way to the center of the room where Morit and Mr. Clean were waiting. Those in attendance bowed in respect as he passed, and when he reached the area where they would be doing battle, he threw off his robe in dramatic fashion to the deafening applause of his guests before taking a seat.

Not to be outdone, Morit too undressed and threw his robe down in a violent gesture as he stood defiantly erect over his rival. The sight of the naked high elf thrilled the females in attendance, several of whom could not stop themselves from fainting in the presence of his greatness. Even Riker herself had put a hand on her chest and take a deep breath to settle her nerves.

He then took a seat across from Seru.

Mr. Clean approached the two combatants and announced the conditions of the match.

“I have been summoned here on behalf of the greater gods of Norrath to oversee the Jankenpo challenge of Saint
Morituus the Censored, Legend of Norrath against Lord Inquisitor Seru.”

At this the guests in attendance stood up and cheered. When the applause subsided, Mr. Clean continued.

“The conditions for this match have been agreed upon to be of the Classic rule set, with no 'Spock' or 'Lizard'. Furthermore, 'Dynamite' is also not allowed and will be grounds for immediate disqualification. In the event that a combatant loses a finger over the course of this match and is therefore unable to properly signify 'Scissors', 'Dynamite' will be allowed to be signaled as a substitution, however, it's value shall only count as that of a 'Scissors'.

He paused briefly to allow for any objections.

“The standard limitations on attacks will be enforced. There will be no attacks allowed below the waist. No gauging, biting, or scratching. Furthermore, there will be no urinating or defecating during the course of this match because that is just disgusting. Both of you had been instructed to take care of your 'business' prior to your arrival here, and this restriction is hereby extended to all the
guests in attendance as well.”

At this, Vorp squirmed in his seat. “I knew I forgot to do something,” he cursed.

“Magic shall be permitted only in the event of sudden death,” Mr. Clean continued, “and only by the combatant with the winning hand.”

He paused again, this time just for dramatic effect.

“Do each of you understand these rules?”

“Yes,” both Morit and Seru answered in unison.

“Then, let us begin!”

Again, a loud roar erupted from the crowd. Vorp was standing on his seat clapping his hairy hands high above his head, and even Riker got caught up in the moment and found herself inadvertently giving another standing ovation.

As the cheering subsided again, Morit and Seru leaned in and assumed their combat positions. Mr. Clean held his hand up, ready to give the signal to begin. Everyone in the room was at the edge of their seats, eagerly anticipating who would be the first to strike blood.

Then suddenly, it happened. Mr. Clean brought down his
hand and yelled:

"Jan-Ken-Po!"

To which Morit and Seru immediately threw down their respective gestures: Morit a fist, and Seru an open hand.

*SLAP!*

Seru grinned from ear to ear, while Morit turned his head and spat.

"You would lead with that," Morit said with contempt.

But Seru just grinned even wider and replied, "A **censored**-slap for my **censored**."

"Jan-Ken-Po!"

Morit extended two fingers, while Seru kept his fist shut.

*POW!*

"There's lots more where that came from," gloated Seru.

Vorp shook his head. "This doesn't look good. I sure hope he's losing these hands on purpose, but I've never thought he'd have to do that, I thought he was a pro."

Riker winced again as Seru landed another crushing blow to the side of Morit's head.

"What do you mean? Why would he be losing on
purpose?”

Without taking his eyes off the action, Vorp explained, “There are two basic strategies for most Jankenpo players – you either try to knock the guy off his chair within the hour, or you purposefully lose, thereby giving away no tendencies to your opponent and try to last til sudden death, where you catch him by surprise.”

Morit yelled as Seru squeezed the soft skin on the underside of his arm.

“But from what he told me, top players like himself use the 'pro strategy' where you just beat the crap out of your opponent without giving anything away.” He shook his head, “But so far I ain't seeing it.”

Just as Vorp said that, Morit caught the break he had been looking for.

Seru went for an open handed 'paper' and Morit had countered with a two fingered 'scissors'. But instead of pinching the underside of the Seru's arm, Morit reached across and grabbed the Inquisitor's left nipple.

Seru screamed in excruciating pain and when Morit
finally released, Seru immediately protested to the judge.

“He pinched my nipple! Who the hell pinches the nipple!”

But Mr. Clean shook his head. “No foul!”

Fuming, Seru turned to face Morit with a look of murder in his eye.

“Jan-Ken-Po!”

Morit went with 'paper' and Seru 'scissors'.

With a look of utter delight, the human reached forward to grasp the tip of the high elf's hairy and muscular chest. But as he squeezed with all his might, Morit simply laughed.

Riker smiled. “He ain't gonna get no where with that attack, Morit actually likes that.”

Riker's comment distracted Vorp, who briefly gave her a disgusted look before turning back to the action.

From then on, the match was amazingly even. Both combatants went back and forth relentlessly trading blows. At the 15 minute mark, Mr. Clean raised his hands to stop the action.

“That's the end of the first quarter. Combatants, you
have a 5 minute break.”

Both men slouched back into their chairs, each one already battered, bruised, and bloody.

“What, they're stopping?” Riker said, sounding disappointed. “I thought you said they fight for an hour!”

“Ah yes,” replied Vorp. “I forgot to tell you, it's broken up into four, fifteen minute 'quarters', with a short break in between. Kinda like American football.”

Riker looked at him blankly. “What's 'American football'?”

“Nothing,” Vorp said, shaking his head. “I wouldn't expect a woman to understand football.”

“Hey!” she started to protest, but before she could start, Mr. Clean signaled the start of the second quarter.

Like the latter half of the first quarter, the remainder of the fight lived up to it's hype. Each man landed blow after thunderous blow, and pinch after agonizing pinch, but neither one ever came close to leaving his chair.

As Morit landed one last punch straight into the bloodied nose of Seru, Mr. Clean called an end to the forth
quarter.

“Time! Combatants, 5 minute break before we start... SUDDEN DEATH!!!”

Right on cue, the crowd roared in approval, but Riker had her face in her hands. The sheer brutality of the game she had played in her youth was too much for her to handle.

Vorp, on the other hand, had a different disposition.

“Oh. My. God...” he chimed. “Sudden death, baby! This is the greatest moment of my life!”

Riker looked up from her hands to see the halfling chest bumping the spectator on the far side of him.

“How can you say that! He's your best friend!”

Vorp dismissed her. “As long as he wins, a few heals will patch him up good as new.”

“And if he doesn't win?”

Vorp shrugged, “Well, in that case, you guys are screwed.”

Somehow his words didn't comfort her, and she soon found herself resting her face inside her hands again.
When the time came, Mr. Clean signaled the end of the break and the beginning of sudden death.

“SILENCE!” he boomed. “Combatants, you have fought a brilliant battle so far, worthy of the admiration of the gods themselves. However, only one man shall emerge victorious.”

He turned to Seru.

“Seru! Will that man be you?”

“Indubitably.”

“Morituus! Will that man be you?”

“Sho'nuff.”

“Then one of you is lying! We shall soon find out who...”

Riker turned to Vorp and whispered, “This guy sure likes to talk.”

But the halfling shook his head and pushed her face away.

“Shut up, this is good stuff,” he insisted.

Mr. Clean signaled to Seru's attendants. “Combatants, stand!”

Both Morituus and Seru stood at the same time, each
one's gaze never leaving the other. Seru's men removed the chairs, and each combatant raised his fist in anticipation of the final hand.

Mr. Clean slowly raised his hand, causing everyone in the room to collectively hold their breath.

Time seemed to slow down, causing the moment to last for an eternity. Some who witnessed the events would later go so far as to say that Druzzil Ro herself was amongst the guests in attendance and had a hand in this.

But whatever the case, inevitably Mr. Clean's hand came down, setting into motion the countdown that would seal the fate of both men.

"JAN!"

Riker clasped both hands over her mouth.

"KEN!"

Vorp farted. "Oh man, you don't know how long I've been holding that in!"

"PO!"

Instantly, both Morit and Seru showed they're hands: Morit extending two fingers, and Seru with an open hand.
Morituus had won. He quickly grabbed Seru's left nipple and squeezed, causing the tyrant to reel in pain. Morit then channeled a lightning spell into his Seru's body, lifting him up into the air.

While still holding firm to Seru's nipple, Morit cocked his other arm back and in one swift motion, blasted a fiery fist into the defeated man's torso, sending his ravaged body flying across the room.

Seru landed in a heap, near the far wall, but Morit wasn't over. He cleared his mind and summoned a giant comet of ice to come crashing down on his fallen opponent.

Helpless and near death, Seru started crawling for the nearest exit.

Still naked, Morit slowly walked towards him, extending his arm as he passed Mr. Clean. The chosen messenger of the gods bowed in deep respect and awarded Morit his prize: Seru's fabled Sword of Truth.

Seeing his own sword in the hands of his adversary, Seru experienced renewed strength. He stumbled to his feet,
and with Morit slowly closing in on him, started hobbling towards the nearest exit.

Then suddenly, before Morit could strike the finishing blow, a large group of adventurers suddenly entered the room from the route in which Seru was trying to escape.

“Lord Inquisitor Seru!” cried the group's iksar leader. “My name is Arishkogol Elmuerte, and we have come for your phat lootz!”

And with that, the raid of adventurers pounced on the wounded man and stole Morit's kill.
Chapter 12
“Old Friends: Part 4”

With Seru down, and the other adventurers celebrating their victory, Morit collected his robe and turned his attention towards finding his friends. With some effort, he was able to spot Vorp near the far exit.

“I'm actually impressed,” the halfling admitted as Morit
approached him.

Morit sniffed the air and looked around slightly puzzled before turning back to his friend.

“Thanks Ugly, you know how I live for your approval,” he replied. The sarcasm in his voice was obvious, and Vorp was glad to see that the “real” Morit was back.

“As soon as we saw that you won, she went outside to get some fresh air,” he informed, noticing that Morit was still scanning the crowd looking for Riker.

Morit laughed, “Couldn't handle the suspense of a big-time match, eh? She didn't think I was actually going to lose, now did she?”

“Well, maybe. I don't know,” the halfling shrugged before adding, “I might have also had something to do with it.”

Morit gave Vorp a suspicious look before realizing what the faint smell he had noticed earlier was.

“I think I'll go join her.”

As Morit trotted to the exit, Vorp called out to him, “Don't worry about me, I'll find my way back! Always do…”

Morit shot him a confused glance before waving his
hand over his head in acknowledgment as he headed out. Once outside, Morit found Riker strolling through the courtyard and walked over to join her. “Impressed yet?” he innocently inquired. She looked up to acknowledge his presence, but kept walking. “Well can you at least fix my face?” She smiled and casted a heal over time spell. Once his wounds started to fade, he smiled and said, “Ah, that's better. You gotta admit, for an old man I can sure take a beating.” With all that had just happened, his age had been the farthest thing from her mind. However, his comment brought back memories of that, as well as those of his former girlfriends... “So tell me, 'old man'... was this beating as bad as the one you suffered because of Lcea?” Morit stopped dead in his tracks, cursing Vorp under his breath. “That...” he said hesitantly, “That was a mistake.”
“Oh really?” she bemused, feeling like she was just getting started. “And MJ? Was she a mistake also?”

Morit visibly winced at the mention of her name. Riker could see the genuine pain her comment had caused, and immediately regretted saying it.

“I'm sorry...”

He shook his head. “I guess there are a lot of things I could have told you by now.”

He paused again, struggling to find the right words. “It's just that I've lived such a long life... there's so much.”

Riker was taken aback slightly by this last comment, and Morit realized that he probably should have worded it differently.

“Look...” he said quickly changing the subject, “I have something I want to show you. Something that will take your mind off of all this.”

He gently grabbed her arms and started casting a spell.

“Where are we going?” she asked.

But he was too busy focusing on his portal to answer her, and the next thing she knew, they were standing on a
stone bridge. There were a couple Kerran guards in the distance who looked slightly wary at the suddenness of their appearance, but were otherwise not alarmed.

Morit was standing in front of her, still holding her hands from the port. He looked up, past her, and said, “There... turn around.”

Slowly, she did as he instructed, and saw why he had brought her here. There, bright in the night sky, was the planet of Norrath.

She gasped.

In an instant, she had forgotten what it was that she had been so upset about.

“I came here before my match with Seru to bind,” Morit explained. “I had heard of this place and I wanted to share it with you, if I got the chance.”

“Where are we?” she asked distantly, not taking her eyes off their home planet.

“Shar Val,” Morit answered. “It's the home of the Vah Shir – descendants of the Kerrans who were displaced by the Erudite civil war. Naf's home town, he told me about it
when he heard we were going to visit Luclin.”

Morit paused, suddenly remembering something important. “Actually, I was supposed to stop by later and give something to his family. I wonder if they're...” he started thinking aloud before catching himself, but Riker wasn't paying attention.

As they admired the view of Norrath, majestically hovering over the city, Riker eventually took Morituus' hand into her own and gently rested her head on his shoulder. She closed her eyes and finally broke the silence.

“You were right,” she admitted.

As he turned to look at her, she already knew exactly what he was going to say...

“Of course I'm right,” he replied predictably, but unlike the previous hundred times she heard those words, this time his voice was calm and reassuring.

She raised her head and looked into his eyes, “Age is just a number, and it means nothing to me.”

Morit smiled gently and took her into his arms to embrace her. But just before their lips met she pulled back
and looked into his eyes again, this time with a look of hope and vulnerability he had never seen from her before.

“Are you alright... you're trembling,” he asked, but she could only look down and shake her head. “What's going on?”

She took a deep breath searching for the right words... “Something wonderful has happened,” she said instead, pausing before looking up into his eyes again, “Mori... I'm pregnant.”

Slowly, he eased his grip on her waist and took a few steps back. Suddenly realizing that her worst fears were coming true, Riker began to sob.

Unable to bear seeing her like this, Morit closed his eyes and took a deep breath before saying, “That's... well, that's won- that's wonderful...”

Riker smiled broadly as tears of relief welled up in her eyes. “Do you... do you really mean that?” she asked, ready to throw herself back into his arms.

“Nope! Not mine!” he abruptly said, before quickly gating out.
Chapter 13

“The Quest for Xegony’s Boobies”

The title of this chapter is pretty self-explanatory.

P.S. He succeeds.
Chapter 14
“Now THAT'S a Dragon: Part 1”

With the legend of their guild growing, thanks in part to Morit's illustrious conquest in the Planes of Power, <Snakegod> begins to branch out into the mercenary market. As hired swords, the members soon find themselves stretched across the planet, often
simultaneously fighting numerous battles for various employees.

To accommodate the large demand for their services, the leaders decide to split the guild up into various “teams”, with each one focusing on completing their assigned contracts.

As the leaders of Strike Team Alpha, Morit and Vorp – who is now a magician by trade (don't ask) – are tasked with the guild's most challenging jobs. Their current assignment is to assist a large raid of adventurers who are battling a giant dragon that's laying waste to the Lavastorm Mountains.

From the insertion point, the others could already tell things were not going well.

“Look at the size of that thing!”

“Cut the chatter, Redd,” Morit snapped.

Turning his attention back to the fight, the wizard didn't
see a way they could win. With each attack the beast was annihilating entire chunks of the raid force. It didn't take him long to realize the six of them would not be enough to turn the tide.

Coming to the same conclusion, Vorp shook his head. “This ain't gonna work, Mor.”

“I know,” Morit agreed. “But we can't just go back home, now can we?”

The halfling glanced back up at his old friend. “We don't have to die unnecessarily, either.”

“They paid us a lot of money, it wouldn't be kosher to just leave,” Morit pointed out.

Vorp eyed the wizard suspiciously.

“And yeah, I already spent it,” the high elf admitted before his friend had a chance to ask.

Knowing Vorp was about to berate him, Morit quickly turned to the rest of the group. “Geico!”

Scar snapped to attention.

“That raid is getting hammered. You, Naf, Redd, and Seja - head down and take some of the pressure off of
them, give em' a chance to withdraw."

"You want me to tank that thing?!" the iksar protested.

"Well, you are a tank, so you might as well start acting like one," the wizard answered. Noticing the shadow knight's flabbergasted look, he added, "Don't worry, I just need you to get that thing's attention for a couple minutes."

Scar cast an suspicious look at his commander – this wouldn't be the first time he was set up by the high elf. "What happens in a couple minutes?"

"Vorp and I will swing around to his rear and hit him hard," replied the wizard.

"Hit him hard?" Vorp asked.

"Yes."

"In his rear?"

"Yes."

The halfling shook his head. "Why do you always make everything sound so..."

"Life's more fun that way," Morit answered honestly with a smile.

"But what about Redd - he's a paly, why can't he tank it?"
Scar inquired nervously, as he watched the monster launch a couple rangers halfway across the zone with one swat of his tail.

“Don't worry, Redd will take over tanking duties when you die.”

The iksar's mouth dropped. He seemed about to protest before Morit yelled, “Now get going!”

Reluctantly, Scar saluted and headed down the hill, followed closely by Redd.

Naf started following the two knights, but stopped when he heard Morit call out his name. He turned to see what the high elf wanted.

“Aye?”

“Take care of her,” Morit replied, nodding his head at Seja.

Naf glanced at the human necromancer before nodding in confirmation and heading down to the battle.

Seja walked up to Morit. “That's sweet,” she said, tenderly running a hand through his hair. “But you know I can take care of myself perfectly fine.”
He smiled, knowing it was true.

“I'm more worried about you,” she added, honestly looking concerned.

“I'll be fine.”

She took a step back and smiled weakly. Morit could tell she was still worried. “You're kinda sexy when you lie,” she said, finally.

“I know,” he replied, giving her his usual cocksure smirk. The gesture succeeded in making her feel a little better and Seja smiled as she shook her head. She turned her attention to Vorp and called out to the halfling, who was standing a few yards behind Morit.

“Take care of him.”

Vorp nodded and sarcastically replied, “Don't I always?” She shot Morit one last lingering glance before blowing a kiss, then turned to join the others.

Morit watched her silently for a moment as she trotted away before finally turning back to Vorp.

“Why do you always get the women?” the halfling asked as his friend walked towards him.
Morit smiled. “You ever look in a mirror? There's a reason your nickname is 'Ugly'."

Vorp flipped him the bird, and the two headed off down the other side of the mountain.
When Morit and Vorp reached the bottom of the canyon they quickly closed in behind the rampaging juggernaut. Taking cover behind a small boulder, they assessed the situation and were pleased to see that their team members were performing their duties admirably.
“Geico's doing better than I thought he would,” Morit noted, referring to Scar who had apparently succeeded in obtaining aggro and was therefore subsequently getting smashed, burned, clawed, and otherwise tossed around like a rag doll by the ferocious dragon.

Vorp frowned.

For all the flack that Morit gave him, Scar was a very skilled fighter. The fact that the iksar was still single-handedly enduring the brutal onslaught was a testament to his talents. But watching their friend take such a severe beating, Vorp wasn't sure if attracting that type of attention upon themselves was such a good idea.

“You sure about this?” he asked.

“Not really. You got a better plan?” Morit replied.

“No.”

“Then let's just get this over with.” The wizard sighed before adding, “I don't know why YOU'RE complaining – you got the easy job.”

Ignoring him, Vorp started summoning an elemental companion.
“Make it a water one,” Morit suggested, “Fight fire with water... makes sense, right?

The magician gave him a skeptical look, “I don't think it works that way...”

“Just do it,” the wizard said, “might last a couple rounds longer, at least. I'll take what I can get. The main thing is to make sure that you Call me before I get eaten.”

“Yeah, yeah, don't worry, I got your back,” Vorp replied, finishing his summons of a water elemental named 'Goner'.

“Nice name,” Morit noted.

Vorp shrugged. “Appropriate, I suppose.”

They silently crept up behind the monster and got into position.

“Here goes nothing...” Morit mumbled as he began his spell.

He had easily cast Ice Comet at least a thousand times before, but this was the first time he ever had to be so precise with his aim.

Instead of just dropping it on his enemy's head, like he was used to doing, this time he would have to guide the
big ball of ice's approach almost parallel with the ground in order to hit his mark properly.

If he was just a hair off, the comet would just impact on the surface of the dragon's large rump, and the attack would likely go unnoticed – soon leaving them with a dead gecko.

However, if he managed get it into the hole...

The giant lizard raised his head to the heavens, roaring in pain.

“Hoo-ahh! That got 'em!” Vorp cheered as the dragon began to whip around to face it's new targets.

He turned to high-five Morit, but the wizard was already 30 feet ahead of him, fleeing at full speed. “RUN YOU IDIOT!” he called back to his friend.

With the beast starting it's charge, Vorp didn't need any reminders, “Goner! Sick balls!” he called out as he raced to catch up with Morit.

“Attacking target, master!” the elemental enthusiastically exclaimed as he moved in to intercept the dragon. The giant creature didn't even pause as he ran right over Goner,
squashing the poor elemental with one of his massive paws.

Stealing a glance over his shoulder while still at a full sprint, Morit turned to Vorp and yelled, “Your pets suck!” But the halfling didn’t bother responding – his stubby legs were already having a hard time keeping up with the wizard.

As they gained more distance from the raid force, the two slowly started to break off from each other. Without turning to look, Morit called out, “Who’s he following?”

Vorp, pumping his arms as fast as he could, snuck a peek. “You!”

“Aw **censored**!”

“I thought that was the plan!” the magician called back.

“Since when do things go according to our plans!” Morit replied, clearly disappointed.

Vorp swung out of the path of the charging dragon to make sure he had cleared any aggro, then took cover behind a boulder. Peeking out, he saw that Morit was starting to tire and that the creature was beginning to gain ground.
As the wizard made a break for a small cave, presumably to buy himself more time, Vorp glanced nervously back at where the main battle had been. The dragon was still too close to the others, but he didn't know how much longer his friend would be able to keep up the chase.

Meanwhile, as Morit was just reaching the entrance of the tunnel, the dragon let out a jet of fire in a last ditch effort to try and cut off the high elf's escape.

“Hot hot hot!” Morit yelped, but aside from being a little singed on his backside, the wizard was relatively unharmed as he made his way deeper into the cave.

After going a few dozen yards, he slowed down to catch his breath. There's no way that thing could fit in here, right?

Wrong!

The dragon tucked his wings and limbs in close to it's body, and crashed into the cave entrance, squirming and wiggling his way deeper into the tunnels in pursuit of his prey.

“You gotta be kidding me!” Morit screamed, as he tore
off down the tunnel, once again fleeing from the beast.

The dragon's violent movements rocked the entire mountain, causing sections of the tunnel system to begin caving in. In no time, Morit found himself trying to dodge falling rocks and boulders, in addition to the dragon's various attacks.

“Ow! Ah! Ugh! **censored**!” he grunted as an assorted range of falling debris pelted his body. “Come on, Vorp! Where the hell is that summon?!“ he wondered aloud as he continued to flee.

Suddenly he was knocked off his feet by a particularly large chunk of rock.

“OOF!”

As he slowly picked himself up, the dragon burst into the chamber Morit was in. “AHH!” Morit shrieked, as the thing made a lunge for the high elf with it's mouth.

“Nonononononono!” he pleaded as the dragon continued it's chase, quickly beginning to gain ground again, due to the larger space.

Still running for his life, Morit desperately scanned for
the best escape route. He noticed a small passage off to the left that led up.

“Up is good!” he said to himself.

Charging into the new tunnel, he continued to curse Vorp with every step he took. As he gradually made his way up, he realized there was good news and bad news for him.

The good news was that he could see what appeared to be daylight up ahead, which meant an exit.

The bad news was that he also noticed light coming from behind, which meant that the dragon had launched another stream of fire at him.

He kicked it into sixth gear.

As the bright light ahead started to pierce his dimmed eyes and the heat from behind started to nip at his heels, Morit started to realize he was screaming like a little girl. Then, feeling the flames beginning to overtake him, he took one last gamble to save his life...

“IMPEL!!!” he cried at the top of his lungs.

The force of the spell, in addition to the gust of hot air
and fire building up behind him, propelled him forward off his feet and out of the cave. As he supermanned through the air, the wall of fire that had been pursuing him began spewing out from the opening that he had just passed through milliseconds earlier.

Morit hit the ground running and quickly found some cover behind a large outcropping of rocks. Out of habit, he cast an invisibility spell, even though he knew it probably wouldn't help him in this case.

He waited for what seemed like an eternity, then sure enough, his pursuer burst out of the mountain, spreading it's wings and soaring into the air.

It hovered there for a while, searching for the wizard. Unable to reacquire it's target and now well out of range of the raid it had been fighting earlier, the dragon turned and headed off in another direction, presumably back to wherever it came from before it went on it's rampage.

Morit breathed a deep sigh of relief... he was safe.

Just as he was bending down to sit on a small boulder behind him...
"FOOMPH!"

"Mrph!" Vorp let out a muffled scream.

"What in the hell!" Morit yelled, suddenly noticing a very uncomfortable sensation in his butt.

He jumped forward and turned around to see Vorp gasping for air.

"What are you doing!?" he exclaimed, furiously.

"I summoned you with Call of the Hero, like I was supposed to, then you just sat on my face!" the little man exclaimed, still gagging.

"Yeah, about that..." Morit fumed, "Nice **censored** timing, **censored**-hole!"

But Vorp was still preoccupied. "Man, my face was all the way up your crack!"

Morit started rubbing his backside, realizing it would be a while before it stopped aching.

"I think I accidentally licked it..." Vorp shared.

Morit froze. They gave each other an alarmed look.

"That never happened..." Morit stated.

"Sure didn't." Vorp quickly agreed.
When they made it back to the scene of the battle, Morit noticed the survivors had already set up a makeshift camp to tend to the wounded. He spotted Redd sitting on a small rock next to Scar and headed over to them.

“Snakegod in the house!” Redd greeted them, while
giving Vorp a high-five.

Morit pulled out a handful of stogies and started passing them out. “Smoke 'em if you got em, boys,” he said as he snapped his fingers, causing a small flame to flicker at the tip of his thumb. He lit his cigar, then nodded towards Scar, who was sprawled out on the ground.

“He dead?” Morit asked through clenched teeth, a fat cigar sticking out the side of his mouth.

“Nah, just feigned,” Redd replied, taking a puff of his own.

Vorp curiously tilted his head to get a better view, then shot Redd a disagreeing look.

Morit simply shrugged and stuck a cigar in the supine iksar's slightly open mouth.

“You earned it, buddy,” the wizard said, patting his motionless friend's head.

As he stood back up, Morit saw Seja heading their way. A broad smile gradually spread across his face as he walked out to meet her.

“You're alive!” she beamed as she threw her arms around
Morit.

"Of course I'm alive!" he replied indignantly, then smiled.

The two grasped each others' hands and made their way back to the others. They had just reached the group when Naf came running up at a full sprint.

"Morit!" the Vah Shir exclaimed, panting heavily, "We just got a report from a runner representing the League of Antonican Bards."

He paused, bending over and resting both hands on his knees, desperately trying to catch his breath. "Thex is amassing an army. They're asking for any volunteers to assemble in Faydark."

Morit shook his head, not entirely sure how good old Tearis would react if he showed up. "What's that got to do with us?"

"Morit..." Naf said gravely, "it's Firiona Vie... they're under attack."

"What!" the high elf exclaimed.

"There's an army... thousands of troops... a naval blockade..." Naf continued. "The bard's saying nobody has
been able to get in or out by both land and sea, aside from a few gaters.”


Still breathing deeply, Naf turned to look him in the eye. “Lanys”

Morit and Vorp immediately shot each other a worried look, and Seja could see genuine fear in both their eyes.

“Where's this bard?” Morit said grimly. Naf pointed over his shoulder and without another word Morit started heading in that direction.

Vorp and Seja ran after him.

“What do you think you're doing!” Vorp chastised.

“I need to get as much info as I can, Vorp,” the wizard replied. “About the enemy troops, about the blockade, who's defending the city... anything I can find out”

“Why?!” screamed the halfling. “You know damn well there's nothing we can do!” Vorp jumped up and grabbed a chunk of his friend's robe to slow him down. “That **censored** is psycho! You saw what she did to Kithicor!”
he screamed.

Morit abruptly stopped. He lowered his head and closed his eyes. Without turning to face his old friend, he replied in a low voice, “Yes Vorp... I remember exactly what they did...”

Slowly, he turned around and looked at the halfling. His body trembling and tears welling up in his eyes, the wizard explained, “I can't let that happen again. Not to my home.”

Vorp realized there was no changing his mind. He and Seja accompanied Morit to the messenger where the news only got worse. The enemy forces were much greater in number than anyone could have possibly expected, backed by one of the largest armadas the world had seen since the days of the Combine Empire.

They also learned that, of all people, “the great” Al'Kabor was in charge of the city’s defenses. This news distressed Morit the most, and he decided that by the time the allied army reached Firiona, the city would already have fallen. He realized he needed to leave at once if there was any hope of saving his beloved city.
Vorp and Seja volunteered to go with him, but Morit refused. He had changed his bind point just after undertaking the Lavastorm mission, so he would have to get back into the city the hard way. To pull that off, he would need the help of a few specific individuals, and there would be no room for neither the magician nor the necromancer.

He ordered them to wrap up their business here in Lavastorm, then gather up all available members of Snakegod. They were to rendezvous with Thex's forces on Faydwer while Morit gathered some friends who could help get him past the blockade.

Morit took a few steps away then turned to face them. “Are you sure about this?” Vorp asked, reciting their 'lucky phrase', as he always did whenever Morit was about to do something stupid.

Morit looked Vorp in the eyes, but for the first time in their long friendship, he did not answer.

Vorp paused, then nodded. The two brothers shared a deep bond, and no words or gestures were needed to
communicate their unwavering (and strictly platonic!) love for each other.

Morit then took the opportunity to gaze into Seja's eyes one last time. “Goodbye...” was the only thing he said to her before he began casting his gate.

Giving her that familiar smirk, he tried to convey that everything was going to be okay... but this time she saw right through his lie. As the flames began to encircle the body of the man she loved, Seja realized that she would never see him again.

With his image already starting to fade, she collapsed to her knees and sobbed, “Mori! I'm pregnant with your child!”

His gaze never wavered nor did his smile, but by the time the last words had crossed her lips his image was completely gone. Yet she could still hear his reassuring voice echoing, both calm and clear, through the remnants of the dissipating portal:

“Nope! Not mine!”
Leaving Vorp to continue leading Alpha's current campaign in Lavastorm, Morit quickly hunts down select members of Snakegod's other combat units, as well as members of the allied guild Son's of Ambien, to assist the wizard with breaking through the blockade surrounding the
As Morit could start making out the silhouettes of the blockade's massive warships, the wizard quickly gave the signal for his companions to come to a halt.

“Alright boys, we'll be within their range soon,” he informed them. “Last chance to back out,” he added, as he turned to face his men.

The cocky smirks that greeted him were a welcome sight – he silently wished he had as much confidence in himself as they did.

“Um, I'll take you up on that offer,” said a muffled voice coming from the hull of the large ship they were floating next to.

“Sorry Tynk, no can do. You're too vital to the success of this mission,” he replied while stroking the side of the ship's hull.

The gnome growled back, “Fine, but could you stop
doing that? That's my butt you're patting.”

Morit gave a disgusted look and quickly wiped his hands on the side of his robe.

“I'm still pissed off about the grotto, by the way,” Tynk added.

“I know, I heard you the first fifty times,” Morit answered. “And I already told you that I had nothing to do with that – I was unconscious at the time.”

“Which is the only reason agreed to help you out now,” he snorted. “I was stuck there for three months!” Tynk reminded him when he notice the wizard rolling his eyes.

The memory of that adventure brought a smile to Morit's face. But it was a smile that quickly faded when his thoughts turned to those of Ambien and Vind – friends who had met a terrible fate at the hands of the same forces that were now standing between them and his home city of Firiona Vie.

Morit let out a deep sigh. “Alright, enough reminiscing,” he snapped. “Kan! Here's your ticket in,” he said as he pulled out the corpse of an ancient megalodon.
“How in the hell did you fit something so big in there?” Tynk asked, completely amazed.

“Magic pants,” Morit winked.

“Wh- NO!” the enchanter screamed, obviously disgusted. The others started chuckling and Morit would've paid a small fortune to be able to see the look on his face. “That's NOT what I meant, and you KNOW IT!”

“Oh, the megalodon?” Morit asked innocently.

“Yes, the megalodon!” Tynk said, sounding increasingly impatient. “Those don't exactly grow on trees.”

“Definitely not from a tree, Tynk,” the wizard replied. “I fished this one out of a lake.”

“Fished?” the enchanter replied skeptically.

“Yes – I am a grandmaster fisherman, after all,” Morit smiled. “Taught Redd everything he knows about the trade.”

“Ah, Uncle Morit,” Kan interrupted. He had been ignoring their conversation while conducting an inspection of the dead fish, but was now giving the wizard an uncertain look. “Are you sure about this?”
Morit closed his eyes. Too many years had gone by since he had last heard those exact same words (minus the 'uncle' part) coming from the wood elf's father.

“It's worked once before,” the wizard reassured him, “And from what I've been told, it was your dad's idea.”

The druid still looked a little doubtful, but nodded his head and started ordering his brothers into the giant shark's open mouth. Just as Kan was about to climb in himself, Morit gently put a hand on his shoulder.

“Thanks for doing this,” the wizard said softly.

“We're itching to get some payback for what they did to dad, anyway,” Kan replied. “If we can help you out in the process, all the better.”

Morit nodded. “Just don't get carried away,” the high elf cautioned. “There's way too many of them to take on directly... even for you guys.”

“Don't worry, uncle,” the druid smiled. “We'll go after one of the support ships – should be a smaller crew yet still lots of ammo to blow. We'll gate out before you even see the explosion.”
Morit smiled. “You guys' have come a long way,” he sighed. “It almost makes me wish I had children of my own.” He paused to wipe a tear from his eye before continuing, “Your father would be proud…”

“Hey!” yelled one of Kan's brothers, ruining the moment. “Hurry the **censored** up – it stinks in here!”

The druid saluted the wizard and quickly joined his kin inside the giant corpse.

As he watched them swim away, Morit shook his head and turned his attention back to his remaining men.

“You two still okay carrying fatso?” he asked the two bards who had been carrying Tynk all the way from Butcherblock. “You've been hauling him for quite a while now and I know he's gained a few pounds over the last couple years.”

“We're good,” Hoorn confirmed.

“Yeah, he may look like the Maiden's Voyage, but he's still just a small rodent,” added Sin.

“I know you can't see it, but I'm giving you the finger right now,” Tynk informed them. “All of you.”
“What'd I do?” Hoorn asked.

“Knock it off, we don't have much time,” Morit reminded them. “Hoorn. Sin. Make sure we don't get hit, but remember – jackass is supposed to be a boat. Our plan won't work if the drows suspect something's wrong before Ambien's boys get a chance to do their thing, so keep our speed down and make sure not to make any sudden changes in direction unless it's absolutely necessary.”

Morit glanced back up at the opposing armada on the horizon. “We're a lot smaller of a target than they'll think,” he reminded them, “so the chances of them actually hitting one of us should be relatively small.”

The wizard paused as if suddenly remembering something troubling, then shot a concerned glance at Beadil.

“What?” the ranger asked.

Morit shook his head. “Nothing,” he said as he turned to the cleric standing next to him. “Med, keep your rez memorized.”

He then nodded towards Kan's group, who had managed
to swim quite a good distance away.

“Once they give the signal,” he continued, “we drop the illusion and make a break for it. Split up so they can't concentrate their fire, but be sure to stick close to one of the bards for Selo's or you WILL get left behind.”

Morit took one last look at the team he had assembled. Despite each member being hand-picked as the best of the best for each of the specific roles he needed in order to get past the blockade, this was not going to be easy.

“Alright...” he finally said, “mount up.”

And with that, Morit, B, and Med climbed onto Tynk's back.

“Ugh... look who's talking about gaining a few pounds,” the gnome grumbled.

With everyone 'on board', the bards began moving them towards the blockade. As they started to get a better view of the massive armada that was waiting for them, Morit began to get a bad feeling.

Just then, he heard B yell and turned to see his friend standing on the starboard bow with his arms spread wide.
“I’m king of the world!” the ranger yelled with glee.

“Hey!” Tynk screamed. “Get off my head!”

Morit couldn't help but laugh out loud – leave it to B to lighten up the mood during their darkest hour.

Just then a thunderous boom rang out across the zone as the armada opened fire.

“INCOMING!!!” Hoorn screamed as he and Sin started veering to the left.

No sooner had the words came out of the bard's mouth when the first wave of spells and artillery started landing all around them.

“Blarg, I'm dead!” yelled B as he was hit by a stray blast.

Morit dove to catch his friend's limp body before it fell into the water. “Medic!” he screamed, but the cleric was already on top of the situation and had the ranger back up and running within seconds.

Morit yelled down to the bards, “That was a bit too close! Try to increase our speed when they launch the next round!”

But it was too late – unbeknownst to the wizard, the
drows had already fired the second volley while they were tending to B and a hail of metal and magic was already raining down on their heads.

“Not again!” shrieked Beadil, as another blast knocked him unconscious.

“Medic!”

“I know! I know!” Med screamed, already halfway through his casting.

Just as B was coming to, Morit could already hear the high-pitched whistle of the next incoming round of attacks.

“Mommy!” squeaked the ranger as another direct hit landed on his head, this time knocking him off the gnome.

As the wood elf tumbled to his doom, Sin broke formation and quickly grabbed him.

“Morit!” the bard yelled, hoisting the ranger up to his comrades above.

As Morit and Med pulled their friend back to the relative safety of the gnome's back, Morit turned to the cleric and yelled, “Forget it! Just carry him and rez later!”

The dwarf nodded and slung the corpse over his
shoulder, then braced himself for the next wave.

But before the armada could launch another volley, a deafening explosion erupted, exposing a gaping hole in the middle of their formation.

Morit's eyes widened as he recognizing the signal, and he excitedly screamed “DROP IT!” to Tynk as he immediately started sprinting for the opening caused by Kan and his brothers.

Hearing their leader's orders, the bards quickly dropped the enchanter and split off to either side of the burning wreckage. “WHAT THE **CENSORED**!!!” the gnome screamed, but the others were already out of range – Hoorn following Morit to the left while Sin and Med (still carrying an unconscious Beadil) veered off to the right.

Tynk, meanwhile, had fallen into the ocean while still in ship form, causing the remaining members of the dark elven armada to let out a cheer, believing they had sunk the would-be blockade runner. Although a few of the ships spotted the remaining group members and attempted to stop them, the incoming fire from then on was sporadic and
easily avoided by the skillful bards.

Once they were in the clear, Morit allowed himself to breathe a sigh of relief. He looked around to take a headcount and frowned as he noticed they were short one gnome.

“Where’s Tynk?” he asked as Med began reviving the ranger.

The two bards quickly exchanged a nervous look. “You said to 'drop it','” Hoorn said timidly, cringing as he heard just how bad the words actually sounded as they came out of his mouth.

Morit slapped his forehead. “I was telling Tynk to drop the illusion so he could move on his own, not telling you to dump him into the water!”

“Yeah, uh... sorry bout that, boss,” Sin spoke up. “But you really should have been a little more specific.”

Morit shook his head. He was really starting to have second thoughts about whether or not he had actually assembled the 'Best of the Best' for this operation.

“Just... nevermind,” the wizard finally said in disgust.
“Remind me to send someone to go rez him when this is all over.”
Morit and (most of) his men safely reach Firiona Vie and head straight for the command center. Using his status as the city's most respected citizen, Morit quickly displaces Al’Kabor as commander and after accessing the situation, orders an immediate evacuation of the city.
Having given out the final orders to his trusted lieutenants, they quickly file out of the room and Morit allows himself to let out a deep sigh.

He wasn't looking forward to speaking with Al'Kabor again, but he knew that they were desperately short on evac'ers. And although that shortage was largely due to the erudite's own incompetence, the man would still be able to contribute considerably when it came time to teleport those who were too injured to make it out on foot.

As he turned to leave, he noticed a figure already standing in the doorway. Although the fires outside were burning so bright that he could only see a silhouette, he knew immediately who it was.

“Dead! Thank my crotch you're alright!”

“I had heard you came back” the sound of her calm voice helped ease his mind, “but I needed to see it for myself.”
She paused as a loud explosion went off in the distance. “When the invasion began they said we were cut off, and that those attempting to come to our assistance were getting slaughtered. I knew you wouldn't turn your back on us... I feared you were among those killed trying to get past the blockades.”

“You should know me better than that, Dead. It takes more than a few thousand drows to stop m-...” his false bravado was cut short by another explosion, this one strong enough to shake the room.

He walked over to the window and looked outside. “We need to move.”

“Okay Mor... but it's not just me anymore...”

She fully stepped into the room, and for the first time he could see that she was carrying a small baby.

His eyes widened so much they nearly popped out of their sockets. “Oh hell no, I ain't got time for this now – Tec!” he grabbed her by the arm and led her outside. “Tec, get over here!”

From a full sprint, Tec stopped on a dime directly in front
of the couple. "Thur's knights have cleared a path to the woods along the left flank, but the enemy's advanced units have already breached the main entrance. They got some... thing... and it's wrecking havoc on our lines," the Mor Drone reported. "Once they figure out what we're trying to do, it won't take them long to cut off our escape route."

"That's fine, leave the coordination to B and Hoorn. Right now I need you to personally escort this woman and her child to the rendezvous point. Grab as many others as you can while you're at it, but I need to know that these two are safe."

Tec glanced at the woman uneasily before turning back to Morit and nodding, "I understand."

Dead could sense the concern in Morit's voice. "Mor, there's something I... there's something you should know."

He reached out his arms to hold her, "Now's not the time, Dead. We need to..."

"It's not yours!" she blurted out before catching herself. "The baby... it's not... yours", she explained as she pulled away, unable to look him in the eye.
Morit paused for a second.

“Well, of course it's not mine!” Morit affirmed, repositioning his previously extended arms defiantly on his hips.

“It's Vorp's.”

Morit visibly gagged, but managed to hold it in and regain his composure. “That doesn't change the fact that I need to get you and Ugly Jr. out of here. Go with this Bard... I mean...” he closed his eyes and sighed, “I trust him with my life.” He turned to the Mor Drone, “Tec, keep them safe.”

“They're in good hands”, Tec said, sounding rather relieved that the awkward conversation was coming to an end.

“I know”

Tec gently grabbed Dead's hand while humming a soft tune, and in a flash they were gone.
Still feeling slightly nauseated from the news of Dead's child, Morit made his way through the shattered streets of his home town to the structure that was acting as the makeshift civilian shelter.

As he passed through the entrance, he immediately
started looking for his old 'friend'. Al'Kabor wasn't very hard to find – most of the citizens were already organizing into groups towards the front of the building getting ready to evacuate, but the tall erudite was excitedly talking to a group of young students in the back.

Morit quickly made his way over to him, and spit out the closest thing to extending an olive branch as he could muster: “Al, I'm glad you're still here. I need your help.”

The bitter old man looked up from his new students and snorted, “You've GOT to be kidding me.”

“I wish I was,” Morit continued, realizing that restraining himself from strangling the old man on the spot was going to be harder than he thought. “But the intel I'm getting says that we have even less time than I originally figured.”

He paused and looked around at the group the erudite had gathered.

“Wait a minute. You're all wizards, aren't you?”

They all nodded.

The wheels in Morit's head started turning... all of them were far too young to be of any use in a fight against the
high level troops of the invading army, but...

“How many of you are advanced enough to port others?”

Most of them raised their hand.

“This is great news! I need a volunteer - one of you who can't group port yet, but can gate to the Faydark and notify Felwithe's clerics that there are going to be a lot of wounded coming their way.”

One of the high elves raised her hand and said, “I'm familiar with the Clerics of Tunare. Master Bronzeleaf was a friend of my fathers.”

“Good, get going – we don't have much time.”

As the young wizard started her spell, Morit turned his attention back to the others who were unable to group port. “Those of you who can self-gate to safety, do so now. When the injured start arriving, do your best to assist the healers.”

He paused to look over the remaining wizards he had to work with, and picked out the ones that looked the strongest.
“First thing's first, be sure to avoid any enemy troops – you're not going to be a match for them in combat, so don't even try,” Morit warned.

“With that said, make your way to the front lines and get in contact with a ranger named Beadil,” he instructed them. “I left him in charge up there, so he'll know how to use you best.”

Morit paused. Ranger... B...

“If he's already dead, then find out who's in charge and do whatever that guy tells you to do,” he added.

As they left, he faced the others. “The rest of you... a couple of you can stay here to evacuate the elderly, but I'll need most of you to port out our wounded fighters. Pair up and head out - find where they're taking the wounded and get them out of here.”

As the last of the group dispersed, Al'Kabor grabbed Morit by the shoulder and started waggling his long bony finger in his face.

“Now wait a minute, this battle is far from over!” he interjected. “We can still repel their advances if we use the
right spells! Why do yo think I gathered those young wizards?"

“I thought you had finally done something right, but I guess I should have known better!” he replied.

The erudite started to object, but Morit would have none of it.

“Your arrogance has gotten enough people killed today. If you had done your job in the first place, you might still have an army to command!” the wizard reprimanded. “As it stands, your army is lost, the city – MY home town – is about to fall, and if you don't shut up about your useless spells RIGHT NOW, I'm gonna shove my epic so far up your stuck up **censored** that you'll end up choking on your own **censored**.”

“But I have an contingency plan! See... I've been saving some extra copies of my 'Vengeance' spell,” he said while fumbling with an arm-full of scrolls, “and I think if everyone...”

But before Al could finish his sentence, Morituus' epic had already disappeared from sight and both of the high
elf's hands were firmly wrenched around the stubborn erudite's throat.

“THIS IS WHAT I THINK OF YOUR SPELLS!!!”

The final straw had snapped. Morituus lost all control of himself and took out over a hundred years of frustration on Al'Kabor's neck.

With his head practically exploding and on the verge of losing control of his bladder, Al'Kabor somehow managed to squeeze off an evac spell. However, unfortunately for both parties, Morit was accidentally sucked into the portal with him.

No one knows where Al ended up gating them to or what exactly happened when they got there... but neither Al'Kabor, his crap spells, nor Morit's epic, were ever seen again.

THE END

(Well... kinda 'The End' – there's a lot more, but I'm never gonna get around to finishing it so this was as good a place to end it as any)