



THE NUMIDIAD

A Tale of Tamriel on the Shattered Scale



4E203 SUN'S DUSK 26

MYRRLYN

/R/TESLORE

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SECOND ERA

CONSTRUCTION

2E296, Midyear... 18 19. Hall of the Colossus, outside Rimmen.

It's finished. Finally, we finished it. The Dunmer promised us a weapon as their bargain for the Armistice, but they didn't tell us we had to assemble it ourselves. Well, we did. All it needs now is a Heart. Tiber Septim himself arrived today, along with his battlemage and warlord, and tomorrow at dawn they begin the ritual to awaken it. Whatever it is. It's just a statue at the moment. A colossal, brass statue of a man. It has parts to move; we had to fit together gears and pipes endlessly. Whatever this machine does, I don't know if we should be proud or ashamed. If you are reading this, know that we intended only the best. We intended to forge peace on the anvil of the world, with the hammer of the Numidium.

THIRD ERA

ACTIVATION

3E1. Midyear, I hope. Hall of the Colossus, I fear.

Numidium awoke yesterday. We had to construct massive gantries to hold it as we built it; they were called the Halls of the Colossus during the years of construction. Now they will only be known as the Halls of the Folly, if the gods are kind enough for any to remember. I fear that we have mishandled power too great for any mortal. The Dwemer built this monstrosity, and the price they paid for it was their extinction. Now we have awoken it, and what shall be wrung of us for our pride?

*The moment of its awakening was truly breathtaking. Tiber Septim, Zurin Arctus, and a great shaggy Nord whose name we never knew stood on a platform in front of its chest. They held a large stone. There was a blinding flash of light, a deafening thunderclap, and it surged to life. It didn't move or change, but we knew. Gods help us, it was **alive**. Tiber stood triumphant on the gantry. A harsh light shone through a gaping hole in Zurin's chest before his body toppled to the sand below, and a cloud*

of ash hung in the air. Then we noticed what else had happened: clouds flashed across the sky around us, but on the far horizon, nothing had changed. Men grew old, or young, around us. Sometimes they flashed to skeletons and collapsed, and some shrunk to infants and vanished. Some had the changed years reverse; some had their bodies pulled in different directions by the eddies of time. My flight across the sand took me to my youth and old age and back, and my left half is that of a man twenty years my elder. I scribe this frantically, not trusting the sands any further. My papers, new-bought last month, crack with age. My ink dries in the pen.

It moved. By all the gods, the monster moved. It's left the gantry. I don't know where Tiber Septim is, but the machine is coming for us.

Mother have mercy.

MORROWIND

3E1, Vvardenfell

We call this the third era, now. The folly of the Cyrodiils marks a change for us all. We don't know where the Cyrodiils found the Brass Walker, but rumor has it that our own Tribunal gave it to them. Surely this is barest falsehood. No God of ours would do this to the world, would they?

There is no time for doubts. Not that there is time for anything, or time, anymore. We hear that the Halls of the Colossus have the worst of it, but even here we feel the ripples of Septim's Folly. Time rushes forward, then backward, and... we don't know how to describe it. I've seen mer become thrice themselves, each following different paths of fate, then recombine in a catastrophic event using details from all three. My colleague married three different people three different times, and now his wife is a grotesque mash up of them all. Was. She died instantly when the times collided.

There's no point in recounting this. Numidium came for us. A Numidium, anyway. We hear that there is fighting all across Tamriel. Numidium is not with us constantly; perhaps it roams the continent. How it moves so quickly we do not know. Perhaps it too split as did my colleague. Perhaps it is everywhere. Perhaps it alone knows the one path through the churned

stream of Time to wander as it pleases incomprehensible to us strewn like flotsam in a flood.

The mainland is lost. We pulled back to Vvardenfell, to the Ghostfence. There is an enemy inside, and they have blocked our Gods from their font of power. We must reclaim it. We face the scourge of Corprus, and monsters beyond our conception, but we must press on. There is no hope beyond the fire and ash of the Mountain.

SKYRIM

3E...

How do we define a year anymore? The seasons are meaningless. They obey neither order nor regularity. Not even the sun can be relied upon for constancy. The only solidity left in the world is the ice.

Tiber Septim began as just one of us. He came from the west, fought with us, drank with us. Nobody thought him any different until the thunder spoke and called him to the mountain, to Hrothgar. People seek out the Greybeards regularly, but to have them ~~some~~ summon a man... unheard of, for ages.

Skyrim has always stood by her brothers to the south, and Tiber was no exception to this. When he moved south to build his empire, he did so with us at his back. Not all of us, at first, but Nords are never of a mind.

This golem, though, he's gone too far. I'm loyal to him, but I'm loyal more to my men and my home. This thing he has done... it is only destruction. There is no honor in fighting with metal that has no man wielding it. The others have all turned against us now, and we cannot stand for a man who employs so easily a soulless machine crafted by soulless elves.

Slept: /// /// /// /// //

Karl and Jormund wanted to head home to Karthwasten soon. I'm glad they stayed with us. We came across a family from the west. The Reach is a bloodbath. High Rock turned against us because of the Golem, and struck at our west. Some of the Reach natives sided with them and are calling themselves the Forsworn. Haafingar is sending warbands south to

try and quell the worst of it, but the fighting is still going strong. We're headed to Whiterun now. Hopefully someone there will know what we should do.

HIGH ROCK

Sixth Campaign, outside Rorikstead

The bloody Nords and their treacherous cousins the Cyrodiils unleashed hell on the world, and nobody else strikes against them. This is my sixth tour into Nordic territory, and each time we find less and less resistance to us. The hillfolk natives are increasingly violent, and have cycled through perhaps three or four governments since we invaded. They are at times helpful to us solely because we continue to strike into Skyrim, and at other times close their gates to us or even attack outright because we are not them. I do not expect them to last, but they are a useful tool to harry the province.

We received word today that Numidium has turned its gaze upon the Iliac. Wayrest has been sacked, as have Alcaire County and, praise be the gods, that barbarian cesspit Orsinium. Our new orders are to pull back west, herding all the hillfolk we can into Markarth, and emptying the mines. The high mages believe that we may be able to use the silver to construct a defense against the Walking Brass. All I care about, though, is that we strip the Nords of wealth and bring it home with us. We'll need it.

Markarth

We've been here for a month now, working the hillfolk night-continuously. The mines seem to never run low, and just as a vein of silver is depleted, rock shifts and another is exposed. Reports from Balfiera tell us that the island overflows with silver from the mines of this region, both Breton and seized Nordic. The mages are making progress on their project, but Tiber's monster has for the time turned elsewhere. I pray that we will be ready when it returns.

ELSWEYR

Intelligence Reports: Elsweyr

The Khajiiti caravans all vanished soon after the Rimmen Event. Our agents in the northern towns gathered rumors these were shouted, not whispered, that the Event has given new significance to the moons, which play integral roles in Khajiiti culture. As we have seen, although seasons and years pass irregularly on the surface, the moons have remained constant in their cycles, as far as we can tell. How this affects the Khajiit is yet to be determined.

Torval Station reports that massive numbers of Khajiit have flocked to the city, and more arrive every day. Hostility to foreigners grows and grows with their apprehension. They will not speak of it where we can hear, but it is apparent that their Mane has issued a proclamation demanding that all of Elsweyr's population migrate south. Perhaps they hope that in the Pelletine jungles, they will be beyond Numidium's reach.

Torval Station: We were chased out of Torval today with the last of the other non-natives seeking shelter or livelihood to the south. We plan to travel east and then sail north to Leyawiin for our return. Our quarter of the city is empty, and the only exit is to the open road. I have decided that further investigation into the Khajiit plans would be fruitless and end only in our deaths. This is the first time we have seen quiet or stillness since arrival in the city, and it is indeed eerie. The only movements are small cloth strips tacked to doors. I have included one below:

Elsweyr is lost. Seek Haven elsewhere.

VALENWOOD

The towering graht-oak lumbers through the clearing, smaller trees crowding back to make room. Its branches shake angrily in the wind, and the chattering screams of the Bosmer in its branches race through the air. Behind it, shadowy shapes flit through the dark forest. Aside from the creaking wood of the graht-oak, the unearthly cries of the angered elves, and occasional deep, heavy thuds of something impossibly heavy striking the earth, the forest is deathly silent.

Animals have never found perfectly safe haven in Valenwood, but their utter absence is an event never before heard in living memory.

Standing sharply out among the dark browns and rich greens of the forest, a blindingly bright brass tower flashes among the forest. It crashes through the smaller growth, pausing only to batter resilient trees out of its way. It charges after the graht-oak, missiles and magic peppering its skin. A fist like the hammer of a god crashes into the graht-oak's trunk, shaking branches and bodies out of the crown. An eerie keening light pierces the tree's canopy in several places. Numidium strikes the tree several more times, ripping limbs and vast swaths of foliage off of it and discarding them. The light vanishes suddenly, and strange howls and roars echo through the vale.

Wave after wave of creature rush from the graht-oak. The towering brass walker kicks and swings at them, but the horde manages to dodge. Mostly. Yipping and screeching, the varied animals nip and climb the metal goliath. Neither side is able to significantly damage the other, and though beasts are flung off with every movement, the wild horde continues to pile onto the Dwarven construct. Finally, it shakes some free and charges vigorously into the forest. Behind it, the alien creatures disperse and the graht-oak lies toppled on the forest floor.

ARGONIA

Deep in the dark and twisted maze of the Black Marsh, a wind attempts to stir through the thickly-grown trees. It fails to move more than a few leaves. Dew drips from the foliage, and sap runs like tears down the bark of trees. These are no ordinary trees, however, if anything in the Marsh could be called ordinary. There is an aura of ancient malice surrounding them, and they exude a strong sense of forbiddance upon any who have the misfortune to stray near. These are no common marsh trees, no; these are the Hist.

Lizards form lines through the area, queued to come forward and drink of the sap. As they wait, they eat whatever is at hand, leaves, insects, and animals crawling or swimming through the mud. The area has been largely stripped bare of plant life, and alongside the lines scamper other of the lizardfolk bringing food from farther away. The lines progress slowly, but steadily. At the base of the trees lie those who have already drunk of the

sap. They grow emaciated, their bodies elongating visibly, their bones moving according to the Hist's desire. When the Hist have finished with each, the reptile stands to its feet. The newly-shaped creature's eyes are glassy, and it moves uncertainly at first. Soon enough, however, it lopes off into the foliage and vanishes.

Smoke and screams rise from the little village, though the screams never last long. On the black star-studded horizon, the dark and forbidding wall of the Black Marsh looms angrily, and a steady tide of the reptilian denizens streams westward. Argonians were no strange sights in Cyrodiil's Blackwood, but these were no common Argonian travelers. The shortest of them stood two or more heads higher than the villagers, their scales were flat black, and they were significantly more musclebound than those to which the residents had become accustomed. Furthermore, their faces were utterly different, though none could say how exactly. Where groups of survivors lingered, inevitably one whispered that these must be the rumored Naga. The whispers lasted as long as the whisperers; that is to say, not long at all.

The column of Marsh-monsters soon ran westward again, and yet more ruin and sorrow joined the silent desolation of the eastern wood.

HAMMERFELL

Hammerfell's coastal cities lie sundered and smoking, their streets filled with debris and bodies. Only the island city of Stros M'Kai remains untouched, separated from the mainland by depths Numidium elected not to cross. Inland, deep into the wastes of the Alik'r Desert, Redguard life is stirring.

As the sand finally subsides, the cloud of the vicious sandstorm still visible in the distance, a half-buried door creaks open. A form wrapped in cloth peers out. It looks around and, apparently satisfied, opens the door fully. The figure drags a set of wooden poles out from the shadowy recesses and begins assembling them into a sand-fly.

A column of Redguards from all walks of life; warriors, craftsmen, families and even their livestock winds northward from Taneth. The city lays in ruins behind them, the latest in a string of coastal attacks from the Septim

machine. Scouts ride out ahead of the column, seeking out little-used landmarks of the Alik'r Desert.

Several days' journey for the column finally ends when a scout rushes to the main body. He points them in the direction of the door and sand-fly, and elated, they strike out. Upon arrival, the cloth-wrapped watchers usher everyone inside, and shut the door behind them. The gleaming brassy door gradually vanishes beneath the ever-shifting sands.

SUMMURSET

As the sun breaks over the eastern horizon, its rays fall on a once-fair island since ravaged by wanton destruction. Mangled colors lie strewn over the landscape like shards of a stained glass window, and painfully vivid colors jut at angles out of the sculpted ground riven by furrows and craters. In curious disparity with the ruin, scattered at random among the broken isle are counties untouched by the chaos around them. The occasional detachment of elven mages roam the landscape, escorting noncombatants to the ferry-ports of the minor sister. Some pause among the chaos, and under their attention the shards of broken color flow back into the ground, which returns reluctantly to the carefully-designed shape generations of elves had given it. Their efforts do little to reverse the catastrophe inflicted upon their soil, but even this slight restoration brings some hope to the elves.

On the coast, the latest in the seemingly incessant rash of Maormeri sea-brigades circles the Walking Brass Tower. It stands up to its waist in the sea, rebuffing magical blasts and crushing any vessels so unfortunate as to come within its reach. Sea serpents and their riders dart among the fray, pelting the machine with spells and seeking to distract it from the more powerful weapons brought to bear by the raiding ships. Frost coats the metal skin of the golem even as the sea boils into steam around it and flashes of lightning skitter across its skin and the water around it. Its arms blur at intervals, and spells thought to have struck home fizzle short or careen at angles to their original course. The ocean flickers around it, seemingly moving at odds with the rest of the sea. Waves jerk to a stop, or pass through at frightening speeds. Flotsam drifting close to the construct disintegrates spontaneously, or is twisted and cut upon itself and changes form at sharp and sudden intervals. On the shore, a glimmering spire rises

out of the ground, gleaming in the sun's light, throwing aloft a pillar of spell-wrought energy. The clouds part around the beam, the shining lance evaporating any wisps that stray too close to it.

At long intervals, the spire launches a blistering barrage of energy towards Septim's metal warrior. Most of the barrage strikes home, though some land among the waves or Maormeri ships. Numidium glows ruddy under the onslaught, and the intense heat boils the sea around it. Metal runs like sweat down its form, and its limbs slow and bind at times. The ever-present tumult of Time surrounding the giant shows a flicker-flurry of motion, and metal streams into shaped order and fractured chaos alike. After the latest spell-strike ceases, the sea-mist clears to reveal the Maormeri brigade streaming smoke with their hulls holed and rigging ragged and torn; Numidium's rapid strikes during the blinding chaos destroyed several ships and more were sailing low in the water.

The fracturing of Time around Numidium grows stronger still, and in a blur it charges to shore and east across the Isles, and vanishes out of sight. Its path is littered with burned and broken bodies, buildings, and strewn rubble. Behind it, tired elves stolidly resume their tasks.

FOURTH ERA

MORROWIND

“My lord! Dire news from the front! Our expedition forces breached the walls of the last Dagoth Bastion, and the House's reserve forces overwhelmed us! They are pouring out of the stronghold now, and it is all we can do to hold our ground at the Pass!”

“We expected as much from the lessened resistance, Commander. Dispatch additional troops as needed; the Dres outriders may be of particular use in this case. You must hold for one hour; after that, I will instruct you accordingly.”

“By your command, my Lord Sotha.”

“My lord! What orders do you have?”

“How fares the front?”

“We have retreated beyond the Pass, but we give ground slowly. The onslaught is... more powerful than we anticipated, my lord, and the terrain does not allow us much ground to field.”

“Pull your men back.”

“My... lord?”

“Pull. Your men. Back. Vivec has moved Baar Dau into position above Dagoth’s Stronghold, and he is unwilling to sacrifice his own army with the Sixth House. Leave fifty Armigers at a choke point, and return everyone else to the Ghostfence. Their sacrifice will be remembered.”

“As you command, Lord Sotha.”

CYRODIIL

“The Dunmer are declaring the Fourth Era? The calendar is OURS! This **ERA** is OURS! So they destroyed some rebel clan on Red Mountain, what, they think they can declare their glory greater than the Empire’s? We should have ripped that lover-liar’s heart out to adorn the Peace he sold Us! Now, what of the Numidium? How fare the provinces?”

“Skyrim is in chaos, Your Majesty. Word has it that the Dunmeri assault on Vvardenfell drove a native species called the cliff racer westward, and their arrival in Skyrim brought about resurgence of their Dragon Cult. The Reach and Haafingar are embroiled in civil war with natives and High Rock, and the middle holds are fighting two fronts and paralyzed as a result. High Rock assaults Skyrim and is reported to be constructing a potential defense against Numidium on Balfiera. Hammerfell’s coast is destroyed, and her survivors are retreating inland to the Alik’r desert. Our spies cannot follow. Valenwood has gone dark and is reputed to be embroiled in a Wild Hunt on a scale never seen before. Towns near the border have fled closer inland. Elsweyr has expelled all foreigners and killed any they discovered after that. We do not know what they do. Argonia sends assault columns regularly against the southern woods, and while Leyawiin holds out due in part to

Numidium, it is starving and weakening. As for Summerset, they continue to occupy most of its attention.”

“Numidium itself returns periodically to the gantries at the Hall of the Colossus for repair. Our workers report that the Elves grow steadily more adept at damaging it, but it uses its manipulation of the Time-chaos to undo some of their destruction. Furthermore, most of the fighting appears to take place in the ocean.”

“Forget the bloody flaming Elves! We must unify the continent, then We can turn Our full attention to the Isles. Smash the Bretons, clear out Skyrim, and We will deal with the Dunmer Ourselves. We **must** have the North!”

“As my Emperor commands.”

HIGH ROCK

The Direnni Tower dominates the Island of Balfiera. The original structure is the core of a large fortress constructed by the Direnni clan and then the Bretons over the millennia, though the gleaming silver shaft still looms far above the roof of the mortal-made stone structure. The newest addition to the complex is a massively intricate silver rune-form, writ across the ground and walls with arcane sigils carefully traced. Evidence of construction is everywhere around the tower, and workers can be seen pouring more silver into carefully arranged molds. Ships laden with silver from the northern mines have arrived weekly, and the blinding glare of the sun flashes incessantly off of the work.

Atop the Tower itself lies a smaller version of the ground’s rune-form. It, unlike the larger effort, is complete and glows with a pale light of its own. Thirty-six chairs adorn the rooftop: along the circumference of the silver, the octants each bear a cluster of four, and in the center, the final four face outward along the axes of the compass.

The scaffolding around the Tower bears a quiet procession. As they reach the top, the dignitaries quietly file to their seats. The rim holds elves from the Isles, Valenwood, and Morrowind, as well as Redguards, Bretons, Nords, and even four reptilian representatives of the Marsh. Four Khajiit also appear, having been dispatched by their Mane. The Cyrodiils are, of

course, not present. In the center stand the three members of Morrowind's Tribunal and the current head of Artaeum's Psijic Order, Lore Master Celarus. It is he who speaks first.

"I thank you all for coming today. The menace of the Cyrodiils has affected us all, and though it may have been difficult to set aside old prejudices between us, the matter of the Septim and the Numidium concerns us all. I believe Vivec, of the Tribunal, wishes to speak."

The assembled representatives mutter angrily. It is no secret that Numidium passed into Tiber Septim's hands from those of ALMSIVI. The gold-grey half-man rises, and the whispers silence. He smiles slightly, and opens his mouth. Though his exact words are untranscribable, he speaks of the myriad time-shards splintering and dancing among the stars, and the multitudes of worlds born into peace at the cost of those crushed into ruin under the heel of the once-Dwarven machine. He speaks of love and loss and kalpic end and chaos, and the grand magnificence of the years to come purchased at the cost of the wounded world-scale of the inescapable present.

As Vivec ends his speech, a thundering roar is heard from a cloudless sky. The rooftop gathering stands in alarm and looks to the south-east. There on the horizon is a massive shadow swiftly drawing near. It is soon discerned to be a flock of dragons, and at their head, an enormous red creature bearing a figure on its neck.

Naafalilargus lands atop the Tower, scattering chairs and dignitaries, and the Emperor Tiber Septim alights. The other dragons circle the Tower, clinging to its side or landing on the ground or staying aloft. Tiber strides silently, majestically, to the very center. Lore Master Celarus opens his mouth, and stares dumbfounded and quiet when Tiber raises his hand. The Tribunal reacts in various ways: Almalexia begins rallying magicka, Vivec stands off to the side, half-smiling and half-sorrowed, and Sotha Sil immediately vanishes in a puff of energy. His voice deep and commanding, Tiber intones:

**GHARTOK CHIVER DALKADOON TALOS.
DOVVE! GAHVON ZIILLE DII SAHROT
KRONGAH TAAZOKAAN!**

A wave, near-invisible, ripples out from Tiber Septim. As it passes through each dragon, the creature crumples, collapses, and begins to burn. As the scaly flesh disintegrates, brilliant streams of light flow from the corpses to the Emperor, who shines like a star descended as he consumes their power. Surrounded by a storm of light and crackling energy, rivers of draconic magic rushing into him, he hovers slightly over the silver filigree the Breton mages had carefully laid out. It begins to melt, and with it, the large design on the island's surface. Tiber opens his eyes and laughs, a deep, rich, powerful laugh booming out from his throat, sweeping its path clear. The ever-present tumult in time, to which the others have long grown accustomed, suddenly reverts to calm, ordered linearity. The change is abrupt, and the madness' absence now seems mad. Almalexia lies gibbering on the floor in front of him, and Vivec has vanished in the interim, leaving his garments discarded. Celarus opens a portal and steps through, and the thirty-two remaining folk burn blinded by the glory. A deep rumbling shudders through the Tower, and through the island as a whole, and Tiber Septim roars with the Voice of a God. Ada-Mantia rises into the air, vortices of wind and light whipping around it, and atop it rides the new-made Talos. Aetheric fire surges around him, obscuring his form behind scourging light. Ada-Mantia rises and rises, escaping at last the depths to which it sank when it was first created. The sun itself dims in the sky, and the two moons tremble. Finally, the Tower is above the ground, and the piercing light of the God atop it shines across the land. Spread out across Tamriel, lone dragons soar above the clouds, shouting their triumph for all the land to hear.

FIFTH ERA

MORROWIND

Sotha Sil emerges from the tunnel leading back into the bowels of Red Mountain. Lit by the ruddy glow of the eternal fires, he carries in his arms an object covered with a thin cloth. It pulses slowly with a diffuse light. He nods to the House Magi around him, who fall in step, and they proceed down the mountain pathway to the gaping chasm of Akulakhan. Revealed by Vivec's strike using Baar Dau, the towering construct, only partially completed at the time, was a hidden project of House Dagoth's. Under

Seht's direction, it was built only to the point of bare functionality, and its bare skeleton is a stark contrast to Numidium's gleaming golden skin. The procession winds its way around Akulakhan's skeleton, stopping at the void in its chest. The Indoril mage bows to Sotha Sil, then removes the cloth. Seht's burden, the Heart of Lorkhan itself, rests cradled in his arms. He releases it and, floating on a cushion of magicka, it drifts into Akulakhan's waiting chest. Metal bars snap to it, locking it into place, and siphoning its power with keening blades. Daedric inscriptions all along Akulakhan's struts flare into glowing life, exuding an ethereal blue glow spreading across the golem's skeleton, a skin-sea whipped into a storm by a wind unfelt. Eyes blazing with chaotic fire, the artifice sinks its claws into the rock wall and begins its ascent. Behind it, Red Mountain groans and shudders, red lava and black ebon bleeding from its fissures.

CYRODIIL

5E8

The Dunmeri siege of the Imperial Island began months ago, and it drags on still. Neither our Numidium nor the Stormcrown's captured Tower are of decisive efficacy against the Numidium that the sorcerer Seht has brought to bear, but they do keep it from toppling us. Despite floating high above ground, orbiting the Imperial Spire, the Second Tower moves very slowly and the Dunmer keep moving into the Spire's shadow where Ada-Mantia cannot strike directly. When their golem is visible from Ada-Mantia, though, the power it unleashes is terrifying to behold. Spears like liquid flame lance forth from its surface to land among the Dunmer, or on the golem's skin. The city-wheel is smashed and burned from both the Dunmer and from our own Tower, and where our flame-spears cut, the stone is polished smooth as if it had been built with pieces missing. Talos continues to direct Numidium against the rebellious provinces, those that still stand, trusting in Ada-Mantia and our own mages to hold Cyrod.

As for the provinces, most lie in some form of ruin. Morrowind's mainland is ravaged by the Marsh-monsters, and the volcano isle was smashed by Vivec's Lie Rock and then ripped apart by the Second Numidium. Argonia's outer reaches have been trampled by Numidium and burned by the Legions. Elsweyr is, somehow, completely abandoned. A few feral Khajiit roam here and there, but otherwise it appears to be wholly empty.

Valenwood is still embroiled in a Wild Hunt, parties of which occasionally spill over the border into Cyrodiil and Elsweyr. Dragon-scouts soaring above the wood report that Falinesti and the other graht-oaks still roam uncontested, but also uninhabited. Whether or not pockets of Bosmeri civilization still hold out is unable to be determined. Hammerfell's coast has been desolate since the beginning of the War, and its population withdrawn inland. They have been largely isolated since then, though sporadic sightings do occur. High Rock has been thrown into complete chaos since the Stormcrown's Glory on Balfiera. Wayrest, Evermore, Camlorn, and Jehanna are the four strongest of the Breton city-states, and without the Bretons and Redguards to suppress them, the Orcs have even managed to incorporate their Orsinium stronghold again. Their leader, a creature called Krognaz gro-Ghazulob, has gone so far as to send emissaries to the Empire seeking provincial recognition in return for fealty and military service. Skyrim, unfortunately, is still sundered in a sea of blood. The Reach native rebellion, apparently called the "Forsworn Uprising", has engulfed all of the Reach, most of Haafingar, and western Hjaalmarch, Whiterun, and Fell Kreath. The roads out of Solitude are unusable, and the Bruma pass through the Jeralls see refugee traffic daily. In the eastern holds, the Dragon Cult has taken a firm grip on the populace. The Windhelm Chapterhouse now commands the Rift, Winterhold, Eastmarch, and Dawnstar. The city of Whiterun is pressed between both the Forsworn and the Dragonsworn, and reputed to be ready to succumb to either.

The Summerset Archipelago sees most of Numidium's fury, and while the cities hold strong, the countryside of the Isles has been largely ruined and evacuated.

This leaves only Cyrodiil. Although Argonian columns have made incursions through the Blackwood and sacked Leyawiin, and the Dunmer burned the northern Nibenean countryside on their march here, the Colovian marches remain relatively intact. Most of the civilian population has been moved to the west, and the eastern counties are thinly populated only by those who refused to move. Three legions have been dispatched north to Skyrim, two hold the defense of the Imperial Tower, and the remaining two guard the western plains.

The Dunmer attacked again today. Their battlemages led the first assault, launching a barrage of spells against the Spire. Our Whisperers managed to repel most, but as always a few shots came through. The Tower is to the north today, and the Dunmer camp is spread along the southern face. I do not envy their constantly-rotating camp, and a central defense against a moving offense is an inarguable advantage for the besieged. The Spire battlemages have been working with Ada-Mantia's weapon controllers, and we may finally have a way of arcing the Tower's assaults around the Spire, by passing the lances through a magickally created lens.

Numidium just arrived. Its travel grows increasingly odd. One minute the Dunmer colossus was pounding at the Spire uncontested, spells flashing back and forth through the air and the dizzying distortion in the air arcing the Tower's beams around us to strike at their golem, and the Brass Walker had stepped out of thin air and slammed its fist into its rival's side. Watching the two fight is both awe-inspiring and terrifying. With the Stormcrown atop Numidium and Seht atop Akulakhan, both glowing with tremendous power, and the two metal constructs scraping the sky, the city-wheel and the Dunmer army below seem as ants in comparison. My unit is stationed near the top of the Imperial Spire, and yet we stand at the shoulders of the two gargantuan constructs. They wade casually through the city and lake, kicking aside buildings like anthills and water like puddles. It is almost like two men boxing on a small model of a city, only there are no roars or grunts or sounds of fist striking flesh. The silence is eerie, punctuated only by the rumble of their movement, the occasionally shrill screech of spell-barrage, and the dull clang of metal colliding.

*By the Divines! Seht charged Talos, throwing him against the Spire! The whole building leans to the north now, but he somehow staved in Aku's knee and drove him into the water. Numidium **PICKED UP** the other golem, with the Dunmer sorcerer flung free, and **HURLED** it south to the river! The Walking Brass turned its attention on the Dunmer army next, but by now they've grown practiced to scattering beyond its reach. The situation is much like a man surrounded by flies, with no way of trapping them where he can crush with ease. Talos recognizes this, of course, so Numidium soon vanishes in the same manner as it appeared.*

HAMMERFELL

5E10

The human tendency for intercommunication is amazing. Even though we have sealed ourselves in these Rourken cities, the necessities of survival mean that surface caravans are a periodic occurrence, and with them travels news and rumor almost as a plague. For once, they are even mostly true. Or at least in agreement. They say that the Cyrodiils have a new-made God. That the Dunmer have a second Brass Monster that they are using to fight the Cyrodiils. And the strangest, and most easily confirmed: the Khajiit have left Nirn. They climbed to the moons again and live there in paradise. This must be true, for a third moon has appeared in the sky, and our lens crafters have been able to magnify it, and the moon appears to be a mass of glistening cat fur. Lights also dot Secunda's surface, and we can surmise that they belong to Khajiit colonies.

May they know peace only dreamed of here on Nirn.

Our scholars have been poring over all documents and artifacts of the Yoku Sword Singers ever since we took to the deeps. We know from bitter experience that merely cutting at Septim's monster will not hurt it, but the Singers did not merely cut. Shamans and swordmasters alike have been desperately trying to recreate the lost legends, and our city has shown some success in this. Last month, Boraccag successfully summoned what we believe to be a Shehai. The spirit sword did not exactly match the descriptions in our old texts, but it WAS a sword, and it WAS immaterial. He practices daily, and each time he summons it, the blade is stronger and longer-lasting. Texts speak of a spirit-slice that cuts so finely that reality parts around it. Surely Numidium cannot resist such a stroke. If we can discover a way to do this, we may have an end to end this hellish war once and for all.

In two months, my crew and I will be dispatched to attempt the run to Firsthold. Numidium has so far appeared to crush every ship we sent, but with the Dunmeri siege we believe there is hope to slip by with its attention kept elsewhere. Our captain, Cyrus, is the best waverunner we've seen in many a year. If anyone can make way through this, it will be him.

SKYRIM

Whiterun, 5E11.

*This cursed war has gone on for more than twenty years, now. I can remember it's beginning, as clearly as yesterday. It may as well have **been** yesterday, given Numidium's ruin of Time. I remember taking my men north out of Cyrodiil. I remember Karl and Jormund wanting to go home, only to find out that their homes were in ruin. And I remember the vise that has gripped Skyrim since then, the Bretons and then the hill-savages in the western holds and the bloody-handed Dragon Cultists in the east. Superstitious nonsense, we thought. We knew the "Harbingers of the Return" were just cliffracers chased out of Morrowind, but to have the Dragons return in force shortly afterwards? I would never have believed it had I not seen with my own eyes Tiber Septim atop his colossus, he and the drakes Shouting back and forth. He bent about half to his will, but the other half remain wild. They now govern Windhelm, Riften, and Winterhold. What's left of it, anyway. The Tongues of Hrothgar came down from their summit to try and counter the menace of the Cult, but we have heard nothing save the awful roars since their departure. I pray that Shor and Kyne watch over them, and bring them to halls of valor in this life or the next.*

It seems that Tamriel is spending all the disasters she has saved up for millennia in one short burst. As if Numidium, civil war, and Dragons weren't enough, the city of Winterhold was destroyed by a tsun-ahm. Everyone thinks it was from the Dunmer slamming their "tame" sky-rock into the volcano. The Red Mountain has been erupting continuously since, and the ground around it shakes with a fury. I certainly can't think of anything else that would cause such a wave. Dawnstar and even Solitude were hit as well, but the distance preserved them.

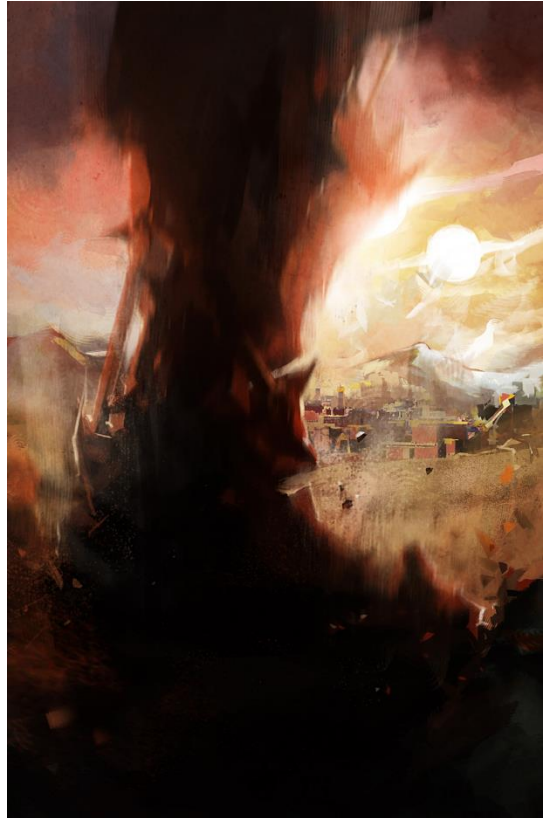
I wish I could say I hoped for Whiterun's victory, or even survival, but the only surety left in the world is death. Tomorrow I lead an army south to the Fell. The mission is to destroy the hill-savages' grip on it and open the passes to Cyrodiil, then bring southern legions north to our aid. But in my heart, I don't believe we will succeed.

Sovngarde saraan.

VELOTH

It has come down from the mountains, the gleaming shards of its skin freshly polished in Reason. The sun shines overhead, burning silently in the stillness of the day. The barrens before it stretch onwards, smoking and jagged from the eruption and the footsteps of the twinned towering constructs. The blur of their heat ripples as its massive legs stride through the wastelands, and the massive gearings of its waist grind and groan as the stone in its chest blazes as a second sun. It takes another step—

—squish



SUMMURSET

It still seems impossible that the Starry Heart has seen not merely one, but three events of such incredible potency that each has caused a calendar reset in a single lifetime, even of the men. Perhaps the haste to change Eras is caused by a hope that a new Era will bring with it actual change (a child's wish and folly), or perhaps the concept of time-keeping is as weakened as broken as Time itself. Still, one cannot deny that the usurpation of divinity by three men, the first new God since the hubris of the Deep Ones and seizing power from its shoulders no less, is a world-shaking event. And the destruction wrought afterwards... we cannot even lay blame at the feet of the Princes of Discord as during the early days of the Dominion. The chaos, fighting, and death of late is all on us. Perhaps this is what the lying Snake wanted us to become when he formed his trap.

The Khajiit departure still mystifies our scholars. We'd hoped that we might be able to use remnants of the Dawn Incana to bring about a lunar shift to coerce their return, but efforts have been so far unsuccessful, and our energy was best spent on immediate defence. As for the third moon of the Mane, it seems to have no effect on the tides and is only a reminder of

the impossible bitterness of the southern sands. And our feral cousins in Valenwood, well, they've truly gone beyond any semblance of civilization. Not even the Sea Folk will sail near those hauntingly silent shores. Our only neighbors have been the Yokudan desert-folks to the north, who have always been oddly educated and civilized for men. This is fortunate, as ever since the Activation, they have provided us with some aid. And now this has come to fruit, in their means of destroying the Numidium. It will not be a clean victory, but then, what cleanliness remains in the Arena?

Upon Numidium's latest arrival to the Tower, to lay siege yet again to our home, we sprung the trap. Our strongest Aethe-wrights formed the Great Seal as soon as it reached our walls, creating a massive dome of solidified light. The monster is trapped with us, and with a fleet of the Sea Folk who volunteered to harry it to the end. This is our death, but it shall be the death of the Machine as well. I regret only that the monster who calls himself Talos was not sealed here as well.

The Seal shrinks ever closer by the hour, and Numidium alternates between assaulting the spellform in hopes to escape it, and the Crystal Tower in hopes of shattering us and ending the trap. It will not take long, however, to pin the Golem and allow us the Final Strike.

The elf shuts his journal and looks outside. He turns and screams, "Boraccag! Now!" The Yoku man stands and joins him at the sill. A massive bronze limb streaks past and slams into the tower's structure beyond them. The building shudders, and cracks race through the crystalline walls. Dust drifts through the air. Boraccag nods silently, his eyes empty and face dead, and turns away. He walks down the hall, slowly shifting to a lope, then a run. He descends the myriad staircases, passing huddled elves and men who look at him with haunted, despairing eyes. On the outside walls, gaping holes are surrounded by the broken bodies of those who were either killed directly by the metal mountain, or who drew too strongly on the sun's fire and destroyed themselves. The blinding light of the dome shines through each flaw in the edifice, illuminating those within with a baleful glare.

Metal screams and crystal snaps as the titanic monuments to engineering and poetry are pinned fast together. The hiss of molten metal is loud in Boraccag's ears as golden drops plummet to the ground like rocks. Through

the gaps in the Big Walker's leg-struts, he can see the Seal fracturing against its alien skin. It will not hold forever, or even for long.

As he silently pulls his scimitar from its catch, he closes his eyes. Thirty years of life, all that he can remember living in fear and hiding and desolation, drift through his mind. His parents. His friends. Growing up in the deepest halls of those who made the monstrous construction before him. Learning only one thing for all of his remembered life: the Song of the world; the Song of his blade. His people knew only rumors of myths at the Awakening, but thirty years of sole focus work wonders for those who know how to Make their Way. And all of it led to this. And none of it would lead away.

Another crash boomed through the elven tower. Boraccag gazed in eerie quiet at the scimitar in his hands. It is a work of art, a masterpiece of metalcraft.

He drops it to his side, and steps forward. A gargantuan brass foot crashes through the door, coming to a creaking stop a few yards before him. He sets his feet just so. Breathes in the metallic, tangy, dusty air. Closes his eyes against the shimmering, blinding light. Though the gentle glow of the form in his hands is seen only by a dying maga, he knows that it is there, as surely as he knows his hands without seeing. It is his Shehai.

Tears stream freely down Boraccag's angular, dark face as he stands in place, momentarily frozen. His lips move in a small prayer heard by none, perhaps not even the gods.

And he swings.

CØDA

The world flashed white and a soundless shock tore through the sky, rushing across land and sea and flattening everything in its path. The unnatural silence lasted a mere instant before thunder roared as the shockwave expended itself and crashed back to the center. The air around the shattered tower turned a jellied blue as it was crushed under unimaginable pressure, and the heat ignited grass, dirt, and the ruined pages drifting through the sky. The firestorm blazed for an instant before starving, leaving only ash drifting down like black snow.

The gently falling ash billowed and parted as a colossus creaked forward. Metal pieces, tarnished, burnished, and dull, rained down from it with every motion. The ground where it stepped cracked and sunk under its weight, and bolts of baleful blue lightning speared outwards from its skin, crackling around it in a jagged nimbus. If there had been birds, they would have flown clear of it, for to stray within that haze was Death. If there had been animals, they would have fled from its footprints and its path, for in its wake was Pain. If there had been Folk, but no, there were no Folk.

The world was silent, with neither animals to call nor wind to gust nor Folk to shout. The only sound was the interminable creaking, clattering metal as one step led inexorably to the next. As the colossal machine reached the beach, its left knee seized, then shattered, spraying metal fragments. Metal groaned, and slowly at first and then with gathering speed, it pitched forward and crashed into the water which erupted in a spray of mist and steam. Its head, once a mile in the clouds, now lay as far offshore. The sea pulled it home, and foot by foot the ruined legs and feet slowly slipped beneath the waves.

The Ur Tower, still circling the White Gold, screamed a loud, vibrant Blue, the light bathing the City of the Cyrodiils in eerie, sacred tones from earth-thrumming Midnight to shrill Sky. All across Tamriel, Jills flashed into existence, their cries harmonizing with the coruscating Spire. The Tiberian Wars had left scars across the continent that all could feel, though only the

Minute-Menders could see. From the sands of Elsewyer to the ash of Vvardenfell, from Skyrim's shrieking blizzards to Valenwood's whispering forests, the Jills raced along the rents in Akatosh's flesh, stitching together the wounds writ by Numidium's passage. As they flew along the shattered and scattered detritus of Time that Numidium left in its wake, picking apart, examining, discarding, and stitching pieces into a rough approximation of continuity and sanity, sometimes proceeding slowly and carefully and (more often than not) racing ahead with wild abandon, feasting on Akatosh's wounds even as they work to mend them. The life-threads of those they encounter are often snarled and sometimes cut, but such is the nature of the imperfection of scar-healing.

AMATIVE TIIDDE FENT BO

The waves didn't crash anymore; they hadn't for a long time now. The waves brushed up against the beach almost accidentally, like a young boy unsure how to handle his first crush. They approached timidly, struck the beach with barely enough force or distance to qualify, and hastily retreated. The sea wasn't calm, no, she was surely agitated, but for once she was the slave, not the mistress. There shouldn't exist anything that makes the sea a slave. Whatever it is, it's wrong. Not wrong like the undark men are wrong, calling this world a blessing and a gift, but wrong like the world is. But worse.

The sea stills, but only a fool would think it is a good stilling. It is the stillness of the doe who first catches the whiff of the huntress; it is the stillness of the man on the headsman's block. It is the stillness of awareness of Death's touch, lightly brushing the shoulder, not yet a grip but suddenly intimately, desperately close.

There, far out from shore, there is a bulge. The sea bends up towards the sky, then runs outwards, almost as if fleeing. Bright, painful blue jagged lines rip through the water, visible even through the distance and deflection. The weather grows fragmented, confused. It isn't sure whether to be sunny or stormy or cloudy and so it is all of these and none. Finally,

the sea parts around a gleaming yellow-bronze helm much as butter parts around a knife. The enormous helm raises its face from the waves to the shore, its eyes burning with a horrible light of no particular color. The helm continues to rise, exposing a ruined facsimile of a face, then broad shoulders a league across surge above the water, cascading waterfalls and steam from each crevice and surface.

The rent, ruined, torso smashes through the water, its head by now rearing almost to the low clouds. Metal gantries and beams and pipes and gears push skyward, in an endless stream of machinery and artifice. After almost half an hour, the beginnings of its legs appear. One is twisted, torn, and thin; although the machine is covered in burns, gashes where the metal had melted, ran, and frozen again, fractures, and every sign of abuse, its left leg is in by far the worst condition. The hulking mountain of metal limps out of the ocean, dragging its left leg, and rears to its full height. It makes no sound besides the creaking and groaning of its metal parts, the hiss of steam, and the crackle of the lightning surround it, yet it emanates an unmistakable aura of fury.

The helm turns slowly on its perch, nearly a mile above the sand, and grimly it lumbers up the beach.

The Jills are everywhere across Tamriel, but the largest flock has been retracing Numidium's route. They swarm around the pit on Balfiera, around which silver and mnemolichite and marble wreckage are strewn, and just beyond sight the air blazes with leftover myth from the Talos Apotheosis. One of the Jills sinks her talons deep into a wound and screeches. Whatever she's gripped, it's pulling her farther in. Her cohorts gather around her, tearing the wound open and dragging her back into reality. Finally, she springs free and the rift snaps shut. In her claws dangles a limp ash-and-aurum figure.

Hammerfell's population had begun trickling back to the coastal cities almost as soon as word was received that Numidium was within the Alinori

Splendor the long fire to back Cyrod's tangled jungles, leaving dry plains and desert behind.

As Numidium crashes onto Hammerfell's southern beaches, massive pistons thrusting its fists into walls and palaces and homes and refugees, the Mundane world is crushed in a mirror of the Mythic. In dimensions imperceptible to the mortal eye, the Dragon-forks crash together, the longer-running head biting down on its shorter brother. $\text{Z}^{\text{Z}}\text{-I}^{\text{I}}\text{Z}^{\text{Z}}$ crunches its crystal jaws, shattering the bones and scales of his smaller brother $\text{I}^{\text{I}}\text{Z}^{\text{Z}}$ and swallowing them.

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Numidium staggered as Mundus cracked, shattered, and reformed in infinitesimally small zero-points of Creatia. Hammerfell's rocks and sands and sea rose and fell and gusted with the mythic collision of the Aka Krenne and the Jills' frantic Mending. Numidium roared its refusal in return, attracting swarms of Jills to the continuing fractures and negations emanating from the golden smoking skin of the metal-mile mountain-machine. They screeched as they tore into the fissures in reality Numidium left trailing, struggling desperately to keep Reality together as the BorMaHu consumed itself. Numidium crashed through Hammerfell with abandon, crushing the land beneath its boots and hurling clumps into the sea and sky. Nirn's boiling blood rushes to the surface, mixing with the seawater and flooding the air with smoke. Flocks of Jills, over-eager and angered and desperate, rush the Numidium, only to be swatted or shouted out of the air and the world. With impossible speed, the God of Refusal finished its work, leaving the once-desert of the west sunken, pitted, burning, and flooded. Islands rise here and there from the mist-blanketed waves, ruins both Yoku

and Dwemer jutting like broken bones. The crushing weight of the Aka Convergence grinds down on the Machine, and it turns its gaze to the sky. There, hanging low and huge and bloody, lies the land of VelothII. Fueled by rage and revenge, Numidium stares up at Masser, seething in hatred.

The tower-legs collapse, folding and telescoping in massive complexity, crouching the Colossus to its minimal height.

Belching steam, hissing and burning 𐛆𐛆𐛆𐛆𐛆𐛆𐛆𐛆𐛆𐛆𐛆𐛆𐛆𐛆𐛆𐛆𐛆𐛆𐛆𐛆𐛆𐛆𐛆 against the Void, the 𐛆𐛆𐛆𐛆𐛆𐛆𐛆𐛆𐛆𐛆𐛆𐛆𐛆𐛆𐛆𐛆𐛆𐛆𐛆𐛆𐛆𐛆𐛆 flings itself from Nirn and erupts into the sky.