

WORLD BIBLE: FERAL GARDEN

Comentado [UdW1]: After half an hour trying to come up with a title that didn't sound like a book's, I settled for "Feral Garden". Sounds videogame-y enough, and carries much thematic weight: the garden is not only the island itself, but also the Lord's society, exemplified by the clan the protagonist is part of being names of different plants or related concepts (thus, a garden). The feral adjective denotes aggressiveness, uncivilized behavior, which contrasts with the façade of the Lords, but is completely in tune with the nature of most of them, and how they treat other people. To round it all a feral garden depicts the image of a neglected garden, something that has the potential to be beautiful, inspiring, a safe space for positivity, but due to the deprecation of its essence, has turned into a chaotic, unorganized mess. Which is exactly the state the player encounters the Lord's domains when they get their first glimpses with Niji

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Comentado [UdW2]: The only thing you will see changed compared to the version I gave at the end of the assignment's date is structuring the index better, because I left some points not very well structured. Yes, I was trying to include things until literally the last moment. If we obviate the "Incomplete character description" part, though, I must say I'm satisfied with the result

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Design bases

- Abstraction about the duality between utilitarianism and emotional thinking, and the necessary balance between them
- Playing and fun as a way to connect with other's experiences
- Necessary balance between good and bad experiences to be truly human
- Contemplation on bonding through experience
- Turn based tactical RPG
- Semi-fully predictable scenarios: no random decisions from IA
- RNG as a spicing element, but not a determinant one

The Setting

The plot of this story will occur on a single island called Mnemosyne, of around 200.000 square kilometer, isolated from the exterior and any other form of human contact for over a millennium, giving place to a separate species of humans. In this island, and most prominently in its capital, Lethe, a high-class society uses a tactical board game to dispute status and financial power. This game is played with pieces that embody the memories of other people, usually the nobles' retainers: the more impactful (not necessary relevant) those memories to that person, the more powerful the board piece.

The game is frequently used (even though it serves much other purposes) as a "civilized" way of dealing with nobility minor problems or unsolvable discussions, as well as being an art, a showcase of discipline... Illegal political actions such as assassinations, war, manipulation... are not uncommon to the nobility of this world, but those only occur in under-handed ways in extreme situations, since it represents a serious risk of being expelled from the high-circles.

Humans

The humans of this island, which esthetically look the same as us, have the capability of generating feeble paths of electricity from their fingers, which has seen a very prominent application: altering their emotions using their memories as generators of an initial emotional signal, similarly to how us remembering something triggers the consequent emotional reaction, but amplified.

Those triggers work through emotion waves (the electrical impulses that for us would be the signal for the creation of an emotion), which can also be emitted towards other bodies. Once they have reached their objective (be it inside or

Comentado [UdW3]: Titaness that represented memories in Greek mythology. As you will see, memories are quite important in the story, thus the name of the island being such

Comentado [UdW4]: Evolution isn't that fast, but we'll go with it

Comentado [UdW5]: The river of forgetfulness, those who were touched by its waters forget everything, even themselves. Since the capital is a crooked birthplace for despotism, it metaphorically (and actually physically) destroys the memories of those who enter (the retainers)

Comentado [UdW6]: This came up for how I wanted to structure gameplay, but holds a strong resemblance with how Go was considered one of the four essential arts by the Chinese aristocracy

outside the body), they act upon the part responsible to trigger a certain emotion. Those receptors work like a boolean (true or false), meaning they either receive the emotion completely, or they don't feel anything. Thus, if an opponent is emitting emotion-waves towards you to open your "emotional valve", the only way to counter it is by generating the same wavelength, but with the signal of shutting the valve. The strength or intensity of the discharge is directly proportional to the lucidity with which the memory is remembered, but since it's a memory, it's exponentially lower than the original sensation, and of barely any consequences if it were to be applied on a human being. This ability can be used more effectively when feeling a really strong emotion, but only as long as it's being felt.

The effect of such waves is almost immediate (1-3 seconds to reach peak effect), and their persistence goes as long as time the other person needs to control the emotion back to normality, having a certain dependency on intensity, but also on the willingness of the affected to stay on that mood. In case that a very strong sensation was being felt, and then another emotion was introduced to the brain at the same time, one of those would have to be quelled, or else the brain could have a sensory overload and collapse.

As an additional consideration, due to the relatively low technological advancement of their civilization, it is not known that those emotion-waves are electrical impulses, and are considered a sort of psychic power (their explanation of the phenomenon is quite rudimentary). There is no religious mythos about it, since this is "normal" for them, but there is a certain wonder over it. Currently, their understanding of the subject is similar to ancient Greece, where they understood the concepts of conductive and non-conductive materials, but didn't have the nature of electricity figured out.

However, were the technology to advance more and understand it, hostile invasions of emotions could be avoided by using non-conducting or dispersive materials as shield (clothes themselves but be enough). Due to the electrical nature of the impulses, they are also affected by air humidity, charge, density and other factors.

The nature of memories

Memories have two distinct properties: memory recall and memory emotionality. The memory recall is the emotion remembered by the person, while the memory emotionality is the prime emotion that was felt at time when the memory was generated, which is unlocked after the enhancement. The thing you use for emotion-waves is the memory recall, but the unconscious effect on the body of something emotional, say a trauma, comes from the memory emotionality. Thus, if someone lives a trauma, they might have a low recall, but mostly always a high memory emotionality (meaning the memory has a deep effect, but can't be used through emotion-waves).

After an enhancement, the memory emotionality (psychological effect) would be the same, but the capability of controlling or emitting it (recall) would have

increased to an almost equal level. This is derived from the fact that the brain signals to generate emotions and emotion-waves are different things, even if they have similar principles and affect the same organs.

Memories are not tangible: they are electrical blobs stored within a group of neurons: the bigger they are, the more intense the emotional impact they store is (memory emotionality). Access to them can be internal or external (done by other people), and it's done by connecting one's own electrical signals to the place where these neurons are. The sizes of the neuron groups have a factor dependent on genetics: some people tend to "feel" more intensely, thus to form bigger neuron conglomerates. The memory recall also has a genetic component, but it's not as prevalent as to make a difference between a normal and an enhanced memory.

The only moment in which those memories are not accessible is during sleep: neurons may come closer one to another, diverging from their usual form, to the point where dreams may generate big formations of "false memories" (dreams) which recess to their original positions when they end, or attribute a lot of emotional weight to memories that are completely irrelevant. This means that during a person's rest, when they are defenseless, others can't forcefully enter their memory storage.

If someone wanted to access another person's memories, they would have to be guided through the neural paths to know how to arrive at certain memories: their unpredictable patterns, especially during dreams, is what makes the process of memory extraction (the next topic to be explained) one necessarily consensual between both parts.

Memory extraction

Extracting memories to convert them into enhanced versions of themselves is the mid-term objective of all Lords. This enhancement consists in a polishing of the memory through connected emotions (not emotion-waves, electrical impulses), which in turn, means a higher memory recall when using emotion-waves. This is done through a process that requires no external technology.

This technique has been passed by over two thousand years now, and was originated by curiosity and experimentation, refined through trial and error. In order to be executed, consent on both parts is needed. Those parts are "the lord" (the person who will gain access to the enhanced memory) and "the retainer" (that who provides the base memory).

Once both parts have agreed, the lord creates electrical connections, emulating a sort of fishing net on their fingertips, which is joined with the memory channels of the retainer, strings of neurons that guide the lord's current into its memories. When the net has arrived at the memory storehouse, it drags around the bigger memories, which are pulled outside in a combined blob of electric spheres, in full

display for both parts. At this point, by the size and amount of memories, its emotional range and scale can be predicted by the naked eye.

In case the results are dissatisfying, the retainer might be kicked out (with their memory lost or returned), or the net may be done thicker to pull smaller memories out. Once taken out, they are separated and stored inside a recipient for the memory essence, in an unpolished state, to undergo proper maturation.

This recipient is a sphere that contains a conductive loop to keep the memory in place, while being coated by non-conductive materials to avoid its dispersion, meaning there is a certain craft and resources needed, although nothing too exclusive if one knows what is needed to make it. At this point, the electrical connections between retainer and lord can be interrupted, since the memory is trapped inside its recipient. The memory being extracted means the retainer has no recall of what that memory stores.

To achieve the enhanced version of the memory, which is a more condensed, more emotionally potent version, it's required a certain "quality of connection" between both parts, while being linked to the memory recipient to generate a current stable enough between both to assimilate the essence. This is usually achieved by building trust between each other.

As this trust is being gained, the memory will become more and more accessible for both parts: when it has become fully readable (which is an estimated moment, not a certainty), the retainer can have the memory's essence integrated back, but it will have been internalized as well by the lord.

This technique has as its main downfall temporary losing the capability to recall that memory, and the chance of losing it forever in case it gets destroyed (which of course, are some of the ones that influence our lives the most). Not remembering it doesn't impact the way a person behaves, because the incapability of telling what it was doesn't take away from the body remembering its behavior patterns or learned responses. It's also the reason why artificially created experiences on the negative side (torture and the like) are not actively generated, because the mental sequels would be lasting, even after the memory was removed.

If the process is completed, of course, the memory will have matured into an enhanced version that will serve as a relatively "infinite" high source of emotion. The game that is the main focus of the story is but a way to maximize the efficiency of the process.

The nature of enhanced memories

As previously mentioned, an enhanced memory comes from a memory essence, which is the embodiment of a memory once it is extracted from someone's brain.

The reason why an enhanced memory has a higher memory recall than normal ones is because the maturation process purifies the memory, making it much

Comentado [UdW7]: The excuse to have "secret" memory levels. If you grow close to someone, the memory gets enhanced. However, there's a certain "deepness" of trust that has to be trespassed to unlock the total power of certain memories, because they are so personal to the retainer that they have sort of locked them for anyone that is not trusted enough

more efficient, compressed within the neurons. This means that when trying to recall the memory, it's accessed much faster, thus the output of emotion per second is much higher.

The polish of the memory will mean that the other part (the lord) will get a "copy" of the memory. However, since the original memory is not being held, it doesn't have the permanency that the retainer's memory has, and thus has to be recharged, the frequency of which depending on how intense it is. Otherwise, the lord will forget it (constantly recalling it is a way to enlarge its lifespan, but that won't stop the final result). This is not to say that the retainer's memory doesn't get affected: as they forget it with the pass of time, the memory's purity will erode until it disappears, as normal memories do.

This also applies in case that the retainer was to be killed in the middle of the process. The lord would be able to get the current state of the memory with its essence in them, but it wouldn't be able to be purified any further, and since it wasn't their memory, they would only be able to integrate the essence in their brains, meaning it would disappear in a matter of months.

Another important particularity of enhanced memories is that the purification process is embedding them into the neurons, meaning they can't be extracted from the neurons again. In practice, this means that if a lord was to lose their enhanced memory, they wouldn't be able to get it back from their retainer, neither could another lord get their hands on it. It also means there can't be re-enhancement, and it can't be forgotten by extraction anymore.

To be completely specific, enhanced memories can actually be pulled out after being integrated to the brain, with a technique that was pioneered by a character named Phoenix, but since it was already polished, it could not be enhanced nor shared with another Lord, because it can't be polished anymore.

It is technically possible to create an enhanced memory with more than two people, if the extraction was done with all of them at the same time. The problem is the high chances of electric overload that ends up dissolving the memory, and so, making it unusable. It's a rarely seen practice, but there have been successful cases.

There had been great worry between the inventors of the technique on how gaining the memories of others would affect one's personality, but it turned out to be relatively harmless, since what the lord obtains is the copy of the enhanced memory, not the memory with the memory emotionality. Any of the changes this process causes are equal to those that occur by living through anything new or emotional.

The game: Scry

Scry is a board game that originated as a way to showcase power and prowess, attributes that validated the top players as rightful owners and main beneficiaries of the Lords' businesses. Since memory enhancement is based on trust, the most

effective way to grow a memory essence has been found to be risking the retainer's well-being, and then being saved by the lord.

Trying to replicate this idea, in *Scry*, the memories of the retainers are put at risk, and once a lord wins a match, the gratefulness for saving them quickly develops into trust, without putting the owner of the memory at death risk, which would turn them away from agreeing to the whole process. This means that when a "unit" is killed, the memory it is representing is destroyed (drop to the floor, where it disperses and disappears).

Losing memories may ruin the value of a retainer for its lord, effectively ruining its life, but the pool of people with experiences to offer is so big that it hardly matters to The Lords, thus they can afford such an extreme system if it means fast memory enhancement (2-3 months to fully enhance one; with 5 retainers playing at the same time, 24 enhanced memories per year with perfect results).

Those who become retainers can be divided in three classes:

- Challengers: typically, nobles who are trying to evolve their happy memories to a next level in order to keep them for years. Since they have no need for being sustained, they have the most freedom of action, and the most equal relation with those they make a pact with.
- Beggars: those who offer their memories in exchange for high-class privileges. They tend to have strong negative memories, and live subjugated to The Lords commands.
- Memory baiters: those who become retainers to integrate into the Lords' social circles in order to extract information, either by own interest or for other Lords. They tend to have mediocre memories, but those who do have memory value and manage to infiltrate can become game-changers in the sociopolitics of The Lords.

The existence of the game is known by everyone outside the Lords as a somewhat grim hobby of them, in which they risk the memories of the retainers, but not many know of its real purpose in terms of raising memory essences. For the Lords, however, it's seemed with a certain rituality and dignity, since it's a way to prove their superiority, and to gain benefits and power.

The specifics of the game will be explained in the *Scry Rules* segment, but mechanics aside, there is somewhat of a process and ritual to it outside of the play.

First of all, both contenders get dressed in their ceremonial clothing, which depends on the Lord of each family. This is especially symbolic, a way to show respect and humility in front of the opponent's capabilities. Not coming dressed with the proper clothing doesn't nullify the match, but it is seen as a grave sign of disrespect.

Secondly, and since the memories need the electrical connections of both retainer and lord to mature, the retainers are positioned behind the lord with the chosen memory. They do also dress, but in complete white clothing, including a

sort of short gloves. Once the match is done, the sweat of those is squeezed out, and the lord drinks it as a way to represent his/her compromise with overcoming the anxieties of their retainers, and to thank them for their trust. Again, some lords do omit this part, but it's generally respected. Of course, during the whole ceremony, retainers have prohibited to speak or interfere in any way with the game.

Before the match starts, both lords do a hand salute in which they imbue themselves with competitive emotion-waves, to signal their preparedness and agreement to the match. The chosen (by the lord) memories of each retainer are connected via electric paths between retainers and the lord, and are left floating on the air around both contenders. Two referees, one selected by each part, enter the room and connect themselves to the two players. Their job is to serve as "order readers": they block the signals of the Lords, impeding them to affect the board. Instead, when it's the Lord's turn, they ask for an order, and once the Lord clearly transmits it to them, they execute it.

This was done in order to prevent cheating that could begin military conflicts between Lords. For example, imagine a Lord has only one memory left, and the other one had still five on his side. Nothing impedes the losing Lord to cheat by killing all his opponent's memories: s/he would still lose, but the other player would have had five memories unfairly destroyed.

In case of cheating, the game must be stopped, and the rule that is being violated must be pointed out: since they are mostly quite strict and specific, it is difficult to justify that cheating was or wasn't done without having hard evidence of it. Once the accusation is accepted, the game is stopped and the cheating part is immediately declared the loser of the game. The penalty is having to sacrifice a memory of the highest rank: if the cheating part was to disobey, they would be prohibited from participating in anymore games until a month had passed, which of course means a huge waste of resource income, thus power and influence.

Once the match has begun, neither contender can forfeit, and the game will only stop when all the memories of one of the two players have been broken.

The game itself occurs the following way: after the hand salute, both contenders sit down in front of each other, and create a shared board within their minds (via electrical impulses, obviously), to which the juries are attached. Inside the mental space, they lay the ground according to the rules, and start playing. While this is happening, the retainers are connected to their lords, and are capable of sensing the state of their own memory, but not of the whole game. This practice greatly increases anxiety levels, especially the riskier a lord plays, which in turns generates a desire for safety. If fulfilled, by having the memory survive the game, positive emotions will rush the retainer, thus quickly creating a sense of trust.

If a unit is killed during the game, the connection that was holding the memory breaks: with only one channel of electricity supporting it (the retainer's), the blob of electricity falls due to gravity, getting discharged against the ground and disappearing.

Comentado [UdW8]: Because a mage did it

Once the game has finished, the victor takes the ceremonial clothing out and leaves it (or a piece of it) in front of the loser, who has to watch as they leave with their retainers before leaving themselves. After the end of the game, the results are made public, both of which was the family of the winning lord and which retainers lost memories.

Those matches occur an average of once per week on each family. This was done to both prevent the lords from getting tired from having to play too much, to avoid losing too much memories on a constant basis, and to help build the tension up for retainers (if they went through this every day, they would get used to it very quick), so that the emotional feedback is as high as possible when the time comes.

There exist friendly matches to prepare the younger lords, or to put certain strategies to practice, which don't have to follow the official procedure. The key aspect that makes them "friendly" is that retainers get to hold their memories: if their memory "died" in the game, the recipient wouldn't fall, thus the essence would be conserved. It also serves to build trust, but it's very much slower (8-9 months on average, around 7 memories per year in comparison with the 24 obtained with traditional Scry).

Scry rules

Roles

Despite being a 1 vs 1, the duelists don't play under the same conditions. To test a larger plethora of skills, two roles would be given to each contender:

- Offensive: chooses the amount of units that will be fighting, from one to five. Their role is to adapt to their opponent's strategy, discerning how much of an advantage they have, and adjusting challenge to it. For that reason, they can choose the difficulty of the match, in order to win more points, if they feel capable of winning despite the handicap.
- Defensive: plays with the amount of units the offensive player does, multiplied by three. Their role is to devise a strategy solid enough to resist any counteroffensive, and adapting to their opponent's strategy, taking advantage of their numerical advantage.

The election of each role is based on who lost the last match: that who won has to play defensively, while the loser goes to the offence, in order to give them the chance to redeem themselves and earn more points. In case it's the first match between two Lords, the newbie takes the offensive role.

Game loop

Comentado [UdW9]: gold, jibun no uchyo (actually I'm not even sure that's how it follows)

Comentado [UdW10]: Which explains why Niji only plays the offensive role

Comentado [UdW11]: They have advanced knowledge on game theory. They are technologically limited because they were busy with crafting what is really important

Every match is divided in two parts:

- Planning: firstly, the defending player chooses the board size (from 10x10 to 30x30). Then, 5 terrain tiles are collocated on the board, followed by as many non-walkable tiles as the defending player wants, as long the following rule is being respected:
 - The map must be fully walkable around the borders.

The defending player puts his/her 5-15 units on the board, in whatever distribution they like. Right after, the attacking player puts his/her 1-5 units, wherever they want. Once the board is ready, both parts get time to craft the items they will take into combat.

- Tactical battle: the units (memories) are moved around the map. When all the units of one of the players are killed, the game ends. Only one memory can be brought by retainer, and each one can only use their own.

Unit statistics

In order to play, the Lords must assign a numerical value to each of their retainers. That is done in two different ways:

- Arbitrarily: there's a total of stat points that each unit has by default, and which the Lords decide how to distribute. There's a total of 1 point for Trash Retainers, 3 for Masters and Retainers, 5 for Travelers and 8 for Lords.
- Calculated: the bulk of a unit's stats, however, come from their memories. Based on their memories properties (size, amount of patterns, coloring, rotating direction...), points are assigned to each memory.

The different stats of a unit are:

- Health points: determines the well-being of a unit; if it reaches 0, its memory gets destroyed. The less health it has, however, the more damage it will do. This was a special rule implemented to facilitate playing riskily, since it allowed better chances at maximizing retainers' trust.
- Attack: determines the base damage a unit does.
- Defense: stat that counters attack. Terrains (tiles with special effects) do not have defense, but do have health points, thus they can be attacked.
- Skills: feature that gives a special effect, codified by the less quantifiable properties of a memory: it represents an emotion-wave attack from the

Comentado [UdW12]: I swear, the moment I made the retainer & lords and Retainers & Lords lexis, I knew this would become very confusing for any person entering this universe. I regret nothing

Comentado [UdW13]: If I were to make this a videogame, I would have to do this, meaning the fanbase would be able to draw how any memory looked like based on the stats (which could allow me to do some really cool reverse-engineer, deep lore stuff), but since I'm not going to have time to define all of the retainer's memories, I won't even go here

Comentado [UdW14]: Yeah, all that theoretic world-building was definitely not prepared to create a narratively justified excuse to set a game where the player is forced to be in constant tension by playing extra offensively in order to create immersive engagement with the character, or in other words, a kind of ludonarrative immersion that would land a more satisfying and complete experience to bring the player closer to the transmission of themes and ideas that I've put behind this story and which are the main drive and core of my creative desires. That would be stupid

Comentado [UdW15]: This means that even if they are beneficial to enemies, they are also a source of BR, thus the player has to make (interesting) decisions: whether to build BR while receiving damage for better output later on at the risk of losing health faster, or putting their efforts on hitting enemies to ensure they are defeated more easily in the future

unit. They depend on the chosen memory for each unit. Each skill has a set of properties tied to it:

- Effect: unique effect of each skill.
- Percentage of triggering: defines how probable is it that the skill activates.
- Crafting value: at the beginning of each battle, you get a certain amount of resources to craft different support items. That amount is determined by the sum of the crafting values of all the memories you are bringing to battle.
- Family mechanic: each family has a unique mechanic that applies to all matches.
 - **Battle resource (BR)**: resource that can be spent to momentarily increase the chance to trigger the skill; once spent, it's lost, independently of the result. It's obtained at the end of each unit encounter, and is equivalent to the damage dealt (unless it comes from triggering a skill) plus the damage received. If the BR spent increases the chance of skill trigger over a 100%, a second chance of triggering the skill will be calculated (it won't occur for a third time or higher). This is the exclusive skill to the Camellias.
 - **Sunburn**: every five turns, a major turn is counted. For each major turn, all opponent units receive as much damage as the number in the major turn counter. That means that after 5 turns, all opponent units receive 1 damage points. After 10 turns, 2; 15, 3; 20, 4... This is the exclusive skill to the Karanamudras.
- Movement: value that determines how many tiles a unit can move on the map each turn.
- Memory counter: when a memory has been completely enhanced, there is no reason to keep using them. However, since they have reached maximum level, it is possible that some Lords use them to have easier wins at Scry, against those who are trying to upgrade new units. **In order to discourage that**, when a Lord has enhanced a memory, they can return it to the retainer, which will give them an extra 5 points to their base character. Since those stack with the memory stats, it gives an advantage to the Lord, while still having to use a low-level memory on their next match.

Comentado [UdW16]: Possible foreshadowing of the Camellia's family origin... I don't want to say they had anything to do with the Regina's Lance family but... I would really like to make a backstory for the initial founders of the families. It would be a shame if I was short on time :v

Comentado [UdW17]: Relatively bad? Maybe. Adequate to Astro? A lot. Is he quite amazing to win by solely relying on this skill? Yes, he is

Comentado [UdW18]: Although many top players do run the risk of losing that enhanced memory in order to obtain better Scry results (for example, many of Oukan's memories: she has both strong memories in her and on memory containers, which means she is very threatening both inside and outside the game)

Unit boosting

- Terrain: special tiles that can be damaged; if destroyed, they become normal tiles. They provide small boosts to certain stats: +X HP recovery every turn, +X defense, +X attack... while on the tile. The specific values of each tile are defined by the referees, who take them from a specified amount in the Scry Rulebook.
- Emotion correlation: since the battle performance affects the mental state of the retainers, thus their emotions, units don't stay statistically static during all the match. Based on recommendations from the Scry Rulebook, referees can agree on giving temporal stat benefits to a unit depending on their reaction to the board's dynamics.

Comentado [UdW19]: This was my try at characterization while doing gameplay, but it's severely underdeveloped, I just mention it because it's something I had planned when doing the Gameplay "Bible". It also is trying to encapsulate the idea that the Lord has to have deep understanding of tactics, in order to benefit the most from how their retainers will feel, and computing that into their strategy

Comentado [UdW20]: Remember that retainers are conscious all the time: they hear when a memory discharges, without knowing who did it. Unlike the Lords, they hear the breathing of everyone in the room, they know the health of their unit (but none other information about the board), they are actively making an effort to create an electric path to support their memory and connecting it with their Lords... Quick note: retainers can't use emotion-waves on each other during a match, since they are already using their fingers to create the electric path to make sure their memory doesn't fall and disappears. And it would be really stupid to sacrifice it to give minor bonuses to another unit

Player main choices

Using any of the following actions will end a unit's turn.

- Attack enemy: a unit attacks an opponent.
- Attack terrain: serves to destroy the terrain. Damage is equivalent to the offensive unit's attack.
- Capture terrain: with this action, the terrain's health gets added to the enemy's health, but if it's brought down to 0, the attacking unit gets to move on the terrain on that same turn. If done so, the terrain doesn't take damage.
- Battle Resource (BR) transference: a unit can transfer a player-determined amount of BR to another one, to a limit of as much as they have on themselves.
- Use item: an item from the specific inventory of the unit is used.
- Wait: a unit ends turn without doing any action.

Player secondary choices

Actions that can be repeated an infinite amount of times per turn. However, if abused to buy time, referees can penalize that by taking the turn away from that player:

- Move: the unit moves from the initial point in which they were on the beginning of the turn to wherever the player commands them to (the unit can only move once, but the action of moving can be undone before choosing an action to end turn).

- Spend BR: the player selects how much BR to spend on a turn, to increase their chance to trigger the skill.
- Prepare BR: the player selects how much BR to spend on a fight of the next enemy phase. The fight is chosen by using an index (0, 1, 2...). If that fight doesn't occur, BR doesn't get wasted. An amount bigger than the currently stored by the unit can be selected: when the time comes to use it, if it's still bigger, it will only use the maximum amount available.

Items and crafting

At the beginning of each map, the player gets a limited amount of resources, which depend on the selected characters' skills. Those resources are:

- Lord badge (m): badge given to Retainers to show their status and the family they work for. There has been attempts to replicate those illegally, without much success. It's worth 1 battle point.
- Bust pottery (n): made by Masters, it's a common motif on the Lord's houses as a representation of their wealth over the memory marketplace. It was initially depicted faceless, but with the passage of time, tradition made it that the busts represented important people. It's worth 3 battle points.
- Purple token (o): used by Lords in a simplified version of this game to learn the basics and achieve a certain level before entering the real competitive scene. It's worth 5 battle points.

Comentado [UdW21]: Not to confuse with Oukan's purple token for her party invitation. Different things. Not done in purpose, I swear

With them, the following items can be obtained, providing another layer of complexity, for the Lords to prove themselves:

- Healing item: encourages controlled offense and serves as a safety net. Costs $3m + 1n$ or $1o$.
- Major healing item: costs $1n + 1o$.
- Supreme healing item: costs $2n + 1o$.
- Battle resource flask: gives BR when used. Costs $2m$ or $1n$.
- Hurting item: takes away health from a unit in exchange for the equivalent BR. It gives resource on top of providing more damage due to the lost health, which provides offensive options at high risk. Costs $2m$ or $1n$.
- Major hurting item: costs: $5m$, $3m + 1n$ or $1o$.

Comentado [UdW22]: Yes, there are Retainers whose job is to do specific items for each Lord, which are then regulated and tested to be fair play. This is a very dedicated society to Scry

- Supreme hurting item: costs $2m + 2n + 1o$.
- Movement boost: both defensive and offensive, goes well with skills that give you more turns, since you can use that boost various times. Costs $4m$ or $2n$.
- Stat enhancer: gives $+1$ to any stat during that year's Scry competition, benefiting the Lords who are skillful enough to not need to use other items, thus helping them come closer to becoming Supreme Lord. Costs $3m$ or $1m + 1n$.
- Fortune wheel: high risk – high reward object, but completely dependent on luck. Does double damage, but if the unit's skill triggers, half of the damage bounces to player character after attacking (BR is still gained). Costs $2m$.

Results

Since the game has repercussions on a ranking that is used to, at the end of each year, give out the Businesses of Joy that each family will be in charge of, there has been a strict legislation over how this point-based system functions:

- When a player wins a match, they get 300 points if they won without any casualties. For every lost unit of a defensive player, they lose 20 points, for an offensive player, it's 60 points if 5 units were taken, 75 for 4, 100 for 3, 150 for 2 and 300 for 1.
- The amount of points that the winner gets, is subtracted to the amount that the loser had.
- Scores can be negative. Having a score lower than zero doesn't matter in terms of Businesses of Joy, but the real objective of all Lords is achieving the status of Supreme Lord. Without negative scores, even if a player could bring all other players to zero points, the moment in which two other players had a game, one would earn a minimum amount, thus the leading player would not have the supremacy. With negative scores, if a player is -1000 and wins 50 points, they are still at 950, and the leading player gets to keep the advantage that they earned.
- From the handicaps that the offensive player can choose, there is a list detailing the point bonuses they get in case they win. The most extreme case is fighting 15 opponent units with 1 player unit, with buffs on the opponent, and debuffs on the player.

- Despite the gradient that most Lords fall into, Oukan was crazy enough to try it thrice, managing to win once. The bonus for it is multiplying the points earned by the points earned, meaning it would be 90.000 points won in a single match, which would be subtracted from their opponent. To give a slight reference, if a Lord won all their matches in a year with perfect score, without any difficulty bonus, they would earn around 14.400 points. This, of course, is the most efficient route to becoming Supreme Lord, but not even Oukan is capable of that, so no one tries it.
- Family heads earn (and lose) more points through a special bonus. This was decided upon to avoid perpetuating family leaders, instead, having the more capable individuals leading. It is an emulation of evolution, trying to have the best influencing everyone below them to produce a competent and strong society. Despite it somewhat working, bringing talent out, it's also used an excuse for Lords to be overly dependent on their leaders.

Comentado [UdW23]: Not real value, since Oukan is head of a family

Comentado [UdW24]: My idea was doing an ending based on this, because I know there are sick people out there, at least half as I am, so they would try. The thing is that precisely to solve the problem of "what if a player doesn't get enough points but has played fairly well" I implemented the Tournament structure, which completely destimulates this whole point mechanic. I would still want to implicate it somehow with the narrative, I just don't have the time for it

The society

Historical formation

Since the beginning of humanity was of tribal nature, once the memory extraction technique was developed, the individuals with the highest emotional memories quickly raised up to power without opposition. Being the individuals capable of defending themselves the best against emotion-waves, and those who could bring the most happiness to their communities, people gathered around them, granting both the resources needed for surviving and the manpower to subject any contrary voices.

Once the tribes of the island started growing enough to enter constant, direct contact between each other, and in a period of wars and conflict, a nation was formed, unifying the factions of the entire island. The families of the previous tribe chiefs came together to form The Lords, harnessing total political influence. The technology by that time barely had conceived the usage of rudimentary swords and arrows: in a showcase of superiority, these chiefs adopted a practice of wearing less clothing to demonstrate how they could bring anyone down with their bare hands, with the usage of emotion-waves.

Comentado [UdW25]: I like the aesthetic, don't judge me

Apart from taking important decisions in terms of ruling the nation, The Lords have Businesses of Joy: with their wealth, they have the resources to experience the more pleasant and positive memories. This means they can offer themselves as retainers, and once those memories are enhanced, the lord of the exchange offers to "shoot" people with those memories in return for resources, which are shared with The Lord who provided the initial experience. This creates complicated alliances between competing, but also collaborating, families, but

ultimately, the establishment of these businesses had consequences in all parts of society:

- For The Lords: as the families grew more and more, and the Businesses of Joy started to pop up everywhere, it meant they had to lower the prizes to remain competitive against each other. To stop the economic ruin they were headed towards, a rule was established: a system of competitiveness within to decide which families had the righteousness to lead the others and keep ahold of the businesses, originating in the tradition of Scry as the way to decide wealth.
- For the common folk: emotion-waves determine your chances of imposing yourself to others and climb on the social ladder. Thus, it's very usual for people who are trying to create an enhanced memory by themselves to be killed, or to get the memory stolen to avoid them becoming more powerful (remember the difference between a memory and an enhanced memory is quite relevant). To avoid this situation of insecurity, it is common to ask for the Lords to be the ones doing the role of the lord in exchange for a safe space during the process, and sometimes even after.

At the end of every year, the qualifications of every match in Scry are compiled, and those who have won more matches get to put their retainers in the businesses' stores, thus having more clients that give them resources. Prices on those do vary, since they are dependent on the quality of the memory being shared, but just by holding a store for a whole year, the gains skyrocket. This partition is done proportionally, meaning that the amount of Businesses of Joy are limited and unchangeable, and depending on wins, a percentage is assigned to each Lord.

Society hierarchies

Going to the more specific hierarchies of society, it is divided in five major groups:

- The Lords (1%): being an auto-given name, it served as an inspiration for naming that who receives a memory. They are divided into families and branches of said families. The bigger ones have established a "lording school" in which members of the family are taught Scry, and can periodically choose to get certain retainers under their wing to enter the process of sharing memories. Despite the clear efforts they make to distinguish themselves, there isn't a disdain for people of other classes in terms of mixing blood (not to say they don't have prejudices): if a Lord chooses a partner who can contribute to the power of the families, they are well accepted. Of course it varies from family to family, but this utilitarianism doesn't come removed from affection. With the passing of time each family has distinguished themselves by their own philosophies and traits, which are clearly reflected in the way in which they treat their retainers in their respective schools. Those serve a secondary purpose other than to train Lords: it's a stack of retainers that provides quick

Comentado [UdW26]: Keep this in mind for the next comment...

replacements, both for Retainers that become useless and for those who have no more memories to enhance.

- The Retainers (39%): servants or people working under the Lords authority, they receive this name from the memory exchange process, since they are technically subjugated to the Lords. Nonetheless, this includes a much wider range of workers, either security members, advisors, cleaning service, and of course, retainers. Those last, and the higher members of security, live under the protection of The Lords, but most Retainers live in their own houses, outside the Lord's domains.
 - Impure Retainers: those who have served under many household, thus are susceptible of transmitting delicate information to enemy factions, or work as double spies. For this reason, they are discriminated by many Lords, many Retainers who change household losing their position and changing social class.
- Masters (25%): people dedicated to the crafts, services and arts, providing materials to society while maintaining a certain independency from the Lords, even if some have a certain patronage or economical relation with them. Since they are necessary to the functioning of society, they tend to have a certain community safety, despite living outside the Lord's domains. The more privileged of this sector are prostitutes, who have a similar level of respect and consideration as Lords, even if they have less resources. After spending five to ten years in the profession, they have received enough invitations of each Lord family to spend the rest of their days living in abundant luxury. The qualifications of prostitution as a job, however, is much different from our concept, indulging in intercourse by their own choice in order to construct an array of memories catered to the different tastes and perversions of each Lord. In fact, acting against the will of a prostitute or causing any kind of harm to them (man or woman, of course), is one of the most severely penalized crimes, despite the overall flexible laws of the island.
- Travelers (25%): population that sustains themselves by travelling around the island and living independently. Some of the most renowned retainers started long journeys themselves, meaning it is a very tempting, if unsafe, path to almost guarantee an entrance into Lord's candidates for retainers, after some years of gained experience.
- Trash (10%): members of society who can't integrate to the system or whose emotional value is considered insufficient to be worth, be it crippled, old, those with trust issues (thus, who can't be retainers), those people without memories to offer... They are considered so worthless as to be ignored by the eyes of most people.

Comentado [UdW27]: As you can see, first came the Lords, then the lords and retainers, then the Retainers. Because Lords are narcissistic by the nature of power itself

- Liars (??): retainers who, after getting their memory enhanced, broke their pact with the Lord, leaving the Lord's domains, thus not being able to refill the Lord's copy of the memory. There are barely a dozen individuals of this class, and despite being some of the stronger members outside the Lords, they tend to live very discretely to avoid being discovered.

Intrinsic dynamics between society and memories

Notably, there is no black market regarding traffic of memories, since they are not transferable, and necessarily consensual. It is technically possible to obtain the essence of a memory forcefully, by leaving someone half-conscious. Even if it was extracted, though, the memory would not be able to be cleared and accessed, so all of the previous effort would have been for nothing anyway. If anything, it serves to get rid of a powerful memory from someone else.

Nonetheless, there is a common practice regarding memory extraction for traumas, either for an enhancement or to throw them away. For those who can't get access or contact with a noble, they tend to wander around abusing their power, or get rid of it if the emotional backlash can't be quelled through contention emotion-waves. This doesn't undo the effects of the trauma, but it can help if it's a haunting memory (the capability of quelling it down is lost, though, so the positive-negative trade is very dependent on each case). Another common praxis, this time regarding positive memories, is going to cheaper joy businesses, which are not from the Lords, but of worse quality, and much more dubious.

Memory enhancement has other complications outside of The Lords methods: it requires to be done with someone who you don't already trust, to create the fertilizer for the essence, which means exposing the intention of oneself to create an enhanced memory (death flag). On top of that, Scry's utility is not publicly known, and it is hardly replicated effectively, meaning the common folk don't know of a method to achieve a fast growth of the essence, meaning it could take over a year for them. There is an exception to this, being couples who have recently fallen in love with no prior contact between each other, **which makes love and sexual playfulness a very open and approved idea**, but it's a very exceptional case.

To top it off, once the enhanced memory is achieved, it's difficult to guarantee the security of the retainer, since no one will risk themselves to protect someone else's powers unless they are vastly more powerful, which is not the case for most impoverished people. Any attempt of creating an organization to produce save spaces for this has, of course, been crushed by the Lords.

There are very generic laws to allow the maximum freedom to people to do as they please. This was done to allow the emergence of thrilling experiences with more easiness, so the Lords could have a faster access to them without having to risk their well-being. Despite the imposition of such laws (or maybe precisely because some of them were made to be broken), there isn't a well-established juridical system. Minor crimes have no relevance or importance, and only those

Comentado [UdW28]: I didn't want to overwrite this, but everything falls together. Like. The Lords going half-naked, the more impressionistic mentality of people, contact being a dangerous thing for how easy it is to attack someone independently of physique. This is a society that exists very close to its primal needs (eat and don't get killed, mainly), thus it makes all the sense in the world that, culturally, there was an obsession with the idea of a needless but powerful feeling that clashed against those primitive instincts (without being completely separate from them), and yet be one that is so fundamental to the human experience (I'll try to keep this SFW, though). I... can't promise it. Seriously, though, we need a game that allows us for a serious and mature discussion of what sexuality is, what is its place in our lives, what it turns us into, and like, why do we not have this. Why is society so stupid that it prefers to ignore it. Like. Ugh. I'll stop. Finish the correction. Topic for another day

that are important enough to reach the Lord's ears are persecuted and punished, as they see fit. There is also no police force, since law and order tends to stability, which means less emotional peaks to collect for the Lords, who are already safe enough with their collections of Retainers to defend them.

Social conventions are only relevant during formal reunions, and most behaviors are completely accepted and tolerated in a common desire to expand the human experience as much and as many diverse ways as possible. This is, of course, as long as they don't limit other's freedom or well-being.

All people at the age of 14 are given a dose of a natural drug to reach a strong high. This is done to make sure everyone has a starting "energetic" memory to keep themselves afloat. Apart from that, use of drugs is not a common practice, since it's quite harmful to both mind and body. Those who become junkies (in this case, understood as any type of addiction, not only drugs) run the serious risk of death or social exclusion, but those who manage to keep a minimally proper behavior may be picked by a Lord, to counter any possible problem related to anxiety or stress. **Not to say that all the drug addicts chose to be so themselves.**

Comentado [UdW29]: Yup, this place has really dark undertones

On that topic, it is not completely infrequent that people dye of emotional overload. Some do because they try to add pleasure emotion-waves while being impacted by other pleasure emotion-waves. Others' minds collapse by a strong collision between two opposite high-intensity emotions. Conditioning through pleasure-pain is also not uncommon in the darkest corners of society.

Even though violence is also not infrequent, abuse is almost inexistent for the common folk who don't have strong experiences, since building up pain and distress on someone who knows you personally completely backfires on the abuser.

Ideologies

It is important to note how extremely emotional this society is. With the lack of public education, and the important role that emotions play on their lives, they are very impressionistic, more guided by instincts and gut feels than logic, even between The Lords. That is not to say they have a null understanding of rationality, and have actually had their fair share of great logical minds, but the general tendency and systems are made for intuitive people.

Precisely because they tend towards impressionistic thought, and keep honing it throughout their lives, is it that the promise of eternal happiness until death, under the protection of a Lord, is such an effective bait. Without even considering the difficulty to stay in the household, or the fact that many people lose their memories, and then are returned to low society, memories don't last a full live, and the waters around The Lords are rarely calm.

A complete renewal of the system is impossible, since the tendency towards achieving memory enhancement is something inherent to people's biology. Being a very easily tool to abuse others, it will bring confrontation and clashes as long

as humans are alive. Nonetheless, there are various ideologies that, despite their irrelevance in terms of being able to act, propose different models to, they say, guarantee a better lifestyle to the majority of people:

- Segregation of population: creating smaller communities means more social control over individuals who would abuse their power. This would be limited to the size of the population within the island, but by diminishing sustenance problems, there would be no reason for conflict. On top of that, Travelers would still be valuable incomes of memories, and if they adapted enough to the necessities of the new era, they could become income of memories to the separated communities, and serve as a communication service in case of scaled conflict. This ideology had a much higher following at the conformation of the country, but currently has decayed to almost irrelevance, deemed idealistic and ridiculed as **utopic**.
- **Fair exchange system**: this idea proposes that The Lords establish a market regulated by themselves, in which the better performing citizens get rewarded with better memories. This doesn't necessarily create hierarchies, and instead aims to produce a society with maximized productivity. The only obstacle it faces is the lack of response of The Lords themselves, who are too worried biting each other and protecting their own retainers to make a whole system that would have huge costs to them.
- Revolution: the most prolific idea between Trash, which is also the less capable of executing on it. Most people just stay away from displaying such ideas in public; those in power are directly sustained by The Lords and other retainers much more powerful than themselves, so the idea that they would risk their position is unlikely. With no one to do revolution, the idea falls flat.
- Refined hierarchy: the ideal of most Lords, and the system that is trying to be shaped. The final objective is to reach a monopoly of resources, after which the final contender, the Supreme Lord, would redesign society and order things as desired. The final aspect is unclear, and varies between Lord families, but it is thought to derive into a pyramidal structure that brings peace and prosperity. Most likely to the ones on top, but that part is never mentioned to not cause social disturbance. Since opposition and competition is fervent, and violent actions would mean getting everyone else against them, the process has been going for hundreds of years, and it doesn't seem to be reaching an end anytime soon.

Comentado [UdW30]: Sad communism noises

Comentado [UdW31]: Niji's ideology

Science

In regards of science, there hasn't been much progress since the discovery of the extraction process. Having obtained an almost literal button of happiness, the

long-term priority of people has become entering the households of Lords to obtain peace and eternal joy, which is not quite realistic, but it's what is pursued. Of course, the term science doesn't even exist, and the closest thing to it are clueless studies on everything that regards the manipulation of memories, from rudimentary biology, to physics and psychology. Nonetheless, those fields have barely been explored, and only those in a privileged position, without economical responsibilities and enough curiosity and patience, are the ones trying to make any advancement on it. The most research being done at the time of this story is regarding a **memory of someone dying**, revered as the most powerful there can be.

Comentado [UdW32]: Happy Dwale noises

Technology

The current technology of this society doesn't get any more complex than simple blacksmithing and the usage of some fundamental physics laws for mechanical labor.

Despite me having referred to their general knowledge to be similar to those of the ancient history of our world, there isn't the level of engineering that allowed things like the Parthenon, pyramids...

Being the memory extraction a technique that requires only of the innate capabilities of both parts, it didn't suppose a noticeable advancement in terms of technology. The one innovation it did bring was the recipient in which memories are stored.

Such a finding will become a door to enter into the field of experimental electromagnetism, even if it won't be relevant to the world for at least two hundred more years. Another field that will greatly benefit from this development will be psychology (or at least the part that touches upon the nature of memories), but again, nothing relevant to the current age.

The electricity a group of individuals can generate is so low that it hasn't seen a practical use yet in any aspect (the intensity needed to enter the brain is not even noticeably to the retainer itself, so harming something or using it to power a mechanism is not possible).

Characters

Niji Camellia, 21 years, Lord

Niji was born in one of the various families of the Lords, being the inheritor of the Camellia branch of the Rose family. Being a sub-branch of the largest family amongst the Lords, her parent's position was rather small, thus her birth and title wasn't noticed by most relevant figures: just a lord among many.

Comentado [UdW33]: "Niji" means rainbow in Japanese, and is what comes after the storm, the storm being the current situation; it's an omen of her victory. The Camellias are flowers that symbolize rebirth, again, creating a new system, a new society

When she was still a kid, her parents started suspecting that something was wrong with their daughter. After some testing done in total privacy, it was made clear that Niji had a natural impediment on emitting emotion-waves, at the same time that she was especially receptive to them. This horrified them, since it meant she was vulnerable to others' manipulation while being incapable of defending herself, and that she could sink the Camellia's position within the Rose family, since she wouldn't be able to provide memories intense enough to be sold in the Businesses of Joy.

Worried about her well-being if the family leaders were to find out, they took their time to construct a narrative about Niji having a terminal sickness that weakened her body. With such an excuse, they quelled all suspicions about Niji being escorted by her parents everywhere, and her lack of attendance to any social meetings.

Despite Niji knowing the truth about her own condition, and the reason why she had so little freedom, she was content with her life, never showing any interest for emotion-waves, since her own were so weak that she wouldn't see them as that big of a deal. This, combined with a lack of curiosity for the social gatherings of the Lords, getting used to a solitary lifestyle, and her passion for Scry, made her quite reclusive and alien to the social tendencies of her equals, and ended up distancing herself from other Lords' mentalities.

This all changed when her mother fled from their lives. Such event occurred when the Bluemoon family requested an exchange of Lords to form an alliance with the Roses, part of Omo's plan to gain influence over the smaller families. The Camellia's were of little importance to both sides, but since they were a family with children, offering the mother as a Retainer, especially for her memory of birthing, was seen as a strong act of compromise. This ended up causing Niji's mother to get her more relevant memories extracted. Her husband, Theace, suspected that would mean she would have had removed the memory of fear when they discovered Niji's condition; once the couple met again, they discussed about it, and decided that the mother would run away to make sure no one could discover the secret, as Theace stood behind to take care of Niji.

Once the escape was successful, the Bluemoon's rose in anger, demanding a compensation that the Rose's refused to pay. At the end, the conflict didn't find peace, and resentment built up between the two families. The Camellia's being responsible for it meant strong consequences for them, mainly the forced inclusion of Niji into official Scry matches, both to compensate for her mother's empty place, and as a punishment.

Luckily, with the practice she had from reading and playing on a prototype, and with her father as a coach, who also helped in instructing her (he was Niji's mother coach before she left), Niji will have enough knowledge to tackle the challenges in front of her.

Description:

As a consequence of her inactive lifestyle, her body has remained fairly skinny and thin, which ironically has made people more convinced of her supposed terminal illness. As it is tradition, her clothing attire is scarce, but when participating in Scry, she wears a long, multi-folded dress, inherited from her mother.

The most prominent character trait people notice on her is her lack of social awareness: difficulty understanding implications or subtleties, as well as a total disconnection with the common beliefs, or at least a less prone attitude to accept them. In fact, due to her lifestyle, and with the exception of her parents, she has had the same type of contact with Lords as with Retainers, and even Travelers, meaning she always judged them under similar lenses. This makes the blatant disparities of resources between classes more evident to her as injustices, even if she has no initial will to pursue change.

This is not to say that she agrees with the current system, since her situation is a direct consequence of the negative dynamics of the Lords, but Niji understands that changing the top of the social pyramid will cause a great disturbance in all the inhabitants of the island, probably in a very negative way for her and her father, since they are part of the top. Her conclusion on the topic was that, ideally, the system would be kept, but the rulers would work in cooperation instead of clashing in the current mess of falsity and interests. In having neither the power nor the influences to change it, however, she kept these ideas for herself and focused on staying safe.

Another very evident trait of hers is an innocence derived from her lack of experience. Even if she knows of disparity and injustice in the system, Niji never had access to the specifics of how life outside of the Lords' walls was like: she understands it is bad, but how to define that evil is too abstract for her to comprehend. "Evil" for her takes the form of acts, not systems or ideals. Parallel to it, despite knowing that the Lords are in constant disputes for each other's secrets, her isolated perspective makes it very hard to detect ill-intent in others; having been taught her parents' kindness, her tendency is to trust the people around her. To top it off, she is not conscious of such tendency yet, since she has not been in the kind of situation that would make her realize how gullible she is.

The final result of her reclusion was a duality between her rational side, which understood her situation and pushed her to take decisions based on the most favorable outcome, and her emotional side, that was kept raw and untrained, with all the good and the bad it brought. Both sides are in conflict, and it's this internal struggle that will end up causing trouble to her: her rational tells her to maintain the status quo as her feelings demand justice for those whom she cares about.

Comentado [UdW34]: Cof, cof, main story theme, cof, cof

This disparity will only be made more evident as she slowly uncovers the memories of the retainers that will go under her wing, having to handle responsibility for her status, and transforming the empathy towards those who have been oppressed and ruled by others into her main drive to tackle the Lord - Retainer system.

Relevant memories: unfortunately having to spoil a bit of how the plot will go, eventually Niji becomes a retainer to put her memories on the line to confront the system, equalizing herself to her retainers in a symbolic act of acceptance and humility. Those memories are the following:

- Hidden Decay: early in the morning, the door on Niji's room was broken down by a group of Bluemoon Retainers, which without giving any explanation, started scrutinizing the small place. It wasn't until seconds later, when her father entered and ordered with an authoritarian voice that they got out of his daughter's room, that they left. Despite her father's efforts to calm her down, the anxiety in Niji's heart told her that something was out of place. Her suspicions were confirmed when it was explained how her mother had been declared a fugitive.
- What Lays Behind the Twelfth Hours: when Niji was 19, there was an occasion in which her parents had to leave her side to assist to a certain reunion. Alone, she crossed paths with the previous leader of the Tija family, Bono, who by that time was over 50 years old. Niji asked him to play proto-Scry, and with him accepting, she had her first match with someone else other than her mother. And her second. And third. She kept losing every time against the experienced mind of the old man, going from morning to night without achieving a single victory, at which point Bono excused himself and left back to his house. That day, Niji was left with a weird mix of feelings inside her: frustrated by her lack of expertise, excited to improve and reach that level, but also satisfied with how she saw herself evolving with every game they played.
- A Mirror Afloat the Quicksand: months prior to Niji's entrance into professional Scry, she was taking a walk accompanied by her parents. During it, they crossed paths with a small procession organized by the Mudra family, celebrating the arrival of new candidates for serving as retainers. While it was going on, an old man dressed with clothes pertinent to a servant wandered around, interrupting the parade. For the many responses it elicited, no one moved him away, with the old man going back and forth in clear disorientation. It was then that the head of the family, Lord Astro, walked towards him, and patiently guided the man, a retainer who had been giving great services to the family almost 20 years ago, back to the terrified caretakers, who only received a minor scolding for their slip.

Micci, 23 years, Retainer

Micci starts the story as a Retainer under Niji's service, specifically as her retainer. However, she had been serving 11 years under the Coiledthread family. During that period of time, she grew very loyal to them, even having somewhat

Comentado [UdW35]: Floral reference, represents the central pillar of the flower (in catalan), because he was an important figure on Niji's love for Scry

Comentado [UdW36]: Not sure what I was thinking, but probably a corruption of the word "abono", which would make sense, because he's the compost to grow Niji's already existing interest in Scry

Comentado [UdW37]: I don't think I'm being too esoteric with this one, but just in case, a mirror is something that reflects your own image (Astro's acceptance of his Retainers as his equals), the quicksand is dangerous terrain (like the society she lives in, with the conspiracies and all)...

Comentado [UdW38]: Corruption of "michi", which means road or way in japanese. Because she has to find her way as a person, not as a servant

of a reputation because of her devotion at the service of Windia, a Lord born in the Cloud family. It was such her dedication to her, that she ended up with the nickname of The Kite, always accompanied by the wind, swaying to its desires.

Everything changed with the arrival of a certain Retainer into an enemy family: it was rumored that they managed to get their hands on a survivor of a great tragedy, and that they would enhance such memories. That information created waves of commotion, especially affecting Windia's brother, who was of frightful nature, and had had many quarrels with that family. As time passed and the recollection of such memory progressed uninterruptedly, tension grew more and more, until the faithful night arrived: Windia ordered Micci to go serve the Cloud's household, specifically under her brother's service, and that she was the only one she could entrust this mission to. Loyal as ever, Micci followed the orders.

Once she reached her new Lord's room, she found him waiting with a sword and two medics behind him. His explanation was direct and clear: in order to combat the new memory of their opposition, he wanted to manufacture a similar one, to at least be able to defend himself. However, finding someone who would allow to be hurt, and then enter the enhancement process was not an easy task, even with guaranteed medical attention. Micci immediately agreed to it, and her Lord explained the method: she would get her weaker arm cut off by pressing a blade against it (not by slicing it), and once the arm felt detached, she would be treated.

As the procedure started, Micci felt the pain she was expecting, twisting agonizingly for almost over twenty seconds. Once it was done and she was unhande, she curled in a gruesome scream. It took another ten seconds until she realized that the two medics weren't tending to her, and the blood wasn't stopping. The Lord explained that getting an arm chopped off may not be enough to rival the enemy family's memory, thus they would wait a bit more to build enough emotions to be a stronger memory. Micci's mind went on a breakdown, battling between following the orders she was given, entering complete panic, anger, and much more. Time kept passing, and after accepting she would die, her mind started to fade out. It was only then that the Lord gave the signal to the medics.

After that, the memory extraction process was successful, but the memory didn't advance a bit: it became impossible for Micci to trust her Lord, and his constantly displayed desperation about it didn't help. Not knowing why she was missing an arm, nor why did she fear him so much, she felt deep remorse for not being able to complete the given mission. Trying to manufacture pain-based memories had been tried countless times in the past, and 99% of those had failed, which is why it is considered a fool's errand: the Lord didn't escape ridiculing comments. In fact, they grew enough for his sister to hear about those. Seeing how tension was scaling, she intervened: since Micci already trusted her, she wouldn't be able to cultivate the memory herself, but at the same time, she felt a profound remorse for being partially responsible: in the end, Windia decided to put Micci out of her brother's hands, under the protection of an allied house, even if that would mean providing power to an external family, and angering the Clouds.

Comentado [UdW39]: WHEN THE FIRE NATION ATTACKED

Micci ended up in the Rose family: however, with her heart still in the Coiledthread household, it proved impossible to enhance her memory, and was offered to any of the branches. After two years passing through various families, without any success, she ended up being adopted under Niji's service to help after the Camellias incident, although Niji's father didn't have much faith on her.

Due to the high amount of households Micci has served in the later years, she has become somewhat disappointed with herself, leaving behind a life of duty for one in which no one wanted her around. Nonetheless, she works hard to find someone worth her trust, even though her character arc will have to do with learning that loyalty is something much separated to the blind obedience that she had been practicing.

Despite all the hardship she has gone through, she has not lost her composure nor good will, and in fact, this situation of having lost everything has tempered her into appreciating the good things she lives through, in a somewhat Zen-like fashion.

Relevant memories:

Since she had already been serving as a retainer on a previous house, the only memories she can offer to Niji's household are:

- **Spilled to the Stars:** the night of her arm being cut off.
- **Flowers also Bloom in Winter:** after being rejected by the main branch of the Rose family, but still being under their protection, Micci felt lost and without home. While taking a walk around the main mansion's garden, a strong wind started to blow, and a flock of swallows flew low, at barely two meters away from her. She stood still for various minutes, wondering; she didn't take it as any divine sign or anything similar, but somehow, that improbable view managed to quell her anxieties, becoming the starting point of her more contemplative attitude. Interestingly enough, she is not conscious of how important the feelings hidden within this second memory have become to her.

Comentado [UdW40]: Her blood, literally, but also her life, seeing how everything went downhill from there on

Blacksnow, 41 years, Retainer

Blacksnow begins the story under Niji's service. His life starts in the home of a modest but honest iron Master, where he was ought to inherit the family business, being the only child of the family. From a young age, people were reticent with him for his height: as a child, he was already as tall as the average adult, and such height would only grow more.

Born outside the safety of the Lords, he was firstly attacked with emotion-waves at age 12. Fear stroke, freezing him. Needless to say, that wasn't the last time. He learned to defend himself, but his size only made others more cautious, so it

was difficult to counter them when they sneaked behind his back. Soon, his father's business felt the effects of the conflicts Blacksnow was tangled with.

Word of mouth only gave him a worse reputation, until eventually, a man in black cloaks appeared: a fugitive with enhanced memories. Blacksnow was dropped to the ground, beaten and mentally broken: in realizing his fame as a dangerous force was a lie, the fugitive left, disappointed. That would only bring more fame to Blacksnow, though, even having shadowy figures from the lowest kind approach him in search of his physical prowess.

With the unjustified gain of his new fame, his father kicked him out of home, as his business was about to go to ruin because of it. By that point, Blacksnow had been running away from his problems, but now, he had no place to run to. Resigned to wander around alone, he rejected the offers of the darkness, and instead became Trash, searching for a miracle that would grant him the chance to go back to a decent life. Such chance did not come. Instead, tragedy knocked on the door once again: he found the black cloaked man. After he recognized Blacksnow, he wanted to have fun. By that time, Blacksnow was 21, and had spent almost four years living in the most abundant poverty. As he saw the willingness to attack on the man's face, Blacksnow jumped at him without leaving time to react, and indulged in his wrath. The man died.

Comentado [UdW41]: Sometimes I know how to write well

This felt like the last step towards the void. Blacksnow didn't understand his place in society, what he could do, what others meant to himself, and most importantly, if there was a path to happiness that he could still take. The only way seemed to be entering a new home, no matter how rotten it was. He spent seven years in a small group of ruffians. He now had a bed, and food, but nothing had changed inside him. One day, the brother of their leader returned: he had been sent to the Bluemoons' household, to become a retainer. However, his lord had been losing at Scry on purpose to have some underhanded memories shared, meaning the poor soul had lost most of his memories. Enraged by the state of his brother, the band decided to attack a small settlement of the Lords. They were crushed under the security, most of them dying.

Blacksnow managed to escape, and had learnt the lesson: the Lords' world was no different, even with all their façade of dignity. He lived another 13 years thinking that, until luck finally smiled at him: he was digging near the Lord's walls in search of their garbage, when he noticed a procession was occurring not too far. Wondering if they were giving food in it, he approached; contrary to it, it was a parade of future retainers. He was about to leave when he heard a commotion rising around him: an old man had interrupted the procession. He witnessed, as Niji did from the gardens above, the kindness of Lord Astro, and that changed his beliefs: for the first time since he was a kid, he felt there was a place that would accept the kindness he wished to express.

A week later, after he had gathered enough to look presentable, he knocked on Lord Astro's family doors, only to be rejected. As he left the place, he came across Niji, whose mother had just left. The distress of both connected them, and by the

end of their talk, Niji offered him to become her retainer. With some hesitation, Blacksnow accepted.

From his point of view, Blacksnow has finally found his place, just in time to grow old and die in a few years. His character arc will be about finding purpose as a person and worth outside of his strength. He will also be a focal point on the idea of bringing well-being on those who are born in conditions that sink them into society's cracks.

Relevant memories:

- Scarring Stain: after brutally pummeling the black cloaked man, Blacksnow observed the scene. As every detail permeated into him, every sensation, and every memory of denying the monstrosity others saw in him, he felt no pity, only a cursed fate he had been fighting for a long time, finally winning the battle.
- **The Sky would be a Better Bed:** after some months after he had been kicked out of his father's home, the night had come again. In a moment of weakness, he felt the ground under him, and cried for an unfairness that no one seemed to care about, and which he couldn't fight.
- Broken Blood: as Blacksnow came back from his group's attempt to attack the Lord settlement, carrying another member who had been injured, he gave his leader's brother the news about the former's death. Blacksnow spoke with tact and measuring his words. When hearing them, the man scratched the back of his head awkwardly, briefly shrug his shoulders, and then left the house.
- The 8-Leaf Clover: the narrated experience of Lord Astro's parade.

Comentado [UdW42]: Yes, I'm referring about committing suicide, living and feeling like human filth tends to produce that effect

Dwale, 29, Traveler

He obtained his ability to kill with a single emotion-wave shot due to his master, who suffered a heart attack from the sadness of knowing his granddaughter (Kouzui) had disappeared, after which he was brought back to life by Dwale, doing first aid. Despite having that power, he isn't any happier than the average Traveler, and is currently serving under a very minor Lord (Niji). Being powerful doesn't mean anything to him but the capability to attack or counter-attack someone else, something he capitalizes as what he can do as a job, but which doesn't define him as a person.

He became a Traveler to live a life in the Lords' domains. As he felt prepared to go get a job there, he met with Niji's mother, who after scolding him for being dismissive of the dangers that Lords faced, became his travelling partner for some days, after which she asked that if he was going to join a Lord, to go under

Comentado [UdW43]: Dwale is a type of Belladonna, reflecting that he has dirtied his hands before, using his memory

her daughter's protection and to take care of her. After entering there, he realized that the Lords' lives are not as idyllic as they make Travelers think, factually taking advantage of them for memories that caused hundreds of deaths every year, of inexperienced youngsters who dreamed of glory.

Despite the hardships he has been through, his speech reflects his personality, being very chill and friendly, completely disregarding social hierarchies, open and frank with everyone due to his live roaming around the island, where, in his eyes, all were equals.

Relevant memories:

- **Foundation for the Younger Bird:** the farewell of his little brother as he became an adventurer like him, promising they would become great Travelers who could meet together at the promised land that the Lord's domains were.
- **The Essence of a Traveler:** after two years of traveling, incapable of gaining any notable memories, Dwale was going through a severe crisis, thinking he would never be able to achieve his goal. It was at that moment he saw an old man from the top of a cliff. Unbelievably, he suddenly jumped off of it. Dwale watched the man's figure torpedoing himself towards the ground, his heart pumping in expectation from seeing a gore fest with his eyes, one that could become a memory worthy of getting him under a Lord's service. However, the man had tied himself with a rope, and didn't suffer any injuries from his jump. That day, Dwale met his teacher, the man who disregarded common sense for the chance of having a quiet place where he could retire once he couldn't be a Traveler anymore.
- **Abandoning a Treasure Proudly:** the memory of his master telling him that he would remain in the forest instead of going to serve a Lord, and enhance with him the memory of him suffering a heart attack. At this point, to Dwale, he went from a man whom he respected for his teachings to his absolute idol and role model. He said he did it to help the man who had given him a second life, not as a Traveler, but as a human. His decision had come from the change he saw in Dwale, from the day they met, when Dwale desired to see his death to make a memory out of it, in comparison with the day he suffered the heart attack, and the expression of fear and desperation that Dwale made at realizing he might have lost his teacher. This is the moment he tells Dwale that in order to keep his enhanced memory, he must visit him temporarily to recharge it.

Astro Karanamudra, 32 years, Lord

Comentado [UdW44]: References how Dwale wants to make the Lord's domain a better place to grant his little brother (the younger bird) a better life there

Comentado [UdW45]: Refers to the fortune he had built (his life and experience), with which he would be able to pay himself a comfortable life at the Lord's domains, and how he abandons it to give a better chance to Dwale

Comentado [UdW46]: Astro because of his central fiery figure, Mudra for the Buddhist signs, Karanamudra being one of them (I pictured a sort of sun Buddha, for some reason)

Main head of house Karanamudra, the main house of the Mudra family. Astro is mostly known by two things: the kindness that has characterized the philosophy of his family for over five hundred years, and an unscapable strictness, always perceptive and critic of those around him.

However, he was not always like this: in his youth he used to be quite an open lad, very accepting and forgiving. Eventually, he decided to accept a Trash as his retainer, one that said to have valuable memories, and who was probably driven in by the rumors of a Lord who had been raising his voice about social injustice.

The memories were unlocked, and served well to Astro. Eventually though, the retainer found himself out of the major circles he expected to be in when he entered the household, and realizing how powerful he could be outside, with all the freedom he desired, he ended up leaving, causing the eventual loss of the memories he had enhanced with Astro.

That supposed a great shock for the Lord, who had already been advised countless times against taking in Trash, as well as the countless poisoned words that were spoken purely because of the man's origin, which he had dismissed, but now found somewhere to be justified.

After some years, a new chance was presented to Astro: a woman dressing torn clothes knocked at his door, asking for help. She said she had killed a man in self-defense, and asked if she could be refuted, offering to work for the family as long as needed, but not as a retainer. Of course such a plea was an absurdity, and no one in their sane mind would have accepted. Astro opened the doors of his house in a prideful attempt to show those under him that his ideals weren't wrong.

After months of scorn and disdain, the woman asked Astro to leave. He gave his permission, a decision that various leaders of the other Mudra families didn't approve of. In response, they set a fire in the woman's room. Thinking she was being disposed of, she ran away, injuring various people with a knife she always carried hidden. To Astro's eyes, none of that made any sense, but again, the evil tongues chipped him little by little.

With time, Astro's behavior became more taciturn: generosity would only be for those already within the family from then on. He never openly spoke about those incidents again, but it was clear how fear had taken over him. His ideals about absolute kindness, however, never truly left his mind due to his very emotional nature, which continued showing off in the almost devoted treatment of his Retainers. A clear example of this is his use of certain retainers, who have no more memories to enhance, in Scry, to avoid risking the new recruits' memories.

On terms of the narrative, he plays a clear parallel to Niji, in sort of a fallen version of her, but not so much that he can't relate and even be of help. He is also a point of comparison with other Lords, and brings an interesting discussion with how he views Blacksnow, and vice versa, since it reflects what happened to him, but to a much more naïve version of himself, as Niji is.

Aesthetically, he has sort of a sun motif, reflected as will in his family mechanic.

Oukan Cigne, 29, Lord

Oukan is the head of the Cigne family, and the person who used to be considered the closest to reaching political supremacy. Considered the God of Scry for six years, she has taken a break due to her lack of duels, and decided to become the retainer of Omo to enhance her strongest memory.

Despite her vast influence and expansion, Oukan has one very clear goal: having fun. She likes Scry, she has a very comfortable life, enough security to live in peace, more memories that she can recount... She likes her situation and isn't worried about trying to control an unpredictable future that is out of range for everyone, even to her. Many members of her family have communicated their uneasiness with such attitude, especially with the raise of the Bluemoons, but despite how much she promises to follow their advice more closely, Oukan isn't planning on doing a single thing about it. Lords won't lose their power if the Bluemoon's rise, and as long as memory enhancement, thus Scry, is around, those in power will want her skills.

That confidence comes from the trust and admiration his brother (Batten) displayed for her since he was a child, which made her internalize her need to compete with others, to prove she was better, and capable of covering her brother's defects no matter the odds.

In a way, she reflects the antisocial part of Niji, as well as her passion for the experience that Scry offers, but having been born with a potential that she had no problem reaching, it was purely a medium for fun rather than what it is to Niji, whose complicated situation was dealt with, in a way, through the exploration of Scry. She also serves as a fuel to Omo, whose sense of responsibility and ambition is contrasted with Oukan's ignorant arrogance in thinking her life is worth more because of her skills (not that she is arrogant, but the way she perceives her self-worth is), but still being a necessary tool to Omo. Despite being an antagonistic force, her lack of commitment to a cause makes her a double-edged ally. She will undergo no development, since her point as a character is the stubbornness of refusing responsibility, and the consequences of that.

Unlike her brother, her speech is much more relaxed, with a tendency to competitiveness. This is because, before her ascent to power, her family had a similar level to Niji, so formalities weren't so common in their social daily life.

Relevant memories:

Gameplay-wise, Oukan is the final boss of the game, and embodies the aspect of epicity, sort of herculean vibe of an unstoppable force. Making echo of it is the only memory she will have equipped:

Comentado [UdW47]: Cigne is for the transformation of the animal (catalan word), since she went from zero to hero. Oukan is a corruption on Ouka, a character I liked, but who was in a videogame where she didn't shine much. Literally that's the reason

- It Was the Year 776: in her climb towards the number one spot, Oukan started by defeating every Lord from the Cloud, Coiledthread and Sorakoi alliance, which was at the time, the biggest contender of all families. This was a blatant humiliation that ended with the Sorakoi leaving the alliance, and the other two very reticent from each other. After some marriages were established, the Clouds and Coiledthreads challenged Oukan again, proposing some insanely unfair handicaps on a crucial match. She accepted, causing the most expected match of Scry that anyone remembers, doing many pomp and circumstances around it, publicized as a big event throughout all the island. At the end, Oukan won in extremis, which solidified her as an unstoppable force, and showed why the Cignes were now the strongest economical force in all the families. Since then, barely everyone prefers to admit defeat instead of even trying to fight her, so Oukan decided to become a retainer to at least be able to re-live the memory by herself once enhanced.

Comentado [UdW48]: IT'S THRACIA TIME BABY

Comentado [UdW49]: Literally "sky carp". Probably gave it that name because it sounded cool. Story wasn't thought out, you can't blame me

Comentado [UdW50]: Stakes, am I right

Omo Bluemoon, 28, Lord

Omo is the head of the Bluemoon family, which used to be the second branch of the Darkmoon family, but has now become the leading one. This rise in power has been partially due to Omo's own talent, but very prominently for the support of Oukan, the best player of Scry, who personally chose Omo to be her lord.

Omo took the chance that one of the strongest memories was offering to ensure her rise not only in her family, but in the overall panorama. That, combined with her reckless style of play, which costs her various memories per game in exchange for crushing victories, have built a reputation of her being ruthless and cold-hearted, something her speech transmits very clearly.

Such is not too far from the truth, since the Moon families had always followed a very rational mantra, which is quite unconventional. Omo was no exception to it, being quite fond of such mentality.

Her live, outside of Scry, has been quite typical, which may be the reason why she is such a good showcase of the general Lord-like culture: she has no distain for people from other social classes others than Trash, and her objective is to achieve the 100% control of Businesses of Joy to become the Supreme Lord.

The main conflict with Niji will be around her responsibility as a person of power, to care and share with those who have less than her, Niji's argument (simplified) being that equity is the best way to maximize society's happiness, thus, everyone's happiness, and to avoid conflict, since a satisfied citizen has no reason to commit crime. Omo confronts this by arguing that people tend to bring chaos to their own benefit, thus sharing resources and power with people who have no idea how to handle it would only make things worse for everyone, instead of being bad for some, kind of fine for most, and really good for a minority.

Comentado [UdW51]: Omo is a corruption on "omoi" which means heavy in japanese, because she is carrying a heavy weight. Am I not just soooo smart. Anyway. Bluemoon means nothing, it was just cold and cool, like Omo, and it felt very iconic, so I added it

Despite being one of the most powerful families, it has a bad reputation among Retainers for the way they are treated: if they don't meet a minimum of requirements (memory's size or density), they are used as fodder for stronger units in Scry, and then abandoned back to society. Nonetheless, with the oversaturated pool of poor people willing to enter Lord's houses, they are never lacking new recruits. Those who manage to enhance their memories, however, are rewarded with huge privileges and status.

The reason why Niji and her end up being confronted goes beyond their ideological clash. Omo had been accumulating memories in a storehouse of memory recipients for some years; when Oukan decided to become her retainer, Omo saw it was the best chance she would have to grow in popularity, and started organizing parties. In those, she offered the enhanced memories she had been storing to the Lords who came: they would get a copy of the enhanced memory (one per party). Even if those memories weren't of high emotional quality, they were a weapon to add to their arsenal, so the participation was massive (especially because Omo complied on the proposed security measures the other Lords proposed).

All of this was given "for free", only asking in return to surrender on the matches against Omo. Considering her talent and Oukan's support, most were already doing so, thus getting something in exchange for nothing seemed like a good deal to most families, without realizing they were becoming more and more dependant on Omo. This way, Omo skyrocketed into being the person the closest to reaching the full monopoly of the Lords, with no real opposition to worry about. Of course, making a copy of an enhanced memory meant they had to "recharge" it to its original owner (Omo), but whether she kept that compromise or not (which she did) wasn't something they cared about, since they would not have lost anything in case the memory wasn't replenished.

Eventually, this practice would raise the alarm to some factions (most prominently of Astro and Niji), since those memories had to be coming from somewhere: considering how many weeks she had been hosting such parties, everyone had accepted there was some sort of shady practice with memories of retainers, but not many seemed to care as long as they would benefit from it (there were families who didn't trust Omo, but didn't have the skill to beat her at Scry, nor the resources to surpass her security, so they couldn't do much to begin with). This general consensus is what will bring the urgency to Niji on why Omo has to be stopped.

This was, however, very much far from the truth. Some weeks before the parties started, Omo started wearing a mask and a long cloak that hid her body. That was a surprise for everyone, because dressing lightly was a long-time tradition of the Lords, which she had always followed proudly. No one gave it much thought after Omo explained she had had an accident and was covering the wounds until they healed.

Even before that, however, Omo managed to do something that would change her ambition into the power driven force she is at the beginning of the tale: she,

as any other Lord, desired supremacy to have control over as many memories as possible. However, she always feared how other Lords would react when that central figure held all the power. Thinking on how to keep them pleased, she hypothesized with creating a copy, if anything slightly inferior, to her own memories to give to them, in a sort of symbiosis that would keep the sub-Lords satisfied, even if they didn't hold the power.

After months of trial and error, she managed to achieve it: as she recalled the memory she wanted to duplicate, she extracted the current containing the memory being processed (different from the enhanced memory bind to the brain), obtaining a duplicate of the enhanced memory, which she would later distribute. Of course, if such a thing was known, chaos in how society was structured would ensue, and she would lose her chance, so she had to hid any trails of her life from the memory. Some months later, she managed to create memories with slight variations, which coincidentally reduced their value, since they weren't true to the feelings they were supposed to encapsulate, meeting her requirements to the teeth.

In this way, Omo managed to obtain the result necessary to put her plan to action. The only problem to it was how draining and time-consuming it was to extract each memory with each variation, and then check the memory was of enough quality (and re-doing the process in case it wasn't). Through countless nights awakened, she was slowly building enough memories to start the parties. However, the extenuation was starting to show off in her body: to avoid suspicions she covered herself to continue the practices as fast as she could, before the unexpected occurred.

Omo took this route because she saw it as the most efficient route to bringing the top spot to her family. This is a great exponential of a characteristic of the Moon families that is usually misinterpreted: they aren't cruel or selfish, but instead are deeply taught a utilitarian attitude for a greater good over themselves. Even if she is clearly supposed to be the final narrative boss, she exists to put onto perspective the role of utilitarianism as a beneficial tool to everyone, if used properly, in absolute contrast with Niji's raw emotional-driven efforts, somewhat concluding on the need of a balance, and the understanding of what to follow in each occasion.

Incomplete character descriptions

Kas, 38, Master

Master hunter under the service of the Sandcloud clan, entered Niji's service because of his good relations with Theace. Due to his comfortable position, and being old (at least at ancient times, reaching 40 was a considerable age), he consents and embraces the system to avoid harming his family, specially his children, who could suffer the consequences of unnecessary complaints. For all his life, after all, that has been the natural way of society to begin with.

Comentado [UdW52]: Sad af

Comentado [UdW53]: Kas is a deformation of kaç, which is an abbreviation of caçador. Because he is a hunter, and barely a character

He is not so much a character as a test in disguise, being the game's way to "check" whether the player truly has the abstract idealism of Niji in the sense of "all Retainers are people, and I'll make an active effort to demonstrate they deserve to be treated as such" or just cares about Niji's side for liking the characters that are presented; developing his character would go against this. The idea is that if the player chooses to show kindness on the Sandcloud match, they are rewarded with a better unit, that being Phoenix. He also serves the function to have some units at the beginning of the game instead of just Backsnow and Micci.

Iso Coiledthread, 19, Lord

A year after his birth, both of his parents died of illness. Being a Lord, the family couldn't dispose of him, so many branches of the Coiledthread would end up hosting him for a while, eventually even being taken for some months into the Rose household as a Retainer, until he came back to the Coiledthread for a concerted marriage.

Out of all the things he lived through in the different families, no matter if they treated him better or worse, there was always the same constant: a drive to benefit themselves in the detriment of others. To him, someone who had no real family, and whose interest was on living comfortably, this constant struggle to keep afloat was haunting. For that reason, when he started playing Scry, he made it his goal to get to the summit to hold power. However, the system opposed him, since it was designed to keep the power struggle *ad eternum*, turning that unhappiness and frustration into a desire to surpass those anxieties when reaching the top spot, monopolizing power to avoid conflicts of interests with other pretenders.

His speech tends to downplay others and amp himself up, with redundancy and unnecessary detail, to piss people off but in a calculated manner, to have the upperhand. This reflects his narcissistic, yet calculative mentality.

Theace Camellia, 41, Lord

A responsible, serious man whose priority is to educate Niji into someone who can fend for herself in the Lord's paradigm. He used to be a cheerier man before her wife had to leave the Lord's domains, but despite the coldness he exudes, Niji knows he's still a loving father who cares very much for her. Completely fulfilling the figure of a mentor, he had to give Niji control over the family decisions when her mother, the previous Scry competitor of the family, left. However, he wouldn't really step down from this role until Niji decided to take a more active role on winning the tournament to gain a name for herself and the Camellias.

Batten Cigne, 17, Lord

Comentado [UdW54]: The camellias are flowers from the Theaceae family, thus Niji, a Camellia, is Theace's daughter

Comentado [UdW55]: Batten comes from John D. Batten, a guy who wrote about a fable with the Swan Maiden, because Swan means "cigne". But Batten is a guy (naming characters is a hell)

Being Oukan's brother is the first thing that comes in mind when thinking about him. He shares her blond hair, but his more distinct physical feature is his crippled legs, which can barely sustain him mere seconds before they give out. Due to her sister, he never had to worry on becoming someone useful for the family, instead keeping himself entertained with meeting people. However, the feeling of inferiority dwelled in his heart, as he saw that no one relied in him, having learnt not a single productive skill as he came out of adolescence.

Eventually, the Cigne family pushed him to becoming a retainer, which was an easy way for him to acquire value. He had to choose someone outside the family, and whom he didn't already trust, which was somewhat of an issue. That's when Oukan intervened to propose Niji; knowing his brother had a particularly strong memory, she thought it would be interesting to level the field for all competitors of the Tournament to give a low-resources – high-skill player like Niji a memory to stand against other high-skill players. If lucky, she would even get to fight against her eventually. Many opposed, but with Oukan's approval and his willingness to meet another Lord (one who also suffered of a birth condition, to boot) he ended up under Niji's care.

Despite his lack of self-esteem, he is very social and curious. He reflects Niji in the innocence of someone who hasn't had to face hardships, but opposes her in terms of social standing. His speech is very polite and formal, a consequence of his upbringing in the recently glamorous Cigne family.

His memories are about a brawl he had with a kid who was arguing with his sister, in which he run and punched him to the face. It's so important because it was somewhat of a liberation of who he thought he could be, but also a bonding moment with his sister, and also really scary for someone who could barely walk by themselves, not to speak of the scolding they got from their parents, and the support Oukan showed him by taking the responsibility by herself (Life in One Day). Another of his memories is the moment before her sister went into That match (It Was the Year 776), the openness of how she actually felt and her fear of not remaining the mightiest unbeatable god. Lastly, he holds very dearly a conversation with his sister about what should he do with his live, in which Oukan, understanding his insecurity, casted by her own shadow, said: "You may have been born useless as a Cigne. But you don't need to do any difficult task. As long as you can be my brother, I won't ask more of you. I don't want your memories nor your information. Just call me 'sister' like always, and all will be alright."

Comentado [UdW56]: It would be a shame if someone couldn't contextualize this any better because time (:

Kouzui, 26, Trash

Kouzui is Dwale's master's granddaughter. She grew up in her parent's house, living a poor and hard life, like most in the island. She was born with a speech disability, which ostracized her socially. Despite that, she did her best to earn her daily bread.

During her teens, the Lords decided to take the Masters they had sent to the town back to the capital, which obliged her family to move to another town, where she

Comentado [UdW57]: If Niji is the rainbow after the storm, Kouzui (flood in japanese) is the storm that may come before it to destroy everything before the rainbow is formed

never quite adapted, becoming more of a charge on her parents. When they died in her adolescence due to illness, she found herself alone, and decided to find her grandfather, who she had stopped seeing since they moved to their new home.

She heard rumors of him as she traveled while scraping by. Coincidence would make it that she found him as he threw himself from a cliff, at the same time but opposite position as Dwale. Horrified with what she saw, she ran away traumatized at the idea that her grandfather suicided out of misery.

With no idea of how to make a living, she moved to the capital, only to keep living like a rat in the streets, as she glimpsed everyday on the clean and wealthy life of those who lived as Lords inside the city walls. Her hatred towards them, and the system they bred, grew so much she convinced herself they were the root of all her problems, and even started to believe her grandfather suicided as an attempt to create a memory that would please the Lords.

Comentado [UdW58]: Which, in all honesty, completely fair

Right before the beginning of the Scry Tournament, the usual celebrations were taking place, which commemorated the First Scry Duel. Iso, in his rejection of the system, did not attend to such celebrations, and instead, took a walk away from the Lord conglomeration. As he approached one of the city entrances, Kouzui spotted him. She knew she was being presented with a once-in-a-lifetime chance, but remained paralyzed, unable to decide in what to do.

With a Trash looking at him without saying anything, Iso couldn't stop himself from telling her off. That heated Kouzui's blood, who tried her best to insult him and accuse him of all the evils people like him have brought. Seeing the ball of anger and frustration she was, Iso had a feeling about her memories' worth. Proposing her to help him crack the system, he extracted her memories, corroborating the power she held in her brain.

She's the embodiment of everything wrong with the system, the neglect, poverty, weakness and impediments, the majority living under the ruling of the powerful, and has been made that way because she is the main (practical) opposition that Niji has to face. She could be considered to fall into the Dragon archetype, but weirdly enough, Iso is also Dragon (and Puppet master) at the same time.

Phoenix, 37, Liar

Phoenix was the younger daughter of the most important Retainer family in the Tobira clan. With a very permissive childhood and a strong character, the moment she began to understand the world, she questioned a system that put others above her for their birth condition. For that, she was severely reprimanded by her parents. During her teenager years, she brought success to the Tobira family, but eventually left, taking many enhanced memories with her, becoming a Liar. Disenchanted by the Lord's world, but afraid of the persecution that would follow her flight, she entered the island's forests to hide there.

Comentado [UdW59]: Phoenix because it's the rebirth of the system, rewards the undying faith of making a better world

There, she spent half her life, and despite having contact with many people, such as Dwale's Master and Kas, in her loneliness she developed a sort of spiritual animism, believing that all animals and plants are connected, thus all should be treated in equal respect and care. The Lord's system opposed this philosophy to the core, but being far of her league, she had resigned herself to hope it would eventually fall down by itself.

Despite her adeptness at many thing, her most unique ability lays in her capacity to "bind" her memories: since she couldn't enhance her newer memories by herself, she developed a method to augment their lifetime. Through experimenting with the currents on her brain during meditation, she figured out she could bend neurons around a memory using the current, and structure them in a similar way in which enhanced memories work.

On her relevant memories: a wolf-like being that dies calmly with her waves, licking her hand; a human dies in desperation despite her waves, because they didn't have a place that would care for them within the world. Assisting a fishing town to catch a huge shark-like thing, disrespecting it as "a simple fish", almost dying for it: the fear of throwing all emotions to the thing, and it not reacting a bit.

Quo Rose, 28, Lord

She's the status quo, and the shackles on the Camellias. She came from the Coiledthread family, where she was appointed to marry a man from the Rose's to form an alliance (although at the time, the Rose's weren't the clan's main family, it was the Yew family). Since she would leave the family, she received no education on many subjects and had to gain everything she had by herself. The archetypical Lord, similarly to Omo, but different in that she is content with her situation, becoming leader of her faction after dethroning the previous one. Pretentious and fake, but scared to take action outside her comfort zone.

Comentado [UdW60]: Quo because she is the status quo, and Rose because the Rose is the archetypical flower, so it seemed appropriate for her to be the leader of the flower-themed family. And also, the thorn symbolism and all

Comentado [UdW61]: Yew family because they can live a long time, thus they are old, even outdating the Roses

[Windia: *Windia Altocumulus / Coiledthread*]

Comentado [UdW62]: Altocumulus are clouds that can signal thunderstorm to come (change and revolution), but also the entrance of cooler temperatures (duality Cloud – Coiledthread)

Bise Cirrocumulus, 29, Lord

A man brought up from young with the ideals of the Cloud family, that of pure freedom. Under such precept, he went about leading the clan for half a decade, always with the idea that the capability of staying neutral, of moving to whatever position they would need at the moment, is what it meant to keep the essence of the Clouds. No compromise, no responsibility, no judgement, none except for those within the family.

Comentado [UdW63]: Bise: is a type of cold wind. Cirrocumulus mean calm but cold: negative status quo

However, Bise failed to recognize that keeping that mentality for the sake of following the family tradition was hurting the clan itself at the long run, giving away valuable members to other families in exchange for immediate benefits. Incapable of realizing his own mistakes, and in denial of any flaw in the teachings

he was given, he started growing a deep resentment for those who were a detriment to the Clouds. That is the case for Windia and Micci among many, who despite having no ill-intention, were part of the incident with Windia's brother: he resents Micci for leaving Windia's brother service (in truth, though, his frustration stems from Micci not being able to enhance the memory, which was almost an impossible request given the circumstances), and Windia for incentivize Micci to do so, putting Micci ahead of her former family.

Varna Tobira, 35, Lord

Varna was a woman who planned on living a normal, Lord-like life. Thanks to a good bunch of Retainers, she managed to learn Scry without suffering too many loses, becoming one of the great players of her time. However, one day, she lost her most valuable unit: Phoenix, who got her memory back, leaving Varna to lose the enhanced memories in the months to come.

That supposed a great shock to her, trying to comprehend why her friend would do such a thing. Eventually, she reached the conclusion it was the system's fault, but instead of trying to combat it, like Astro did, Varna accepted that was a lesson to learn from: the system doesn't allow trust. She simply had to keep playing, stay on long winning strikes, and she would be able to reach old age without much to worry about. Due to that, she has a more relaxed attitude towards the restrictions of Lords and Retainers, but seeing with condescendence those who try to actively oppose the inevitable.

This meant that reaching the quarters of the Scry Tournament put her on the spotlight of many attacks and a pressure she didn't want, but which she couldn't reject for the possibility of power that it brought to her.

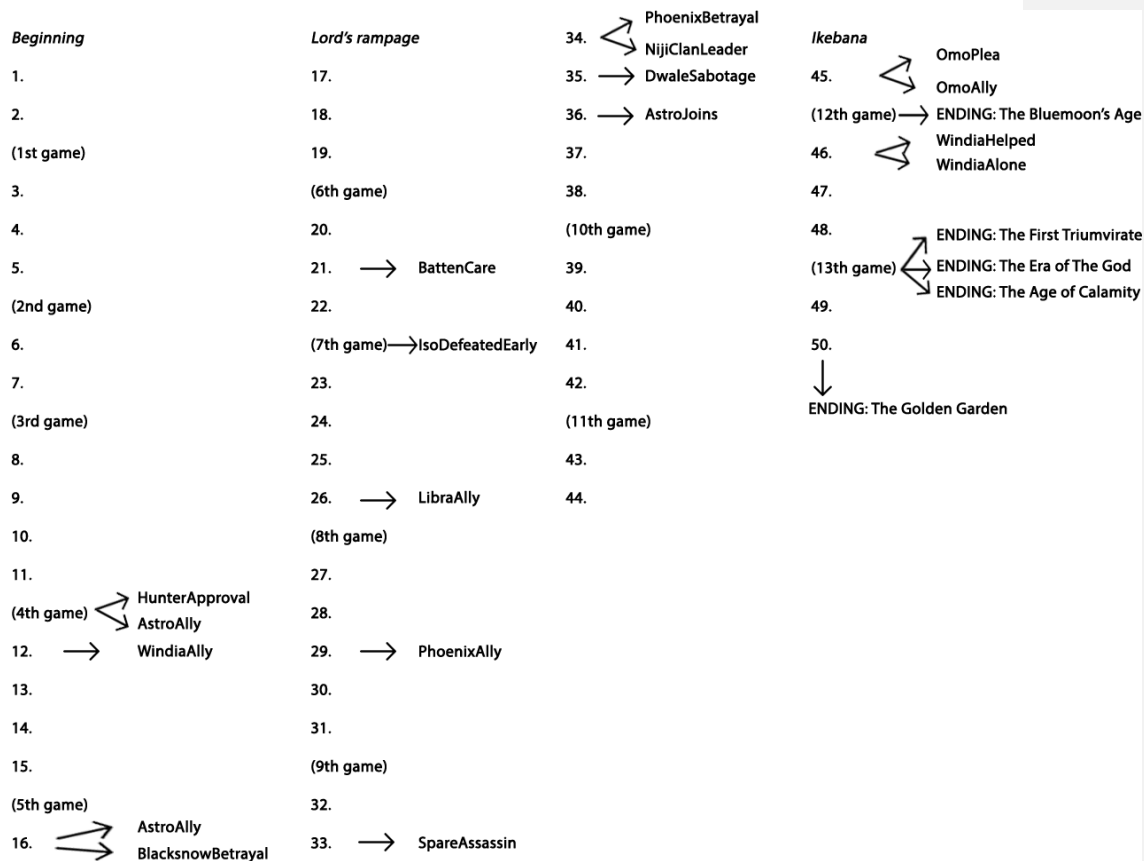
Her speech is very apathetic and calmed, like she doesn't care about what goes around her. Reflects her passiveness in regards of the system.

Choice guide

Decisions on this game have been planned to have long-lasting consequences, in order to fit the political plots that develop throughout the story, instead of the more traditional *in situ* decision – consequence relation. It is necessary to point out that no story deviations are indicated in the following image: many exist within the narrative, but have been omitted to simplify the showcase of possible decisions taken.

Comentado [UdW64]: Varna is the name of the cast system in the India → symbolizes rigidity between Retainers and Lords, and how she accepts that inequality as natural. Tobira just means door in Japanese, because she is the "door" to the ending, the last match before Omo and Iso

As a small note, if Niji were to lose all of her Retainer's memories (except in the 1st, 12th and 13th game), or if she were to lose any of the following matches: 6th, 8th, 9th or 11th, an extra ending named *The Bluemoon's Supremacy* would appear, ending the game.



Story structure

The story is divided in three acts, but in reality follows more of a four acts structure:

- Beginning (1-16): introduction to everything until the point of no return
- Lord's rampage 1 (17-28): Niji faces the world, and it's overwhelming. This part is about achieving stability with the new Retainers and the new situation (Iso's Torunament)
- Lord's rampage 2 (28-44): under the same conditions, Niji has grown confident enough, and with Quo's defeat, enter quarter-finals, in the last sprint towards glory
- Ikebana (45-50): we fight the big baddies and end the story

On each section of the story, we introduce new retainers to make sure that the player never runs out of memories, but without giving them out regularly enough to make the game easy to beat by sacrificing them periodically.

One thing that may appear controversial is how the story begins by changing the status quo. This is an error I've run up various times in other stories I've written, because we don't give enough focus to the character's situation, and the reader (player) doesn't empathize with them.

In this case, however, that doesn't quite happen, because even if Niji's everyday life is shackled by the fact that she has to enter the Scry competition, that is the player's mundanity, serving as a somewhat stable situation (if dangerous for Niji's Retainers) that serves to introduce world, characters, culture, conflict... We don't begin the story from earlier, because early Niji doesn't have a want, she doesn't have conflict. The moment she has to enter the competition, she gains the objective of achieving power to protect others, but as said, that isn't the point of no return, that is the normality of her current life (we don't know how it was before it). That point of no return occurs when Iso convokes the Tournament, altering the whole society's status quo and eliciting Niji to face an unescapable problem.

Lastly, exposition is not very heavy, but enough is required to minimally understand how the memory's dynamics work. To avoid confusing and saturating the player, exposition has been handled as sparsely as possible, distributed along the narration's length, instead of cramming it in a single plot beat.

Story description

1. Introduction to memories, that they can be materialized and are commercialized
2. Introduction to Niji's situation, both personally and socially. Also serves as the tutorial to experiment with most mechanics in a safe space
3. Introduction to Micci and Kas, and the concept of memory extraction
4. Introduction to social conflict between Lords and Retainers, plus minor seeding
5. First "real" game (with memory permadeath) and explanation of the Scry fanfare
6. Definition of Niji's objective plus minor seeding
7. Set-up and justification for Oukan and Omo introduction, with some more time for the player to get used to the mechanics
8. Introduction to Oukan and Omo, as well as emotion-waves being used, plus major seeding
9. Set-up for incoming set-up (trust me, it works)
10. Contextualizing Bluemoon's position, plus seeding for conflict with the Coiledthreads
11. Introduction to Astro and the concept of Supreme Lord
12. Proper introduction to Windia

13. Two beggars infiltrate Niji's house in search of worthy items to sell, threatening her with a knife as they fled
14. Niji's secret is unveiled, and Micci is appointed as Niji's close guardian
15. Set-up for Iso and the Reunion of Leaders
16. Iso proposes a tournament to decide on a Supreme Lord: point of no return, plus some Astro characterization
17. Introduction to Batten and Dwale, as well as advice to Iso's match
18. Exposition plus very important seeding on Batten having a really good memory
19. Kick to the wholesome feels
20. Lots of seeding and very esoteric character development
21. Iso is a prick (and does some seeding in the meantime)
22. Iso's fight
23. Murders explanation
24. Niji's turning point from a surviving Lord to a Supreme Lord in the making
25. Set-up for next match
26. Introduction to Libra and, if Iso wasn't beaten, Oukan is defeated in emotion-waves duel
27. Astro lost. F in the chat for Astro
28. Libra recruitment
29. Kas leaves, Phoenix may join, Quo match mention
30. Important concept about cool things that Phoenix can do with her memories explained
31. Niji vs Quo
32. First Vicmit assault to the Camellias
33. Decide whether to forgive Vicmit or not
34. Niji may or may not become leader of the Rose (Camellia) clan
35. Theace proposal to enact upon Iso, and mentioning of the next matches
36. Astro may or may not join Niji as a retainer
37. Micci was threatened by Bise, and Niji solved the situation cha-cha real smooth
38. Bise's match plus Windia second chance of joining
39. If Vicmit was forgiven, he gets murdered by Dwale
40. Niji goes extract her own memories, but the player doesn't know it
41. Omo's suspicious actions are discovered by Dwale by pure chance
42. Varna match plus Phoenix development
43. Discussions over what to do with Omo's hideout information
44. Infiltration into Omo's hideout
45. Omo vs Niji match
46. Iso's last murder attempt, and Windia's possible death. Or literally only tension build-up, depends on timeline
47. Niji walks to the Temple for her last match
48. Last match against Iso / Oukan
49. Iso's last struggle to impede Niji's rise to power
50. Best ending

Script

Beginning

1.

Micci showed her Lord Badge to the shopkeeper. The old woman looked at it with scrutiny, and picked up a thin metal bar. After softly hitting it twice and listening to the reverberations, she concluded it was the real deal, and asked the youngster what she wanted.

Micci: A determination memory, please.

The old lady smiled kindly, taking a small sphere of metal and discharging a small spark from her fingers in it. After handling the object to Micci, she wished her good luck, perceptively. Micci returned her words with a smile of her own before leaving the Joy Shop.

2.

Niji sat on the ground, in front of four imposing figures, looking at her from their cushions. Next to her, her father, unshaken by the quartet of judges; at the other side, a muscle tower of a man who was frozen in a permanent bow.

A woman with red threads coiled around her arms entered the room, eliciting a saluting sign from everyone.

Quo: Excuse my delay, the Bluemoon's demands are quite troublesome to deal with.

Theace: By no means milady, it wouldn't be a problem to begin with if my wife hadn't decided to flee the city despite her circumstances.

She nodded, pleased.

Quo: Now then, I will proceed to dictate sentence. Initially it was discussed to send either of you as retribution to serve the Bluemoon's. However, since your daughter here has poor health, I exerted my authority as the Rose clan's head to change the punishment into something more befitting. That which I'm talking about is Niji's Camellia insertion into the Scry competition, in behalf of the Rose clan. That's all there was to say. Leave, now.

Comentado [UdW65]: Many commentaries will be written over it. Some just point out things, others explain what was going in my mind when I wrote it, but mainly they exist for rewriting purposes, to know why phrasing and structuring was done in a certain way, and what purpose each fragment serves

Comentado [UdW66]: Seeding for when Micci appears later on. Micci is nervous about entering a family after so long, so she goes to buy a memory to be more confident. It serves, as well, as an introduction to the main cause of conflict in the world: we can commercialize memories. Also, the fact that is presented in such a mundane way sets the normalcy of memory treatment in this world

Comentado [UdW67]: There are things called Lord Badges that are used to buy something, and which have been illegally replicated. Also, based on the name it seems to have a certain cachet. We will later on know that Micci is no Lord, so her badge has been given by Theace → Lords have economic benefits over normal people

Comentado [UdW68]: Introduction to how emotion-waves work

Comentado [UdW69]: This girl Micci has something to do

Comentado [UdW70]: Context of what the scene will be about

Comentado [UdW71]: Didn't want to start spilling out names, because for the conversation that will unravel we already have to worry about Niji, the Bluemoon's, Theace, Quo, and whatever Scry is. Five is enough

Comentado [UdW72]: Because he is a Retainer, thus inferior

Comentado [UdW73]: Red coiled threads → denotes her heritage, and gives that Rose vibe

Comentado [UdW74]: We have it everything: the protagonist mother has left the place, and that has put us in conflict with the Bluemoon family

Comentado [UdW75]: Helps us introduce how others superficially view Niji, and serves for a set-up of the next commentary

Comentado [UdW76]: Quo is shown to be a big deal; the fact that she points out that she is the one who "made the sacrifice to help the poor kid" shows how conceited she is

Comentado [UdW77]: The conversation has ended for her: she decides when it ends, because she's the most important one

Niji's father praised the woman for her kindness and compassion, after which he incited his two companions to leave steadily. The three of them walked with hurry towards their residence, in the Rose's house conglomerate, where Theace told Niji to wait inside her own residence; four close walls with a roof over them that was slightly separated from the Camellia's main residence. Niji remained silent, nervous for what was to come. Her Retainer entered her room, and came out with a wooden board with a grid drawn on it.

Comentado [UdW78]: Denoting again the Rose's clan hierarchy

Comentado [UdW79]: Conclusion until now: Niji is not a very wealthy person, despite her status (which has been pointed out with how Blacksnow had to bow, while Niji didn't, but may not be clear up to this point)

Comentado [UdW80]: Without the comma it feels more like "came in and came out". With it, we are giving it the "space" that separates the coming in, the taking the board, and then the coming out (if we did mention that, we would have the mention of the board between the going and coming, while in this way we get to tie the board with the concept of proto-Scry, which hopefully, makes the whole situation less confusing)

Comentado [UdW81]: This is something unique to Niji, it's a handmade version of Scry she did years ago. The concept of proto-Scry doesn't exist because Lords already have friendly matches to practice it

Comentado [UdW82]: Blacksnow knows Niji to some extent, and cares about her. Cements the basic of their relation

Blacksnow: Want to play some proto-Scry while we wait for your father?

1st game

3.

Two more people had returned with Theace, during their game, waiting to its end before requesting Niji's attention.

Theace: With the three weeks I've had, I could only find two candidates with enough potential that would agree to become your retainers. The first one is The Kite, whom I believe you already have known by name, Micci.

The girl bowed silently, with a serene expression.

Comentado [UdW83]: Wink wink

Theace: The other is a well-known Master, specialized in hunting, Kas.

The man bowed as well, his right arm bandaged due to a bone fracture.

Kas: Apologies for presenting myself in such a state.

Theace: For now, I would recommend you extract their memories and judge if they are as good as I think they are. Stay close to Blacksnow and avoid other Lords. I will try to find more people in the week of preparation they have given us.

Comentado [UdW84]: We present this concept, as a necessary step to play Scry, and also the idea that memories have a hierarchy

Comentado [UdW85]: Again, Niji is the smallest fish

Niji: What are the chances you can find someone else, Father?

Theace: For a beginner from such a secondary family like ours... Not many. I hope that changes after you win your first match, but if I can find them more retainers earlier, the more prepared we will be.

4.

A week passed flying, among preparations, practices and hurries. Niji and her father, together with the three Retainers, walked towards the Scry Temple, all wearing their ceremonial dresses. As they arrived near the entrance, the two contenders that were dueling before them came out, from opposite sides of the building. There was, however, a man who came out later, dragged by two guards, dressed in lesser fancy clothes. Despite his anguished face, he opposed no resistance: it wasn't difficult to tell that he had been subdued with emotion-waves.

Niji: Have the Bluemoon's lost? – whispered to avoid being heard by the creepy-dressing girl who was about to cross with them, victor of the match.

Theace: Unlikely. I imagine he was used as bait for the other retainers, and now that he has run out of usable memories, they kick him out.

Niji kept her eyes on the dragged man. She knew there wasn't much she could do, but still, a part of her struggled on whether to forget or try to help him, even if it was just accepting him in the family before he found somewhere else to go to. Her father tapped her head.

Theace: Don't lose focus. I don't think there are more than ten players you can't beat, but that's only if you have your head in the right place.

Niji nodded and entered the temple. Inside, her opponent was already waiting.

5.

Niji walked towards the center of the spacious building until she was in front of the other Lord, a tall man with moustache wearing long orange clothing. When they came face to face, both parts' retainers sat down, each holding the memory that would be used to play with. Both Lords did their family's hand sign, sat down, and began the match.

Comentado [UdW86]: Scry matches are traditionally done with those

Comentado [UdW87]: With the introduction of memories and their nature as electric currents, this concept shouldn't be difficult to grasp for anyone with any bit of imagination. The usage of this scene serves to characterize Niji and her conflict with the system as well as to present to the reader the inequality and abuse that is currently rampant

Comentado [UdW88]: Omo-chan!! (PD: Don't call her that, she's going to look at you very disappointedly)

Comentado [UdW89]: Bluemoons = bad. Although that is not true, since this serves more to display their utilitarian methods, this is probably the first association the reader will do, and for all intents and purposes, that's fine

Comentado [UdW90]: This exists because in the future, Niji will be able to make this choice with Libra. It serves as a point of reference on how Niji has progressed, the power she has attained, and what things she can change, even if it's at small scale with it. It also shows she is kind-hearted, which helps empathizing with her (I hope)

Comentado [UdW91]: So Niji is not very influential, but we are cued that she has talent (although in truth it's expertise) to make a name of her own in the game

Comentado [UdW92]: Negotiate a peace or negotiate a time and place...

Comentado [UdW93]: Very brief explanation of how memories and Scry are related

2nd game

After the referees agreed on the validity of the results, the retainers put their memories back to their metallic receptacle while the winner stood up. They gifted a part of their clothing to the loser as a sign of superior play, and then left the pavilion.

Comentado [UdW94]: Yup, we have those

if (Niji won with a perfect victory) {

Theace: Excellent result, as expected. It's still a long way until the end of the year though, don't let it go to your head.

}

Comentado [UdW95]: Explaining what is the ritual of Scry, and doing so independently of who won. After all, it wouldn't make much of a difference to explain it from the perspective of a Niji who lost or from the one in which she won, so better to be concise

else {

Theace: ... I hope this was just a fluke on their part. Otherwise, getting to the end of the year may prove a real hassle...

}

Comentado [UdW96]: Indication to the player that they don't have many margin to be sacrificing memories thoughtlessly

6.

In the main residence of the Rose clan, a party was taking place, celebrating the Dahlia's family victory on their match. There would be not one mention about Niji, the same way that none of the Camellia's would receive an invitation to the event.

Niji warmed herself up, alone, with a bonfire close to her one-room house, with the proto-Scry board by her side, unfolded. She couldn't care less about what the heads of her clan did, but the feeling of having started a grueling uphill climb had been shaking her for hours. So much so that she didn't realize Blacksnow's presence until he sat on front of her.

Comentado [UdW97]: Showcase of poor respect towards a minority family

Blacksnow: Little Niji here is now on the leaderboards of official Scry, but still won't take a break with her training. You think you can improve anymore with this cheap replica?

Comentado [UdW98]: Considering how many relations Lord – Retainer go, shows confidence and closeness

Niji: Cut the chatter, Snowy. Not in the mood.

Being called like that by someone half his age made him raise an eyebrow, but chose to not poke on it. He got more comfortable on his seat, and after enjoying some seconds of silence, he spoke again.

Blacksnow: You know I'd rather leave the political tangles to your father, but... If it isn't too much to ask... There's a Lord I've heard of, his name is Astro... Say... If you were ever to face him, would it be possible that you... declined the match?

Comentado [UdW99]: Seeding for Astro, but also tracing a relation between him and Blacksnow. It could be argued that it doesn't make sense, because Blacksnow doesn't remember what happened with Astro, but remember that memory extraction impedes the recalling of the memory, but the emotions that derived from a memory exist within the person, and can't be removed. Blacksnow wouldn't be able to tell why he cares about Astro, but that's how he feels anyway

Niji blinked before bursting in laughter.

Blacksnow: ... That's a better face, if maybe not the one I expected.

Niji needed some air to calm down.

Niji: Sorry, it's just... Here I was worried about being capable of tackling the competition, and then you come in behalf of a top player.

Blacksnow was confused by this, since he had seen the one called Astro only around the middle of the board.

Comentado [UdW100]: I wonder why this may be... Keep reading to find out ;)

Niji: You don't need to worry, if there's a match I don't feel confident about, I'll surrender. I would rather keep your memories in one piece rather than risking it for some self-centered high command.

Comentado [UdW101]: Niji motivation: keep everyone safe from the system

Micci: Lady Niji. – Micci came out of the shadows, silently. – Your father sends me to bring you news about your next match. It will be in two days.

Niji dropped her forehead on the board, letting out a long sigh together with a thud, and inviting Micci to sit with them and explain the details properly. Far from there, Theace observed them from a second floor window, worry written all over his face. Behind him, Kas was palpating his injured arm, letting out a growl when touching the injured part.

Theace: Do relaxing memories not work for pain?

Kas: They kind of do, but I'm getting a feeling of my limits right now. It's difficult to know how well the recovery is going without some rough treatment.

Niji's father looked back through the window again.

Theace: Indeed, my friend...

Comentado [UdW102]: I consider this really bad. I was trying to be face and making a parallelism on how Niji has to go through some rough times to gain a certain status and what not, but honestly, I feel it's really clunky and poorly executed. Probably should be rewritten

7.

Despite the one-game-per-week rule, chance stacked against Niji as her second game was programmed early on the calendar. The clock run fast, and a new test begun.

Comentado [UdW103]: More exposition

Theace: Remember we don't have the luxury of surrendering, at least not yet. The Roses expect a win today.

Drugic Macaque, from the Cigne clan. Even with three consecutive lost matches, he retained a certain prestige as a member of the family with the stronger player. Niji watched as he approached her, conceitedly, with his five retainers. Hand signs, mind immersion, and the game begun.

Comentado [UdW104]: Casually mentioning Oukan without mentioning Oukan

3rd game

if (Niji won) {

Drugic turned around, looking at his retainers. His fists closed, agitated for a second, until he started yelling at the poor devils, who kept their sights on the floor, used to the tantrums of their Lord. His hands showed no mercy to a bald man who was repeatedly hit in an attempt to disperse his frustration.

}

else {

Drugic: Ha, too young to see how reckless it was to confront my grandiosity. It is too late now. Alas, don't be too hard on yourself: it is only logical that you would lose, for a pathetic family like yours never stood a chance against the glory of our clan.

}

Niji observed him in silence, with calmed breath and relaxed posture, but boiling with words she couldn't keep inside, as Drugic's impertinence rambled non-stop. She stood up, looking at him from above.

Niji: Milord, I would ask you don't disgrace yourself more than you already have.

Comentado [UdW105]: Niji characterization: despite her low influence, she is willing to stand against abuse, whoever it comes from

The air froze as Drugic took his time to process her confronting eyes. He cracked a false smile.

Drugic: I will not stay to hear poisoned words from the daughter of a fugitive coward.

Theace rose up slowly, towering above both youngsters.

Drugic: What now, old man? You should have apologized earlier, and not allowed your kid's offense to...

Theace: Sir, do not make my daughter repeat herself.

Comentado [UdW106]: First glimpses that Theace is best father confirmed

Drugic blinked twice and took some deep breaths before turning around and leaving from where he came. The Lords that waited outside for the next match couldn't avoid looking at his contorted face as he left towards the Cigne's residence.

Comentado [UdW107]: Drugic is just the excuse to have Oukan get interested in Niji. Maybe we should give him more time (the idea is that the games give enough time to make it feel like we have been enough with every tertiary character, but truth be told, Drugic comes in point 7. and leaves at point 7., so yeah...

8.

The skies poured incessantly on Niji's umbrella, carried by Micci and Kas. The weather accompanied the retinue's mood.

Comentado [UdW108]: Setting tone with the weather. Timeless classic. Also, it has been made clear during the re-reading I should put something between 7. and 8., because otherwise it feels rushed (classic me)

Niji: When I'm reporting this to father, all the blame will be on you. – said while pointing at Micci.

Comentado [UdW109]: The tone should be more "she's the one who started" than "I'm about to ruin this girl's whole career"

Micci: It is indeed. Lord Theace told me to only accept intakes that had usable memories, and I judged none of them did. I'm sure, had he been there, he would have judged so equally.

Kas: Maybe it is a bit pretentious of a youngster to equal herself to Lord Theace.

Micci: ... Excuse myself if that's how it sounded. And pardon me if this sounds equally arrogant, but I served eleven years under the Cloud family, honing skills such as this. I wouldn't have been commended this task by Lord Theace if I couldn't fulfill the role he gave me, after all.

Comentado [UdW110]: Her serious, formal but also neutral tone makes it sound like she isn't being arrogant, and just denoting facts, mixed with exposition and arguments that solidify her commitment and respect for Theace. Really good intervention if you ask me

Niji: Stop it, I didn't mean it as a reproach. It's just... frustrating to come back empty-handed despite being the head of the family. What was my father thinking when he put me in charge...

Comentado [UdW111]: Naturally (as in not artificially) saying that she doesn't feel prepared, and rather is quite insecure with all the responsibility she has been given

Micci: My lady, I'm sure if Lord Theace delegated on you is...

Niji stopped her, as two blurred figures approached through the sky's waterfalls. As they came closer, one of them sprinted towards the Camellias. Kas made a step backwards, flexing his body; Micci grabbed Niji by her wrist, in case she had to quickly pull her away; Niji looked at the incoming person with curiosity. It stopped in front of her, raising a wall of abundant blonde hair when incorporating. Her green eyes shone above her mischievous smile. Soaked from head to toes, she casually greeted Niji. Despite not having crossed a word before, Niji recognized her instantly: Oukan Cigne, considered the most powerful Lord due to her immeasurable prowess at Scry.

Comentado [UdW112]: You are welcome

Comentado [UdW113]: We build tension by adding lines between the sprinting and the arrival, while making some characterization: Kas readies himself to run away if necessary, Micci adopts a more defensive stance and Niji has not even considered that anyone could mean harm to her

Comentado [UdW114]: This, to me, feels super iconic. There's this erratic figure approaching through the heavy rain with no umbrella whatsoever, who does a "pelo Pantene" motion and then is like "yo, people call me the God of Scry, nice to meet you"

Oukan: A little bird told me he found a rude flower at the board.

Her gaze felt overwhelming, as if she could bend Niji with her sheer presence.

Niji: D-do not expect me to apologize for my rightful words, Lady Oukan.

Oukan: It's the other way around! – honesty poured from her smile – I like to see there are gutsy people left around! Lately it's all been cowards that don't want to play with me anymore. – her expression saddened before returning to its usual spark. – Say, would you take the challenge if you were to play against me?

Oukan had been slowly raising her hand towards Niji. Despite the distance, the figure that accompanied her from behind noticed it, tensing her index and middle finger towards Oukan in response. A spark lit among the droplets of rain, instantly

reaching the Scry champion, whose body contracted for some seconds out of pain. The three members of the Camellias froze in place, uncertain of what were the other newcomer's intentions.

Omo: How many times do I have to tell you to act sensibly when you come with me? – she grabbed Oukan by the neck and pulled her away from Niji. – Excuse her rudeness. I believe you already know of Oukan. I'm Omo Bluemoon, head of the Bluemoon family.

When it rains, it pours indeed. Her somewhat sinister looks, with the mask and the veils that covered all of her, already unusual for Lords, were only made worse by her provenance.

Omo: This airhead here told me she had someone interesting to present me, but it turned out it was a stupidity. Again... – she hesitated for a moment. – I don't think I have seen your face before. Here.

She handed a purple spherical token to Niji.

Omo: I host very special parties in my residence every Friday. Most Lords find them quite a rewarding experience, and I would be pleased to have another participant. As for now, we are parting ways.

Omo made a gesture at Oukan to follow her. The Scry champion looked at Omo, then back at Niji, and put a wide smile on her face.

Oukan: Bye bye, young Camellia!

Omo stopped dead in her tracks and turned her head around. Micci made another step forward, preparing herself for the worst, despite Kas' fruitless efforts to push her back. Neither moved, expecting the other to take the first action. In the middle of it, a third figure appeared in the distance, running towards them at full speed.

Theace: You two get away from my daughter! – shouted Niji's father, approaching the group with fiery eyes after receiving news that Oukan Cigne had entered the Rose's domains.

Comentado [UdW115]: This I consider to be the first major jewel of the script. Basically we have a tone set-up with entertaining character interaction, then some tension with the introduction of those two mysterious figures, then we get this heavy-emphasized chaotic introduction to what would be the biggest antagonist (Oukan), but which seems like a friendly hyperactive cupcake, and then we get the best player of the world knocked down by someone we don't even know: the camera moves away from Oukan, zooming into Omo, with her black clothes, wearing a mask, surrounded by rain that only made her figure more diffused. One of those scenes that you picture first, and then build all the other pieces around. Really satisfied with it. Also first-time apparition of emotion-waves being used

Comentado [UdW116]: Yes, Oukan was about to shoot Niji to make her feel competitive and create a sort of rivalry that would influence her to agree on a Scry match if the day ever came

Comentado [UdW117]: Confirming that Oukan is a puppy. Which actually plays really well with her having many dogs. Tarzan 2.0, excepts its dogs. Because dogs. I like dogs

Comentado [UdW118]: I'll trust the player on this one and hope they remember that the Roses and the Bluemoons are confronted. I don't usually do it, but I should

Comentado [UdW119]: She is like a door to door salesman, except for world domination

Comentado [UdW120]: Laughs in chaotic vibes

Comentado [UdW121]: Because Kas is too afraid of pissing powerful people to do his job

Comentado [UdW122]: This was a line I thought of, and had to include somewhere

Comentado [UdW123]: Yes, I didn't say Theace, I said Niji's father. Wink, wink

Omo: ... We were leaving anyway. Do consider my offer about the party, though.

9.

As days passed, the incident seemed to die out, but Friday arrived, and an unexpected guest knocked at the door. Theace heard the ruckus from his room, and came out to find Quo walking towards him. The reason of her visit was simple: Omo had invited her to one of her parties, commenting how she had done the same with the Camellias, but whom she didn't expect to see, which would be very unfortunate.

Quo: This seems like a great opportunity to start a reconciliation with the Bluemoons, so I wanted to make sure you didn't forget to assist.

Comentado [UdW124]: Closing the thread with them while opening another one

Having said that, the Rose's head left, leaving Theace with uncomfortable news for her daughter.

10.

Niji, her father, Micci and Blacksnow entered the Bluemoons residence with reluctance. It was impressively spacious, most of it built in recent times. What was even more impressive, however, was the amount of people who had assisted. From most families there was at least one or two members with their escorts, all sharing the same space without confrontations, despite the long enmities between them. Niji shivered at how quickly the situation could spiral out of control.

Everyone stayed in the small groups that had been formed based on alliances and family connections. Inevitably, Niji's group ended up together with the largest one, from the Rose clan. It didn't take long until an itch to get out of there the fastest she could had taken over her mind: her father had mundane, boring conversations with people she knew nothing about, while she did nothing but stand at his side. Insufferable. She couldn't even talk to her Retainers because she had to pay attention to whatever was being vomited by the other Lords.

Comentado [UdW125]: Although it could be understood as it being the proportionally bigger one, it's supposed to convey the idea that the Rose's family is the biggest one. I really can't think of a better way to phrase it

The night dragged on slowly Omo appeared, grabbing the attention of all assistants. One by one, as they were being called, the Lords of each group approached her to receive a small spherical orb made out of metal: a memory container. When Niji's turn came, Omo handed her a memory, receiving the next Lord without mentioning what had occurred days ago. Niji thought it was for the better. When she and her father went back to where they were, they only found Blacksnow, with a distressed face.

Comentado [UdW126]: As someone who has been there, I had to put it like this. Luckily, the aggressiveness conveys Niji's character, so it has a reason to be here

Blacksnow: Two Retainers approached us when you left, and told Micci to follow them. She said to not worry but... I'll take you there.

The two Lords followed him to a corner of the room, where they were stopped by two men who pointed their hands towards them. After being stopped for a moment, Niji continued advancing towards Micci. One of the men moved his hand towards her; she jumped away from him. Theace shot a spark from his fingers, which made the offender blank for a moment. The other responded accordingly, but Niji's father repelled the incoming projectile with another one of his own. Everyone turned their eyes towards them. All assistants' hands left their pockets, tensing.

Niji: Micci, are you all right?! – as Niji circled Miji with her arms, she noticed her pale face.

Omo: The Lords of that corner better stop now, unless you want the might of the Bluemoon family to befall you! – she squinted her eyes. – Do the Camellias not know how to behave without making a scandal wherever they go? I made it clear that no violence would be tolerated. Pick your retainers and leave. That also goes for the Coiledthreads.

Comentado [UdW127]: I thought of closing with a “!”, but that would indicate emotion, and I prefer that Omo's character stays more cold, at least for the beginning of the story (and especially on a situation where a bunch of strangers could see her anger)

A woman came out of the multitude, her face painted with anguish. She and Micci exchanged glances for a second, in a mix of emotions they had no time to express. The woman turned to a man that stood with her group.

Windia: I hope you have an explanation for this, Lord Lemat.

Comentado [UdW128]: Lemat comes from Le Mat (from French, the madman, because who does what this dude did in the Bluemoon house)

After the Coiledthreads left, Theace apologized for the inconveniences and left with his entourage through a lateral entrance door. Once outside, they advanced in silence, wary of any possible ambush, until they arrived at Rose's terrain. Before they arrived at their residence, Micci stopped for a moment. Her hands trembled.

Micci: My lady, Lord Theace, I... I haven't told them anything. I swear I haven't.

Theace saw in her daughter's eyes anger and frustration for what happened, but also a saddened compassion towards the anguished Retainer. He made a signal at Blacksnow to guard them from afar, and give them some privacy to take in that night.

11.

The dawn to a new Scry match arrived. As Niji came out, dressed for the ceremony, she encountered Kas, who had been waiting for her.

Kas: Lady Niji... I know it may be selfish on my part to ask of this, but... You see, your opponent today is from the Sandcloud clan and... That's the one my family's guild is contracted by. It would be mostly unfortunate if that relation got affected if you were to win... Of course I'm not asking my Lord to lose! But... It would certainly bring many peace to my heart if you let me stay out of it for once.

4th game (var: HunterApproval = true if Kas is not brought to battle)

if (Niji has won all games up until now) {

Niji welcomed the fresh air blowing outside the Temple. Intending to return home, a man in a baggy skirt stood in front of her. His long hair and intelligent eyes made his' an unmistakable face to Niji: Astro Karanamudra, leader of the Mudra faction.

Astro: Lady Camellia. Lord Theace. I would like to speak to you privately, if it isn't too much of an inconvenience.

Niji's father agreed, making their Retainers wait further from where they were.

Astro: I will be brief. Your daughter has impressed me, not only on her Scry performance, but more importantly, on what occurred at the Bluemoon's residence. I belief she might be the one person I've been looking for in all these years.

The two Camellias felt unease at hearing such benevolent words from a Lord of the status of Astro. He continued, with his calming voice.

Astro: Seeing how scarce this chance is, I propose you a pre-alliance. A sort of testing period. Without entering into many details, I need a powerful ally who I can trust. Your daughter seems a maiden of pure heart, and your position is desperate enough to consider taking a fully aggressive playstyle with the competition.

Theace: Lord Astro, as renowned as you are, no Lord is such a Good Samaritan. While it's true an alliance with the prestigious Mudras would make us rise, it's difficult to believe in words of empty benevolence. What do you want?

Astro: ... I suppose the answer is "your retainers". I'll be frank: I don't like the spurt of influence the Bluemoon's have had. The parties they have been hosting have granted them many supporters. Were it not for the dispute between your family and theirs, the Roses could have joined, and they might have gained enough influence to grant themselves a chance at becoming the first **Supreme Lord**. That means the Bluemoons are bad news for my plans, so I need an ally. Making a small family like yours grow isn't complicated for me, and I need more firepower than my own Retainers. You are not wrong in thinking I'm acting to my benefit, but that doesn't mean I'm acting against your interests.

Comentado [UdW129]: There is a desired position of power that no one has been able to reach. The player doesn't need any more than this to understand what will be coming

Theace: Such convenience is scarier than a threat, I must say. Were we in a more equal position, we would take your offer. But we are still gasping for air, so I'm afraid we must decline.

if (Accept offer; var AstroAlly = true) {

Niji: I must oppose your words of wisdom, father.

Theace: ... Niji. – he stopped for a moment, thinking of the best words to convince his daughter. – I beg of you, do not rush this out of emotion.

Niji: ... I may be doing so, but we need growth. A chance to obtain such strength may never come again. Father, we must be able to change things. To be able to fend for ourselves. And... It may be naïve of me to say so, but I trust Lord Astro. He may be the only other Lord I'm willing to cooperate with, so I couldn't be any more thankful for you offer today. I trust my father's believe in my Scry skills, so I'm sure I won't disappoint you, milord.

Niji offered a polite hand sign of agreement, which Astro returned with please.

}

else (Decline; var AstroAlly = false) {

Niji: Father speaks sensible words if any were ever spoken. 'Tis an honor to have the chance to speak with someone of your caliber, my lord, but we ought to leave.

Comentado [UdW130]: Cowboy samurai music starts playing in the background... If anyone got this reference, chapeau

Astro: ... I hope our paths meet again on a luckier day, then.

}

}

12.

Niji and her father were assisting their Retainers with the garden maintenance, throughout the small parcel around the main house. It was then that a messenger from the Roses approached Theace.

Comentado [UdW131]: Because they are so lacking in Retainers that they have to help with it. This is a major factor of why they relate more to them than traditional Lords do

Theace: Micci, come here! You too, Niji, there's someone waiting for you.

They made their way back to the main hall of the Camellia's residence. There, a woman waited for Niji, patiently sitting on her knees. She made a welcoming hand sign, as Micci approached her to put her under the influx of emotion-waves. They were comfortable, the feeling of being warmed by blankets on a winter night, but it was enough to minimize the damage of any surprise attack that she might want to pull off with her own emotion-waves.

Comentado [UdW132]: When one is receiving emotion-waves they can't use theirs at full strength. It's not even plot relevant (I think), but it's good to expand on lore and worldbuilding from time to time

Windia: I have come to express my gratefulness towards Lady Camellia for helping Micci at the Bluemoon's house. I know her transfer from our family to yours was an undesirable anomaly, and I'm glad to know she ended up in a better place.

Niji: Those are very kind words, Lady Windia, and yet I wonder why that incident occurred when Micci is no more your Retainer.

Windia: Yes, that's also part of why I've come here. First of all, to apologize for it. But more importantly, I want to give you a word of warning. The Coiledthread are getting nervous at the Bluemoons' rise, and they are trying to step up no matter how. That is why, please, be weary of them.

Comentado [UdW133]: Sir, I don't know what you've heard, but whatever it is, Jefferson started it! ... Thomas Jefferson resigned this morning...

Theace: I am well aware of how close your relation with Micci was in the past, so I trust there is truth in your words. To demonstrate our gratefulness, I'll give some advice myself: you are a member of the Coiledthread. As much as we appreciate your gesture, it may not be on your best interest to warn us.

Windia: ... You are certainly right, milord. Even then... I'm sure you remember the time when I married into the family. By then, things were different. Better. If going against my own is what I have to do get those times back, so be it.

if (Neutral option; var WindiaAlly = false) {

Niji: I hope to see your efforts come to fruition. And again, thanks for paying us a visit. We are honored that you remembered us.

}

if (Offer help; var WindiaAlly = true) {

Niji: Do not fret to ask my help if troubled, Lady Windia: though a small family, the friends of my friends are mine too.

}

13.

News of possibly receiving a new Retainer into the household in the following days kept Niji playing proto-Scry with Blacksnow and Micci late into the night.

Blacksnow: I will never understand what is fun about defeating an old man again and again. You should find yourself a better practice partner.

Niji: You didn't sacrifice the blacksmith. It would have given you a better chance of victory, but you didn't. I had never seen you do that before we started assisting at the Scry Temple, you know? – Blacksnow rolled his eyes, as if Niji was trying to apply an inexistent logic to his decision. – That makes it still fun to play with you. You do suck, though. Micci, another rematch?

As they kept playing, the more tired their bodies grew, until a satisfied Niji decided to end the session. Blacksnow would stay as guard outside the door, as always,

Comentado [UdW134]: Leaving aside that yeah, he didn't sacrifice the blacksmith, because his father was a blacksmith that sacrificed him and all the Freudian bullshit you want, I especially like this line because it reflects the nature of game as a way to explore facets of ourselves. Blacksnow became more empathic with the pieces he controlled, because he has been one of those pieces, and has risked losing a part of himself for a decision outside of his control

but being as late as it was, Niji asked Blacksnow to escort Micci to the main building's entrance.

Blacksnow: Then you ought to come as well. I'm your guard, after all, can't leave you alone.

The flowers were but a fuzzy stain in the dark night, so the three of them made sure to circle the house from a distance to avoid stepping on them. Once they reached the main stairs, they saw Micci off to go back to Niji's room-house.

Niji: I wish I could live in the main house. It would be much more comfortable.

Blacksnow: And it would also affect your health severely. I already worry enough having to see you go up and down the stairs of the Scry Temple every week.

Niji: ... At least the Roses could have given us resources to make it bigger. I live like a **caged bird**. But you are right, sorry to have... – Niji squinted her eyes. – Em, we didn't leave the door open when we left, did we?

Comentado [UdW135]: Both physically and metaphorically

They didn't. Blacksnow got in front of her, signaling to stay alert. They silently sneaked towards the door and peeked inside. A boy was rummaging everywhere, messing the ordered room. His hair was dirty and uncut. His arms were even thinner than Niji's, as if the bones were only covered by a thin skin. Not older than eighteen, his hands trembled as they picked every shiny thing they found, and crammed it inside his pockets. All of a sudden, a hand pulled Niji back.

Agaricals: Point your hands at the big guy!

Comentado [UdW136]: The order from which the Hebeloma genre is part of. Read the following(s?) comment and it'll make sense

With a knife over her neck, Niji obeyed. Blacksnow froze as he saw the creepy old man pull his Lord out of reach.

Agaricals: **Hebeloma!** Get the fuck out of there! – he said keeping a low voice but in a shout-like manner.

Comentado [UdW137]: Hebeloma syrjense, a type of fungus that has been observed to grow on corpses due to its high needs of nitrogen. Obviously referencing the parasitic nature that Trash are forced to undergo due to society treating them like shit

The kid got out, startled by Blacksnow immense figure, then running behind his father. The thief dangled the knife over Niji's neck, but she kept silent.

Agaricals: Heh, Lords are no fun to play with. **Them and their stupid, handy memories**... Don't try to follow us!

Comentado [UdW138]: The thing is that Niji can't use memories on herself (or on anyone) so she's just that good under pressure

The thief kicked Niji to the ground and left, running together with his son into the darkness. Being close to the roads that conducted outside the fortified walls of the Lord's domains, Blacksnow prioritized checking on Niji's state before trying to mobilize anyone to begin a chase.

14.

On the following morning, Niji went to explain the incident to her father. After hearing it, he asked Blacksnow to leave the room, and instead called Micci to come. The Retainer's face paled as she was informed of what happened.

Theace: I have no idea how those two managed to sneak into our domains, but I will be informing of this to the Roses, see if I can pull off a permission to get reinforced security before rumors spread to unwanted ears. However, there's a detail I'm worried about. I will talk about this with Blacksnow later, but for what I've been told, the attackers were most likely Trash. Proof of it is that they were stealing and caused no harm to Niji. That means Niji's life, a Lord's life, was at the hands of a nobody. Say, isn't there something weird on that sentence?

Micci: Uhm, Lords tend to be very well protected, but we...

Theace: No, no, not that. Think, why wouldn't the people that live in this **forsaken land in the middle of the sea** offer to become Retainers, instead of ganging up on the Lords, taking our luxuries?

Comentado [UdW139]: I managed to diegetically say that this all occurs in a solitary island without needing a whole scene to bring it up! Yay!

Micci: ... Well, of course, being a Lord means access to enhanced memories, which outclass base memories... But in this case, Lady Niji was taken by surprise and...

Theace: Even then, the first thing kids learn is that we are powerful. That's why we need no armor, our fingers speak of our strength. No matter how you look at it, what has occurred makes Niji look weak. And we cannot allow ourselves that. From now on, the official version will be that we were attacked by Lord's assassins. Two specialized murderers whom we couldn't identify. And one more thing. From now on, you'll sleep in the same room as Niji.

Both girls were surprised by that announcement.

Micci: Milord, doesn't Blacksnow guard her already?

Theace: His is a delicate situation. He might be imposing, but he doesn't have it in him to kill others. And what I fear are not petty thieves again. It's certain families' actions, especially as Niji becomes more renowned as a Scry player.

Micci: Milord, you know I'll follow your orders, but... Wouldn't it be more effective then to teach Lady Niji to use her emotion-waves? I could do that if the problem is a lack of a trainer.

A cold silence invaded the room. Niji's father walked around the room, checking through the doors that no one was listening through the walls. He then returned to the center of the room, sitting very close to Micci, whispering his words.

Theace: She can't use emotion-waves.

Despite not hearing her father words, Niji's heart shrunk. Theace stood up and went back to his place.

Theace: You can imagine what would happen if others knew, and confronted her. That's why she doesn't attend any event. That's her illness. The only reason I'm telling you this is so that if the worse was to happen, you have to pull her out of it by your own strength, and yours alone. Her mother left to protect that secret. It's imperative you take it to the grave. Now please, leave, both of you, prepare the room for Micci to reside there, do whatever you have to.

Theace watched the two girls disappear behind the doors. Alone in silence, his heart beat uncomfortably loud. From there on, he could only wish **he had taken the right choice.**

15.

The incident had become the talk of the town, to the point that it was included to be one of the topics that would be discussed in the Reunion of Leaders of that

Comentado [UdW140]: Even if Micci was a Retainer with a huge reputation about her loyalty, imagine telling someone the secret that made your wife go live in literal trash. Or imagine having you bodyguards think that the person they have to protect is extremely strong, when they are completely defenseless. What a fun dilemma

month. People couldn't shut their mouths about it, even as they moved away from Niji's path, as she and her companions advanced towards the Scry Temple, as if they were to bring ill-fortune of some kind.

Theace: Your opponent today is quite low on the ranking, but don't let your guard down. Still, it would be wise to take this chance to increase trust with your Retainers.

Comentado [UdW141]: Theace wisely advising you to farm some experience, because you may want some levels before what is to come

5th game

Theace: With this taken care of, we can ready ourselves for your first monthly reunion: I shall explain you a couple of things about the leader of the Coiledthreads. It seems Windia was right, after all...

16.

The days had past until the appointed Sunday arrived. Niji dressed with the more Lord-like clothes she had while gulping down her umpteenth cup of valerian root tea. Since it was a Reunion of Leaders, she had to go alone. No advisors, no help if things got out of control. On her first assistance to the summoning. Drinking something a bit stronger seemed an interesting consideration. She opted for another cup of tea.

Comentado [UdW142]: Which is not a lot. But don't worry, it won't be sexualized, because we love and respect best girl Niji :D

Comentado [UdW143]: A relaxing beverage. Denotes that she is nervous. Pretty self-explanatory

Determined to drop the scaredy-cat attitude, she left her house after repeating the various instructions her father had been giving her the last four days, half of which had high chances of being ignored.

The reunion was, as always, inside the Scry Temple, neutral ground for all families. Many people whom Niji didn't know were already at the outside gardens, but luckily she found Astro early on, and latched onto him until the reunion started. A tall man with a long ponytail gave the sign for everyone to go to their places: the lead of that reunion, Iso Coiledthread. Ceremoniously, each one sat to their place.

Comentado [UdW144]: I just realized Astro also has long hair. Iso does. Oukan does. Niji does. Windia does. I haven't pictured Omo with it, but maybe. It just gives way more visual strength to have a bunch of hair waving to the wind

First topic: shipwreck of the main fishing ships from Bluesalt Town. Iso proposed sending a couple of carpenters from the capital to be employed as assistants to the shipwrights. No one opposed, thus the measure was considered approved. Second topic: there had been an increase of rabbits at the western forests of the island. Iso proposed mobilizing some hunters from the capital to the outskirts to care of that. The representative from the Sava family opposed, arguing the towns from the area should be the ones doing the hunting to offer those preys to the Lords, or else they would lack resources to pay the local Joy Shops, thus risking dissatisfaction from them. Ten minutes of arguing later, the outcome was voted. Since it got over 50% approval rate, the measure passed.

Comentado [UdW145]: And if you've paid attention, when Kas leaves, you'll remember this happened and everything will seem very organic and logical

Comentado [UdW146]: 1. Showcases how their democracy works
2. Shows they actually do politics, even if very simple ones
3. It's not going to advance the plot, but that's what I want: you feel bored, then Niji feels bored (empathy), then Iso says this is boring, and uses that feeling to construct on his point. Long story short, I want the player to understand, at the lowest scale possible, why Lords were prone to agree with such an extreme measure

Niji fervently desired to be shot with some kind of emotion-waves that would ease the insufferable pain in the ass that was sitting down there without anything to say for hours. Even with the regular breaks they took, her legs hurt and her moral was under ground level. It was going dark when the head of the reunion decided to bring a delicate topic onto the table.

Comentado [UdW147]: This has to be the most relatable thing Niji has done yet

Iso: As you all know, almost a week ago, Lady Niji Camellia, from the Roses clan, was attacked by two mysterious figures. It was reported to be a failed attempt at assassination. I will hear all opinions, but first I would like to give the floor to the newcomer herself.

After a practiced speech of how the two murderous figures ferociously attacked her, and how her loyal and competent Retainers heroically repelled their vile intents, Quo offered to stablish two guard posts close to the Camellia's residence.

Astro: If I may give a word of advice to our young lady here, I would investigate that bulky man who always follows you. The one who smells of Trash scum. They tend to have a big mouth.

Comentado [UdW148]: No, smells of classism. Serves to give insight on his character... I will admit it could have been more smoothly implemented, though

Many voices agreed with his observation.

Iso: Lord Astro, I believe this is not the moment for accusations, and even less ones with such poor back-up.

Astro snorted, standing up to speak clearly.

Astro: What is poor, Lord Iso, is making us waste our time in internal squabbles and pointless topics. I didn't expect you would make a joke of this gathering when you asked to be head of it.

The words rang true for many of the Lords, who pierced Iso with their glances.

Iso: ... As much as I understand the complaint, what we have been discussing is far from pointless. As you can imagine, I didn't include this topic on today's reunion to discuss the internal matters of the Roses. Neither it is to find a culprit who has left no clear evidence to follow. I want to make a point. We have been discussing quarrels between Lords since the sun reached its peak. And so I ask,

isn't that proof that we need a better organization? Someone who takes the reigns of the capital and manages the conflicts between families responsibly once and for all?

An uproar followed his words, which Iso took without blinking. As the crowd calmed down, Omo stood up.

Omo: Before our grandfathers were born, it was already known that the title of Supreme Lord would only be given to that who proved their worth by obtaining all points on the Scry yearly competition, a showcase of mental and social prowess. A solution to keep balance and avoid a massacre between Lords. Someone who speaks of breaking the oldest of courtesy rules is asking for an early death.

The crowd agreed.

Iso: Pretty words until you realize the one spewing them is Omo Bluemoon, a viper that has been coercing the smaller and weaker families into obtaining some mediocre memories, that come from who knows where, in exchange for their complete retirement from the Scry competition. You are getting closer to become Supreme Lord by deceive and cunning, which is to me even more outrageous. I propose a fair competition between all families to elect a competent governor that brings stability to the capital.

Suddenly, the reaction wasn't so unanimous. For small families with little chances to oppose other Lords, this seemed like a gold opportunity.

Iso: Let me go into more detail of my proposition. It's important we all vote on the same terms if we have to approve this. The winner gets absolute authority for a year. Every family will put all staff at their disposition, and the situation and actions of such servants will be dictated by the Supreme Lord. To elect the winner, we will organize a tournament with random distribution, under the same rules as conventional Scry. Losing means getting expelled from the tournament. Finally, both during the celebration of such tournament and during the year of governing of the Supreme Lord, the Scry competition will be maintained to avoid destabilizing Joy Shops. That's all.

Everyone smelled how much of a bad idea it was, but the sweet fantasy of winning kept their mouths shut.

Comentado [UdW149]: TOURNAMENT ARC!! Okay, in all seriousness, I have conflicting feelings about this, because in one way, it's not your conventional tournament in the sense that it does have huge consequences for the world, it's not just a "I want to become stronger" scenario. But at the same time, it seems very trope-based and unoriginal. The thing is, I wanted to do various things, and the most convenient and logical way to justify them was doing a tournament. I even gave a completely reasoned explanation on why Iso decided to take this approach as a safe way to power, so it makes sense in-world :)3

Quo: What is the limit of family participation?

Iso: All families will participate.

Quo: ... Then you have my support.

Slowly, many voices started giving their support as well. Just with three quarters of the Rose's approval, Iso had won a twenty per cent of the votes.

Iso: Oh, I almost forgot. This is important. Oukan Cigne doesn't have the right to participate. Her prodigious capabilities at Scry are a result of sheer talent, unrelated to her political capabilities.

Oukan: That's an oddly convenient explanation. Smells like fear.

Iso: Say what you will, I don't need your vote if I get to the fifty-one per cent. Anyone against prohibiting the Cigne's head participation?

Of course, no one opposed to removing the biggest threat from the picture. Oukan's face displayed frustration for a second, before resigning to it, laying on her seat and taking a nap for the rest of the reunion.

Astro: I vote against this proposition. It is unbalanced, clearly giving more opportunities to the big families of this generation. It goes against the principles of the Scry competition of breeding a family with values capable of maintaining their dominance long enough to reach the hundred per cent. This is a cheap bypass out of power hunger. Anyone who agrees is dooming us all.

All the Mudra factions began to vote against it as well, as some other minor factions started to do.

Omo: I approve it. And anyone who votes otherwise will be excluded from assisting at the Bluemoon's parties.

Comentado [UdW150]: Omo only had so many years to secure power before Oukan ran out of memories to enhance and re-entered the competition, so even if it isn't ideal, it's still a good deal for her

The avalanche of negative votes stopped under an ominous silence. Indecisively, some started to change their vote: small families, too afraid of losing the position they could pretend to have with Omo's influx of gifted memories. When the majority was reached, Iso concluded the reunion with a smile.

Iso: When the celebrations of **The First Scry Duel** begin, you will all receive the formal announcement. Look forward to it.

Comentado [UdW151]: The day in which the beginning of the system sustained by Scry is commemorated, Iso wants to begin his plan to destroy it. Cute (you've probably heard of me, I'm Lute (that's a really dark reference))

He stood up and left under the nervous gaze of the rest of assistants. They looked to each other, resigned with the results, slowly returning each to their house. Niji felt like puking. It was in her best interest to return home as soon as possible.

if (player had interacted with Astro) {

Astro: Would you mind if I accompanied you home?

Niji: ... Sure.

Astro: Things have taken a turn for worse since the last time we spoke.

Niji: Yeah, can't believe we have given that **dickhead** what he wanted.

Comentado [UdW152]: Niji the underground lass

Astro: ... That's a way to put it, yes. At this point we can only play their game and try to win. And since things have come to be this serious, I'm sure you would appreciate my support more than ever. Especially to not repeat what happened the other night.

if (AstroAlly == false) {

Niji: I thought I made it clear last time, Lord Astro. Your presence outshines ours so much it could only be considered a temerity to try standing at your side.

Astro: Cut the irony, Camellia. It's hard to find gutsy Lords who aren't balls full of ego. You could say I'm desperate.

if (Accept offer; var AstroAlly = true) {

Niji: ... Father is not going to like this. But, given the situation, I may appreciate help. Just don't think I will do anything you ask me to.

Astro: That's the attitude I wanted to see. And don't you worry about any petition, for now it's enough that you grow stronger. As long as you agree, I'll simply try to give you some protection, like good friends.

}

if (Decline offer) {

Astro: ... So be it. Take care and good luck, Lady Camellia.

}

}

if (AstroAlly == true) {

Astro: For that, though, I must ask you a very important question: – Astro's expression turned much more serious – the Trash you have under your service. I don't know how powerful his memories may be, but nothing good comes from having one of them in your household. If I offered my help to get rid of him, what would you say?

Comentado [UdW153]: Giving some serious KKK vibes, but I swear Astro is actually kind of a good boi

if (Agree: var BlacksnowBetrayal = true) {

Astro: Great. I'm glad we have made things clear. Until we cross paths again, Camellia.

}

Comentado [UdW154]: I love this, because Iso really does hate Trash. But even if he does, he doesn't want to, and even if he wants Niji to watch out for them, he doesn't want to team up with someone who would get rid of their Retainers for the promise of power, even if those are Trash. Human essence in a nutshell

if (Disagree: var BlacksnowBetrayal = false) {

Astro: .. Have you never heard of Astro's Liar?

Niji: No. But whatever your personal experiences are, they don't apply to Blacksnow, I'm sure. I've also had... contact with people from outside. And most of them are great people.

Astro: They pretend because you are a Lord.

Niji: Then Blacksnow is different.

Astro: ... You'll grow up some day. Nonetheless, while you are still young of mind, it will be a pleasure to support you. Call it alliance, call it trust. Call it nostalgia if you will. Just keep progressing, Niji. And keep watching. I'm sure the day will arrive when you stand up for my cause by your own decision. You have that noble spirit, after all.

Comentado [UdW155]: He clearly doesn't refer to her being mentally capable, but of her naivety, young in the sense of inexperienced

Comentado [UdW156]: Because he used to be like that. Nice foreshadowing for when you get him as a unit

Astro bid farewell as he walked away with relaxed pace, whistling a happy tune.

}
}
}

Lord's rampage

17.

At Theace's indications, all of Niji's Retainers came together at the gardens outside of the house's family. There, a Theace with noticeable eye bags left out an unsatisfied sigh.

Theace: ... I guess there isn't much point in extending this. Niji, and everyone else, last night came the announcement for both the Scry match and the Scry Tournament. For the second, we are facing a mid-level player from the Regina's Lance clan. But in the Scry match... We are going up against Iso Coiledthread.

Niji squinted her eyes as all gazes moved towards her.

Niji: He wasn't in the game when Oukan won That match, was he? I did not pay much attention to what came after that... Can you give me some numbers?

Comentado [UdW157]: Foreshadow of Oukan's "It Was The Year 776"

Theace: He's certainly young, but for what I've seen of him, he must be around the fourth or fifth best player out there. Although except for Oukan, the ten best players are around the same level, so it's hard to say.

Niji crossed her arms. Beating such a high level player was enthralling, but her chances weren't good enough to justify accepting the battle. Then again, the skill ceiling meant there would never be a guarantee when playing against the top competition.

Theace: Luckily I also have good news. Very good indeed.

He raised his hand and made a signal for two guys who were waiting at the shade to come. One of them waked with crutches, with the other following his slower pace. Micci muttered some intelligible words of surprise that Niji didn't grasp. Theace urged them to present themselves, beginning with the guy with the crutches.

Comentado [UdW158]: Micci knows Batten. Of course she does, she is the Super Retainer. She knows all Lords, and affiliations, and that kind of things

Batten: It is a pleasure to meet you all. I am a Lord from the Cigne house, Batten Cigne, and I'll be under your care for a while. I hope we fulfil an enhancement process that forges a prosperous future for both our houses.

Comentado [UdW159]: Makes me want to pat him in the head

Everyone stood in awe at the realization they were looking at Oukan's brother.

Dwale: Um, yeah, guess it's my turn then. The name's Dwale, I'm a Traveler, have been so for 11 years. I've come to relax a bit from all the adventuring and stuff. I'm respectably good at many things, but if I have to put my finger on my specialty, that would be killing. Been told I would work as bodyguard, aye?

Theace: Indeed. Blacksnow will stay guarding Niji's place, while Dwale will patrol the outside perimeter of our house.

Niji: ... That's great, and I'm certainly honored to have two more people to take under our care, but that only extends our margin for error. Isn't it wiser to surrender against Iso rather than risking any memories?

Theace: That seems the case. However, this can also be seen as a gold chance: we won't win, but we also won't lose. I believe you are well acquainted with Lord Astro's approach, don't you?

Niji cracked a smile when realizing what he meant. Despite the Mudras' high reputation, Astro consistently ends off the top of the leaderboards. That is because in almost all of his matches, he brings retainers without memories, which makes them substantially weaker, and instead enhances their memories via naturally growing trust, elongating the usual period of 2-3 months up to around a year. Despite the huge difference of time investment, it's seen with fascination

the high rate of successful enhancements he achieves, which is why people call him the Mudra Miracle. However, since no one has been capable of replicating that approach without going bankrupt with the Joy Shops, it is seen as a useless tactic, since it only hinders the Scry player.

Comentado [UdW160]: This is exposition heavy, yes, but I want to make it really, really clear to the player that they should prepare if they want to go against Iso. Because he is going to be really strong, too much for the level of the player at this point of the game

Theace: Of course, that means no memory will progress on its enhancement, so it will be a lost week. Something unadvisable now that this ridiculous tournament has been kicked off. We will later go check the data of his matches from the last years, but I doubt we will find anything meaningful. Nonetheless, if you think you have something on your hands, it would be a significant boost to the Camellias to have beaten the organizer of this whole mess. The decision is yours. In any case, it would be only proper to take care of our new companions here. Lord Batten, Dwale, please, follow us to the Scry Temple to do the memory extraction.

18.

Once there, the four of them went to the center of the room, where they lifted the widest wood plank, under which multiple metallic spheres were being stored. Niji got ready to begin the process, swinging her hands to relax. Moving her fingertips closer to each other, a small net of unstable sparks formed between them. Despite Dwale's clear distrust of it, Niji moved her hands towards his head, closing her eyes. She still felt wobbly when joining the circuits of someone else. After some time to find the right path to Dwale's memories, she extended her net, and then slowly pulled the memories out. Six scintillating bulbs came out, which Niji held as Theace wrote down their sizes and color pattern. He then encapsulated four of them in four different metal spheres.

Comentado [UdW161]: Beautiful Word ahead

Comentado [UdW162]: Exposition on how the memory extraction process works, yes, but also it serves as a set-up for when it's Batten's turn, to exalt how good his are

Once done, Niji put back the other two inside Dwale's memory trail. Right after, it was Batten's turn. Niji repeated the process, and again, Theace took notes of it. He then stopped. There was one memory that stood out among the others. His hands trembled as he carefully separated it from the others and stored into the correspondent sphere.

Comentado [UdW163]: Clear message to the player: Batten is good. Use Batten. He will be important for a certain moment of the plot

Niji: Is there anything concerning, father?

After taking care of the other seven, of which only two more were harvested, Theace pulled out the first one he encapsulated.

Theace: See how many colors flow through the orb? And how fast they spin? That indicates a lot of emotional charge. This is probably the best memory I've ever seen. It's a real treasure. Tell me, Lord Batten, did your sister know of this?

Comentado [UdW164]: Some more exposition of what memories look like, and how they are classified with that information

Batten: In all truth... It's complicated to assure since I can't recall the memory anymore, but Sister was the one who recommended me to apply to your household. She said it would be more exciting that way.

Comentado [UdW165]: More context to expand the many layers of complexity that I put to the memory extraction process. Which... Maybe not necessary... But whatever...

Niji: ... With all due respect, your sister's a bit freaky.

Comentado [UdW166]: But that's why we love her! :D

Batten: I know... – he smiled awkwardly. – But as her brother, I wouldn't want it otherwise.

Comentado [UdW167]: References (unconsciously) Oukan's words about his worth for her being in him as a brother

Dwale: And what about me? Any cool traveler memory worth marveling about?

Theace: They are real good, Dwale, no need to get jealous over a kid. For now, escort Lord Batten to the Cigne's residence, then you can go rest. We will stay here and check the matches' archives.

19.

Within all the preparations for the Scry match, the Tournament game's day arrived. As usual, Theace was giving some last minute advice.

Theace: For now, forget about Iso's match. Today we just have to win this one. Are you feeling...?

Dwale: Ehm, Lord Theace does that girl have anything to do with the small fry we are going up against? 'Cause I'm pretty sure she's following us.

Theace fulminated Dwale with his gaze for interrupting him, but as he looked where he was indicating (as so did the others), the girl that covered her face with a wide straw hat lifted it up for a moment, revealing to be Oukan, made a double thumbs-up sign, and run away. Everyone turned towards Batten, who had closed his eyes as if that could disperse his public shame. Dwale put a hand on Batten's shoulders.

Comentado [UdW168]: Eyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyy

Dwale: As a big brother myself, I'm sorry.

The group faced forward again and entered the temple. Theace's preoccupations evaporated at Niji's failed attempt to hide her smile.

Comentado [UdW169]: Picturing this scene may have slightly broken me, which is weird because I don't get emotional about shit I write, because it's bad, but this was an oof for me. Like, I was just trying to introduce the next Scry match coming from a serious tone, and suddenly there's this cheesy, heart-warming chill moment where Niji gets to, I don't, be happy for once

6th game

20.

As Niji left the building she noticed a gray stain on the wall; a huge marble plate had been posted, containing the names of each participant in the Scry Tournament. Many were already crossed out from the brackets. Niji hurried home to get more practice in, but in the way there, she noticed Windia watching over the Lord's terrains. Niji looked back. Micci had also noticed.

Niji: Do you want to go?

Micci: ... It would be most improper to converse with my previous Lord, even with your permission.

Niji shrugged her shoulders and walked there.

Niji: Is everything alright?

Windia: It is.

Niji assented and turned around to take her leave.

Comentado [UdW170]: Characterization: she has no social clues

Windia: Have you... ever been outside? In the city?

Comentado [UdW171]: Seed for a later conversation with Blacksnow, which in turn will serve as a way to propel Niji's determination, together with the thieves' incident. Also, the scene is trying to imply that Windia has been outside for the first time, foreshadowing a greater disposition of action because of the impact it has caused on her

Niji denied with her head. The Coiledthread Lord went back to staring at the townscape while silently nodding.

21.

A day before the big match, Iso Coiledthread entered the Camellia's household, meeting Dwale face to face.

Comentado [UdW172]: Negotiate a peace, or negotiate a time and place

Iso: Call your Lord. Tell her that Iso Coiledthread is knocking on her door.

Comentado [UdW173]: Denotes superiority and arrogance

Without giving his back, Dwale called for Theace, who arrived in clear distress.

Iso: I have certainly called for the Camellia's Lord, not this decrepit relic.

Theace: She's busy preparing for your match. Shouldn't you be doing the same?

Iso: No need to be so hostile, I'm not planning on getting exiled for killing a couple of worthless Lords. I just want to talk. If you feel like having a little brawl, thought, I don't mind. Do under your own risk.

Comentado [UdW174]: Narcissistic son of a bitch

Comentado [UdW175]: Important information: killing people gets you exiled. It's the reason why he doesn't do it more

Theace: ... Fine. Just know that exile is a price I'm willing to pay. Dwale, go inform Niji.

Dwale: ... Maybe you should be the one going? Niji doesn't need my shaky explanations, but I can deal with anything this shithead throws at me.

Theace: ... You are right. Bring him, but take your time. And keep a close eye on him.

After a short run, Theace arrived at Niji's room. There, under Micci and Blacksnow's supervision, the young Lord was writing down team combinations and possible efficient strategies under specific scenarios. Theace interrupted them to explain the situation and hurried Niji into getting prepared for Iso's arrival.

Comentado [UdW176]: Autistic brothers, rejoice. At this point, I don't even know if this is a reference, or a joke, or science. But anyway, Niji is a good student, that's the point of this commentary

Niji: Micci, you should leave.

Micci: Milady, it would be inappropriate for me to...

Niji: Please. I don't want to get you involved in any more trouble with the Coiledthread.

Micci: ... Thanks.

As Micci left, Niji calmly put some order to the room. Soon after, Iso arrived. He glanced over the room walls, looked at the cramped room and made a face at the small place Niji offered for him to sit on.

Comentado [UdW177]: Because he will send an assassin later. I know, my brain is too big. Bow down to me, Robert McKee

Niji: Excuse the inconvenience, but I could only prepare a better seat if I had been warned with more time. In any case, I've heard you wanted to talk to me.

Iso: Precisely. As participants of the on-going competition, we both know how much of a threat the Bluemoons are. Unfortunately, even to me. It is, however, far from an insurmountable obstacle; that strength only comes from Oukan Cigne's support.

Comentado [UdW178]: What follows is Iso trying to set-up an emotional reaction from Niji to see how close she is with Batten, to predict how far until The Memory that can screw him is from being enhanced

Comentado [UdW179]: Is that just another beautiful world there

Niji: Perhaps you are giving too little credit to Lady Omo.

Iso: And you underestimate Oukan. She wasn't named the God of Scry for nothing. I suppose you have never battled against her. I have. Both as a player and as a unit, she is formidable. Her mere presence paralyzes the faint of heart and makes every move seem like an obvious mistake. The Bluemoon is too idiotic to use Oukan at her full potential. She has much, much more in reserve, for sure. Imagine how much of a prodigy she is, that in her own house they say she stole the luck from her brother. And I bet they aren't just talking about the legs: that kid is dead weight to the Cigne's. Had he been born anywhere else, they would have fed him to the pigs.

if (Confront his words, var BattenCare = true)

Niji: If you've come just to sharpen your rotten tongue, I will ask you to leave. I have better things to do.

else (Stay neutral, var BattenCare = false)

Niji: ...

Iso stared at Niji's every face gesture.

Iso: Excuse me, I'm ranting more than necessary. Bad habit of mine. Back to where I was, if we take Oukan down, the Bluemoons go down. And with all the murders that have been occurring lately, I wouldn't be surprised if we managed to gather two or three families willing to ally with our cause.

Niji: ... What murders are you talking about?

Iso: You haven't heard? Huh, I suppose facing me has really kept you busy. I'll leave you to find it out by yourself. What is your answer to my proposal?

Niji: ... If you came thinking I would get my hands dirty for you, you couldn't have been more wrong.

Iso: A shame. I will partake, then. No need to guide me, I already know the way out.

22.

The day had come. An odd calm invaded Niji as she ceremoniously advanced towards the meeting room. Amongst the small crowds of mumbling Lords that had gathered, Astro Karanamudra observed the doors closing behind the Camellia's group, wondering if that day would end in distress. Iso and Niji stood face to face. They made their respective hand signs, sat down, closed their eyes. The match begun.

Comentado [UdW180]: Negotiate a peace or negotiate a time and place (this is what I aspire to, do writing so iconic it gets tied to a common phrase as if that's where it came from)

7th game (in case the player won, IsoDefeatedEarly = true)

if (player opted to follow Astro's strategy and lost) {

Iso stood up outraged, throwing a piece of his ceremonial costume to Niji's face. Expecting a memory massacre, he left without waiting his Retainers. Niji looked at them awkwardly, since they had to leave before her faction could. Among them, one had her gaze fixed on Niji, eyes that felt like piercing needles.

Comentado [UdW181]: Kouzui

}

else if (player opted to fight Iso and lost) {

Iso wildly smiled, satisfied. Not even going to the trouble of handling a piece of his costume to the loser, he rose up fresh like a newborn and patted one of his Retainers.

Comentado [UdW182]: Kouzui

Iso: Let's go home, Kouzui. Things are about to get fun.

}

else if (player opted to fight Iso and won) {

Iso was dumbstruck, paralyzed in place, incapable of processing why Niji left one of her red silk gauntlets on him. That would mean he had lost. Which was, obviously, absurd.

Similar was the reaction of the Lords who had congregated to receive the participants, all looking back and forth between Niji, who couldn't hide the pride in her newly accomplished feat, and the interior of the Scry Temple, where Iso still sat down, incredibly. Astro's laughter busted among the crowd, congratulating Niji for her victory.

On that same afternoon, Quo went to their house to thank their contribution and splendid work. Niji felt like a god. Nonetheless, she knew it was too soon to become complacent. The road was long and arduous.

}

23.

Theace: I've been investigating what Iso said about murders. Corroborating some things with Lady Windia, there has been a total of three successful assassinations and seven failed attempts. And the reason seems to be very clear: all perpetrators where from families who have lost at the Tournament's first round, while all victims were from families who won.

Niji didn't understand. If they were already out of the competition, it made no sense to risk exile for revenge. Theace sighed at having to explain the obvious.

Comentado [UdW183]: Niji = socially inept. In case it wasn't clear

Theace: ... They are being used by winning families who hold power. Probably something like "do it and I will pardon your crimes when I reach power; don't and the family will destroy you". The usual.

if (IsoDefeatedEarly = true) {

Niji: I smell of someone who might want to instigate one of those against me...

}

else {

Niji: So as long as I'm in the competition I'm a possible target...

}

Theace: Indeed. We will have to stay ever so vigilant.

24.

Micci: Milady, are you sure you don't want me to do it?

Niji was sewing a new ceremonial dress, passing the needle through the fabric to make the sleeve's decorations. Since she had been wearing an old dress from her mother's youth, Niji wanted to have another one as soon as possible to preserve the other one **in its best conditions as long as possible**. Because her room was too small, they had moved to the Camellia's house, and were relaxing in a huge wood-covered room, accompanied by the rest of her Retainers. Meanwhile, Theace had gone out to get the announcement of their next opponent.

Comentado [UdW184]: Because her mother is gone. And probably dead. Isn't this script full of happiness and joy?

Niji: It's fine, I'm used to it. I learned from my father when I was a kid, so it's nostalgic to indulge in it from time to time.

Blacksnow: That's Little Niji for you. The Lord who can actually do things by herself.

Kas: Mind your words, Blacksnow.

Blacksnow: Oh. – Blacksnow turned to Batten. – **No offense. But. Still true.**

Comentado [UdW185]: The Bro

Batten: **Non taken. You are right in saying I'm useless. I'm not even competent** at Scry.

Comentado [UdW186]: Me, every time, for everything. Isn't this script full of happiness and joy? :')

Blacksnow had been left with a bad taste in his mouth, so he decidedly walked towards the boy and gave him a headpat with a hand as big as the youngster's head.

Comentado [UdW187]: No one can take this away from me >:3

Blacksnow: No one said you were useless.

Dwale: What, you saying you are not even good at plotting how to bring demise to others for your own benefit? – Dwale yawned as he stretched like a cat. – Disappointed.

Batten: A-actually, there are many Lords who deserve much admiration. They just get obfuscated behind the more prominent figures.

Dwale: Ha! No. Like: no.

Comentado [UdW188]: Pure characterization. Actually, kinda. He's a joker. I love Dwale's character, what can I say. And writing him. I can get the sass from three hours of straight work out

Micci: For your information, Lady Windia is a really good person.

Dwale sat up and looked at Blacksnow.

Dwale: She spoke. To someone who isn't Niji. Out of her own will. – Blacksnow nodded with complicity as Micci rolled her eyes. – I'm not going to do anything more productive than this in the whole month.

Kas: If only that was a joke...

Niji: I think people like Iso are incredible.

Comentado [UdW189]: Let me explain why this last lines:
1. Setting a family tone. This people are comfortable with each other, even though we mostly see them in serious situations
2. Tone: we come from talking about murders, right into a section of very important character development. Give time to breath
At a more specific level of why this line comes out of nowhere. The excuse is that Niji was concentrating on sewing. Yeah well, smokes mirrors. Actually I wanted to somewhat give a conclusion to the sketch with Dwale (wrap up punchline (which also has character development)) before having Niji enter the conversation. In this way I also try to grab the reader attention, because this seems very contradictory with Niji as a character

Everyone shut up.

Niji: Sorry, I was finishing a seam and I... spaced out. ¿Am I late to the conversation?

Micci: Of course not, milady.

Dwale: Just to be on the same note, is it normal, in the capital, to define petulant megalomaniacs as “incredible”?

Niji: Well, I also don't like the guy, but I must admit he is an incredible player. I realized in our match that winning against him wouldn't mean I'm better than him. Only that I had managed to win. And father said there are nine equally good. And Oukan.

Dwale: But you already knew that when you started playing.

Niji: That's what the Niji of a month and a half ago thought. But then I had to take actual decisions. Decisions that affected your lives. And I started to think of what would happen if I left any of you without your most important memories. If I could afford keeping you as Retainers, if I couldn't afford to win. If I could protect you even if managed to win everything... – a dense silence covered the room. – I guess I'm a Lord after all: complaining over my pettiness when I'm the biggest liability.

Blacksnow: Well, that's why we are here. We help you, you help us. Isn't that enough?

Niji: I also thought that. That it was enough. Enough to move forward. But when I played against Iso I realized I was meant to lose, eventually. I'm no genius who can overcome all obstacles.

Comentado [UdW190]: Me being fancy, you are welcome

Kas: You can follow Astro's lead when facing strong opponents, then.

Niji: Astro... He is in a different position. He is a master at Scry, and the leader of his faction, with many subfamilies that support him. I couldn't win anything without using memories, I'm sure. And if I run away from the stronger players I'm putting us at a weaker position.

Dwale: Better that than obsess over power.

Niji: Surely... But now it's different. A way to the top has been created, and I have a chance. The decision was definitive, voted by all Lords. If I win... Maybe I can swing the rest of the Rose's to my side. And with some other votes, they won't be able to revert the results.

Comentado [UdW191]: Player, listen, this will happen. Don't get hyped if you win and then you are kicked out of power anyway

Blacksnow: ... That doesn't sound like something you would have thought.

Niji blushed.

Niji: Most of it, I've been told by father. To be honest, I haven't even thought of what to do if I ever get full power over the Lords, despite it being my main objective right now... I guess, if anything, I would change something to help the people outside our domains, but not sure what.

Blacksnow: ... Those are very noble words, but not ones that you should say aloud. The only thing it will bring is either wasted effort or people trying to predate on your good intentions.

Kas: I'm surprised you are the one saying it.

Blacksnow: You are a Master, and one that spends more time at the forest than in the city. I guess from here I'm the only one who really knows. What about you Dwale? How much you've seen?

Dwale laughed with pleasure.

Dwale: I've seen lots of shit, that's what I've seen! But I guess I haven't been a Trash for long enough to say, so go on.

Blacksnow: Out there, people starve. And when they get enough rations for two, they don't save them, they don't share them, they sell them for cheap memories to forget that they starve. Those that can, try getting accepted by Lords to obtain enhanced memories. As long as there are such things, people will be blinded by them. And as much as I want to see them disappear, no one can break down the basis of our species. So it's pointless.

Comentado [UdW192]: I love how poetic this turned out as a way to summarize the social conflict derived from human's desire for momentary happiness

Batten: I would save those observations for when Lady Niji reaches the top spot. Lord Theace is a man of many solutions after all.

Blacksnow: He is a smart devil, I'll give you that! – he laughed.

Niji: Father also said that, if anything, this tournament brings us the chance to make a name for ourselves, enough to provide a safe place for future Retainers of the Camellia house.

if (Blacksnow has at least a memory left) {

Blacksnow: Like the kid said, resourceful to the bone. I wouldn't mind spending a memory for the ones that will be coming after me.

}

else {

Blacksnow: Like the kid said, resourceful to the bone. I wouldn't have minded spending a memory for the ones that will be coming after me.

}

Niji: And that's the question that worries me right now. How many I have, and how many I can sacrifice. Somewhere within that, there's a line that shouldn't be crossed, but I have no idea where it is.

Dwale: You better not say you are scared, now.

Niji lifted her newly sewed dress. It didn't look as good as the one Theace did for her mother, but it was hers, and she would wear it with pride.

Niji: How could I be with the path that has opened in front of us?

25.

After Niji continued polishing the dress, as the others joked and discussed, Theace entered the room with an unusual smile on his face.

Comentado [UdW193]: Plot twist: the whole dressing thing wasn't just to give Niji some new cool clothes to sell figurines, I was actually trying to make a metaphor, in which the dress is her determination, and how this is sort of the point in which she convinces herself that yes, she ought to go for the win to change society and the conditions her family lives under

Theace: The following week's match was supposed to be against a member of the Sequoyah family. But they have surrendered! I guess fighting Iso was worth something. – Theace recovered his usual composure. – Now, the important one: Tournament fight against Angel "Straight" Darkmoon. She used to have an impressive record, but one of her Retainers suffered a suspicious accident, and since her best unit was lost, she has not excelled much lately. She's lesser than Iso, but still a threat. Somewhat of an advantage we have is that she lost her last Scry match against Quo, and she still has another match before ours, so she may lose some more memories before facing us.

Comentado [UdW194]: Indian tribe chief that created the Cherokee written symbols; it not only references the more intellectual side of the family, but also serves as a reference of times of old, since this family takes their name from their founding leader similar to the Regina's Lance one

Dwale: Sounds jinxed.

Theace: Don't think so. I don't know if it was intentional or not, but Iso's decision to maintain Scry matches while the Tournament was on-going may have been taken precisely for this: pushing other players to have more losses. That way, he had a chance of denting other Lords. Of course, he would also take that risk.

Niji: Either way, new contender means new preparations.

26.

The Camellias, once again, made their way towards the Scry Temple.

Kas: I apologize for having to leave the capital at a time like this. I hope I perform as well as always in this last game.

Comentado [UdW195]: Telling the player that Kas will leave, so if they were going to invest into him, don't

Niji: That's just how it has to be. If anything, I'm sorry I had to make you come to another match before you leave the capital.

Dwale: We'll miss your lack of humor.

Comentado [UdW196]: Is this a hidden fourth wall break because Hunter got not much character development because I needed him more for gameplay reasons of having at least 3 characters instead of for story reasons? Maybe

Kas: The feeling is mutual.

Theace: Let us postpone farewells. It seems that our turn has come.

The Temple's doors opened. Omo came out, hidden behind her mask and cloak. Oukan came behind her, resting her arms on her lord's shoulder and making victory signs to all the Lords who waited to have the fresh news. Behind them, two guards escorted a young girl towards the domain's exit. Another sacrifice to keep the unstoppable streak of victories of the Bluemoon leader.

Suddenly, the girl turned around and outran her escorts, running towards her ex-lord, screaming frustrated gibberish. All the Lords near her run away, raising their fingers to defend themselves if necessary. It was clear her objective. She jumped at the two Lords, both of her index and middle finger tensed, eyes blurred with tears. Oukan's demeanor went from her usual cheery self to a mix of anger and boredom. She lifted the arm she had around Omo's shoulder, closed her hand in a fist, leaving only the index, tensed. Her legs relaxed, air left her lungs, and a cloud of sparks shot towards their assaulter.

The girl felt flat to the ground, convulsed until she faced up, left a long sigh and remained quiet, her eyes fixed on the horizon. For some seconds, the world seemed to stop. Then, the crowd began a short applause.

Comentado [UdW197]: If this isn't iconic imagery, I don't know what is. Picture this animated, slow-motion, some nice and expressive poses. Perfection

Comentado [UdW198]: Non-intentional wry. But now, it's totally intentional

Oukan: You two! – she shouted to the guards. – Do your job better!

They apologized for the trouble and lifted the half-conscious body, resuming their way towards the outsides of the domains. Niji bit her lips.

Theace: Niji, focus! If you don't relax this match may go all wrong.

Niji: I know.

if (Let her rest at the Camellia's house until she wakes up, var Libra = false) {

Niji: Hey, guards! Bring her to the Camellia's household! Guard her until she wakes up! It's an order.

}

else if (Get her under Camellia's protection, var Libra = true) {

Niji turned towards the two man, picking up her pace.

Theace: Niji, don't! – he said following her.

Niji: You said I had to relax. And I don't see a way to regain focus other than helping her.

Dwale: Fuck yeah.

Niji: Guards! Take her to the Camellia household! She is now my Retainer, have I made myself clear?!

Comentado [UdW199]: Serves to both position Niji as a figure to the public who has similar tendencies than Astro, thus people fear what she can do in power, but also allows me to open a door into Bluemoon's private information, like, don't know, the memory practices of Omo

As the two man left to fulfill her instructions, Niji turned around.

}

else (Let her be, var Libra = false) {

Niji: We can't be helping every soul in distress. First I win everything, then I'll worry about fixing things.

}

Her attention went back to her match. Turning her gaze to the Temple's door, she realized Omo had stopped to look at her. She shrunk her shoulders in a mocking manner and turned around.

if (IsoDefeatedEarly = true) {

Iso: How regrettable I had to see the old God of Scry having to deal with the Bluemoon's shallow husk of a retainer.

All Lords turned around. Iso and a girl behind him, the one who acted as Iso's main unit in Niji's match, looked at the Bluemoon group scornfully.

Omo: Can you move out of my way, Lord Coiledthread? You barking is ruining this splendid day.

Iso showed a wide smile. And moved not an inch.

Omo: Spare me your imbecility, Iso. Or do you want a bit of Oukan action too?

Iso: What if I told you that's exactly what I came for.

Omo failed to contain a laugh filled with absurdity.

Omo: I love it when people go out of their way to make my life just that bit better.
Oukan? Mop the floor with his face.

People moved away from the two conflicting forces. Omo pointed her fingers to the girl under Iso's service, and she mirrored the champion's pose, without a sign of hesitation, not for a second, not in her stance, not in her eyes. Iso confidently announced a countdown. When the time came to 0, sparks flew.

Comentado [UdW200]: From generalistic to specific, with style, trying to convey build-up for tension. In my mind this is a cool countdown sequence in which the closer we get to 0, the more the camera zooms into the eyes of the Retainer, but hey, this is written style, not animation

Iso: I hope to see you in the finals, Bluemoon. – he said as he and his Retainer left. – Can't wait until you meet Kouzui on a match.

Omo approached Oukan with a nauseating feeling in her gut. The God of Scry stood in a trance, as if she had been petrified. All the Lords dissipated to their homes. They were not going to get any juicier news than that. Niji and the rest of her group disconcertedly watched as Omo and her Retainer dragged Oukan home. As they disappeared into the distance, the Camellias snapped out of it.

}

Niji slapped herself in the face, looking at the wide room she was about to enter. A new match was about to begin.

8th game

27.

Once the match was over, Niji sat down at the porch of the Temple, taking in the sun.

Theace: Micci was right in saying that there were too many people even for a Bluemoon match. Astro is out of the competition. I've heard he cheated to save

a memory of one of his Retainers, so he has been expelled from playing Scry for a whole month.

Niji didn't want to begin imagining how much four weeks of losses would mean to a family leader. Not to say his disqualification from the Tournament.

if (AstroAlly == true) {

Later that day, Niji received Astro himself at home. Once the pleasantries were done, Astro exposed the reason for his visit.

Astro: I've come to apologize. I promised to form an alliance with your family, and yet, I failed to get past the second round. Nonetheless, I must express that I don't regret what I've done. **Conserving my Retainers' memories was more important than a victory.** ... Even then, it is a pathetic state the one I find myself in.

Comentado [UdW201]: Central theme of Astro: if one is not willing to sacrifice (or has extreme talent), goals get out of reach. Being purely good leads to failures, and one has to either accept that or play more to their interests

Theace: Do not apologize, Lord Astro. Your influence and recognition is more than enough to us; do not think we view our alliance as any lesser.

Niji: Father is right. How could we make any positive change if we couldn't support each other even at bad times? If anything, we should also apologize for not having provided any help. In fact, I would say that we have been useless from the beginning of our alliance.

Astro: No, by any means. I'm the one who acted conceited for being more well-known, and bossed you around. But I've come to see a bit of hope. Maybe we can still make a bit of a difference. And for that, I have to **think what I can help with.** Now, if you excuse me, there's many work to redo.

Comentado [UdW202]: Like... Becoming Niji's Retainer? *wink wink *

}

28.

if (Libra == true) {

By night, the girl whom Niji had taken under her care woke up. Her name was **Libra**, and she had been serving under the Bluemoon's house for three years. Niji made sure she was fine, and that she got served some dishes to calm her hunger.

Comentado [UdW203]: Libra because she acts like a balance, opening knowledge on Omo, but closing the route to allying with her

Libra: May I ask an impertinent question? – Niji encouraged her to do so. – Omo exhausted all my memories, and with none enhanced, I doubt I would make much for an assassin. So... What was a picked up for?

Niji: Nothing, really. It didn't feel right to let you be abandoned like a dirty rag. As for what you can do for me if you want to stay... I guess you can help around. We are short of hands after all. Especially with the gardens' weeds.

Libra: That's... all?

Niji: Um, I guess there's one more thing. If someone asks for help, help them. We are all together in this.

}

29.

At the end of the week, the day came in which Kas' hunter guild was leaving the capital. Niji brought her whole group to farewell him at the domain's doors, thanking his contribution to their collective effort.

if (HunterApproval == true && Kas did not lose any memory on 8th game) {

Kas was about to turn around, when he saw a woman coming towards him. He welcomed her into the group:

Kas: I'm glad you decided to come. Lady Niji, this is Phoenix, an old acquaintance of mine. When I decided to leave, it felt wrong to abandon having served for so little, so if I could convince a Traveler like Phoenix to join you... Well, I would have been able to repay your family a bit. And seems like she decided to make my day.

Phoenix: He's putting me in too much of a pedestal. Am just an old woman who has been living too many years alone in the forest.

Micci: Anything unusual makes for good Retainers. And if I had to judge by looks, Lord Theace looks older, and he is an invaluable member of the Camellias.

Comentado [UdW204]: Otherwise, it could be understood that Niji sacrificed his memories because she knew that he would leave, thus would stop being of service, and would then rather use him as a meat shield for the Retainers she would be keeping

Niji: I didn't want to be the one who mentioned it, but she's right.

Theace: Niji. – his serious tone made Niji think they had hit a sensitive spot. – Get behind me. – Niji took two back steps, understanding Theace had noticed something wrong. – I don't think there are many women that were on their prime twenty years ago and whose name is Phoenix.

No one understood what he was talking about, but got on guard preventively.

Phoenix: ... Can't say I didn't try, Kas. Will you let me leave or are we going to have trouble?

Niji: Wait, wait, wait! Everyone! Some explanations before we start shooting each other for no reason?

Theace: She's a Liar. A Retainer who worked under the Tobira family, and left after having her Lord enhance her memories.

Kas: P-Phoenix?

Phoenix: It's what he says. My Lord lost the enhanced memory because I wasn't there to renew them, a sinful act for a Retainer. And I'll say it without shame, I would have done it again if I hadn't liked this Camellia kid you spoke about. After all, I only came because you told me she's a Lord like no other.

Comentado [UdW205]: That insight of memories and the enhancement process. Not completely subtle, but good enough to leave a bit more information for those who care

if (Ask her to join, var PhoenixAlly == true) {

Niji: That's all the drama? The way you frame the incident makes it sound like that Lord deserved it.

Phoenix: ... He didn't. He really didn't. But I couldn't stand staying where I was. Kas told me you were trying to change things around, and I felt I had to be part of it, that's all.

Niji: Then my offer stands still.

Theace: Niji, we are in a delicate position. Maybe this isn't...

Niji: Father, I take my decisions. I ask you to respect that. You are free to watch over her if she accepts, but I refuse to judge people based on what the system says of them.

Theace: ... You are right. I sometimes forget you have grown with new blood.

Phoenix: ... Seems like Kas wasn't off the mark. Very well, let me get under your service. Just remember that I've come to see things change.

Niji: I'll make sure you aren't disappointed.

Phoenix: Great. For what I've heard, that orphan from the Coiledthread has organized a competition to elect a supreme leader of sorts. May I be given details on what is the situation right now?

}

else (Let her go, var PhoenixAlly == false) {

Niji: It is a shame then, but I'm not willing to intake someone of such dubious reputation. Have a safe journey, Kas, and thanks for thinking of us up until the end. As for you, Phoenix, you are free to go. The Camellias don't hunt people for fun.

The woman moved back without deviating her eyes from Niji's. She hid behind the walls and was seen no more. The farewell ended with a bitter end. Niji sighed. Keeping her composure was more tiring than she wanted to acknowledge.

Niji: Some battles are better not picked, I guess... Nothing we can do about it, so better to focus on the next match. Who is our next opponent, Father?

}

}

else {

Comentado [UdW206]: Since we aren't going to get access to Iso's memories, I wanted to drop some details about his youth wherever I could

As he turned around, Kas smiled with the satisfaction of leaving those cumbersome days behind and go back to his simpler life. Niji finally relaxed, after the whole fanfare was done.

Niji: We will stay strong. We will... Say, Father, who is our next opponent?
}

That wasn't a question Theace wanted to answer, but whom everyone him to.

Theace: ... Quo.

30.

if (PhoenixAlly == true) {

Phoenix arrival caused an uproar among the Lords the moment it was known. Despite not having legal action to act upon her, Theace and Dwale went collect the memory containers from the Temple and brought them home, just in case someone did something stupid.

Phoenix: This place is as frigid as always. Even the trees feel distant.

Niji blinked in confusion.

Phoenix: And my arrival may have made things worse. I can still leave if you want.

Dwale: I didn't think an ex-Retainer would be chickened out about getting their memories extracted. – said placing the memory containers on the floor.

Phoenix: ... How disappointed your teacher would be if he heard you speak so irreverently.

Dwale: You know the old man?

Phoenix shook her head in disapproval.

Phoenix: In any case, now that the errand boys have returned sound and safe, you will have to give me a moment so that I may prepare my memories. I suppose you'll want an explication on what I mean.

if (yes, PhoenixExplainedThings = true) {

Phoenix: Enhanced memories can't be extracted because they get hold by the structures of our heads, intertwined in complicated ways. Once I started living alone, I applied the same principle to my memories to avoid forgetting them. The bond is not as complex nor strong, so I can undo it after tinkering a while with my memory paths.

Niji: That's... kind of amazing.

Phoenix: I know. This island would be much better if people stopped pursuing so many enhanced memories and put some work on discovering the world that surrounds them.

}

if (no) {

Phoenix: You don't?! But...! Ugh, whatever. Just give me some time to meditate and I'll tell you when I'm ready.

}

After Phoenix did her ten minutes of meditation, the memories were, indeed, ready for harvest, and harvest them they did.

}

31.

When the time came for the match between flowers, unusual drums resounded across the Lord's domains. An impressive display of all the families that formed the Rose's clan made a line from the main entrance of the Rose's residence to the Scry Temple. Lords and Retainers, dressed in their ceremonial clothes, cheered with all their enthusiasm usual whenever Quo passed through.

Comentado [UdW207]: Because there are some people who don't care. Probably the one decision that has no narrative consequences (or at least that's what I've tried), but life improvements are also necessary. I guess (actually this has huge implications if the player does everything wrong, but it wouldn't make sense otherwise, and it's hilarious this way, so yeah)

```
if (PhoenixAlly == true) {
```

Meanwhile, scorn and a rain of vegetables felt upon the Camellias, both in disapproval of their opposition to Quo, and their stubbornness on hosting Phoenix.

Phoenix: Even the tomatoes taste like dead in this place. Niji will have many work to do if she wins.

Batten: They were probably thrown because they already begun rotting...

```
Phoenix: ... Well observed, kid.
```

```
}
```

```
else {
```

Meanwhile, a cold silence was the only thing waiting for the Camellias.

```
}
```

Finally, both opponents entered the room, diametrically opposed foes.

```
if (IsoDefeatedEarly == true) {
```

Despite Quo's cocky tendencies, she was clearly restless over the results of the match. Niji went to her place with decision, and sat down to prove her worth once more.

```
}
```

```
else {
```

Quo had the same expression on her face as many others who faced Niji: the comfort of facing a weaker opponent. As with so many, Niji couldn't wait to prove her worth.

```
}
```

9th game

32.

Comentado [UdW208]: Phoenix may be a veteran, but she's also human, and a very cranky one (imagine living 20 years alone). I felt like she was getting a bit of a mysticism aura, with her introduction being rushed due to time constraints and all, so I felt like humanizing her a bit

Comentado [UdW209]: The immigrant emerges with unprecedented financial power, a system he can shape however he wants. The Virginians emerge with the nation's capital. And here's la piece de resistance (I just realized I skipped a verse. Shame on me)

Silence invaded the Rose's domain, with the only exception of the Camellia's house, where a small private party was being held. A bit of expensive food, some bottles of blue papaya juice and more smiles than usual. After their victory, the opponent from the weekly Scry match surrendered, and on the Tournament, only three opponents were left before reaching the summit.

Comentado [UdW210]: Yes, this is a fruit that exists, no, it doesn't have alcoholic effects, it's just really sweet and expensive

After the night came, Niji disbanded the celebration, arguing they had to start working even harder from there on to win what was left. She and Micci went to sleep to their house, Batten stayed in the guests' room and everyone else Phoenix went to their respective dormitories, and.

As the night advanced, a man waited hidden in the gardens of the Camellia's residence, sheltered by the walls' shadows. An unexpected obstacle stood in front of him: a big man guarding the Lord's door. He couldn't tell whether he was sleeping or not, thus he had been circling the house for hours, advancing slowly but unnoticeably. From time to time, a younger guy passed by, in his tireless guard, but soon enough, he managed to see the big man's back in front of the door. It took him half an hour of crushing pressure to get right behind him without doing any sound, keeping his breath unnoticeable and his heart quiet. The shadowy figure extended one of his hands, covering Blacksnow's mouth, as he unleashed a shock of emotion-waves straight to Blacksnow's head. Niji's Retainer opened his eyes in pain before collapsing. The attacker left him down carefully, and palpated his small satchel to take out a purple candle. He approached Niji's door when a hand pulled him back: Blacksnow slammed him to the ground, holding his hands to avoid emotion-waves' usage, and screamed for reinforcements. A couple minutes later, only Dwale came.

Comentado [UdW211]: This serves as development for Blacksnow. He doesn't go killing people, even if they are from opposed ideologies than him. Unlike someone else will...

Blacksnow: Go check Theace is fine, then call for someone to assist us.

Dwale: ... If no one else has come, I don't think anyone will. You sure you don't want me to guard Niji?

Micci peeked out from the inside of the room, confirming both of them were fine. They decided to move all to the main residence.

Niji: Um... I don't even know where to start thanking you for this... Are you not hurt?

Blacksnow: He did give me quite a shacking surprise, but I'm fine.

Vicmit: How... how did you resist it? I didn't miss your head...

Comentado [UdW212]: Corruption of "victim". Because that's what he is, a nobody who got sent to the wrong mission

Blacksnow: ... I've felt worse things out there. You should understand it.

Micci: You know him?

Blacksnow: No. But I know where he got the memory of the feeling he attacked me with. He's most likely an ex-Trash like me.

33.

Once everyone was reunited, Theace checked what the intruder had on him, finding a lighter and the purple candle. It was easily identified as Sea Grace, an innocuous seaweed that, when burnt, released a toxic gas, leaving practically no prove behind.

Blacksnow: This time it was also a close call: he managed to get behind me without making a single sound. If he had brought a knife, I would be dead meat.

Theace: It seems like Blacksnow isn't enough to drive ill-intentioned people away. Seeing the record, Niji will have to move into the main house. It was clear we would have to fortify ourselves with how far we have gotten. I'm sorry for not having noticed earlier.

Vicmit: If I may, I would like to make Lady Niji an offer... – no one opposed listening to his words. – If... If your family doesn't present any charges against mine, I'll explain everything. I swear I'll make sure this doesn't happen again.

Niji: ...

Theace: May I give some advice? – Niji signaled him to proceed. – What's more probable is that this was perpetrated as another attempt to end a participant from the Tournament. Either that, or Quo can't take a loss. In either case, I doubt the interested family would be sending their Retainer to do the job: they would pressure a family who has already lost, one they would have influence over. It doesn't matter if this guy swears for his life he won't do it again, if the leading family gives the order, orders will be followed. And about getting the information... Well, we don't need it. We will identify the family where he is from, present the evidences to an immediate Reunion of Leaders, and his family will be exiled. They

Comentado [UdW213]: Consolidating the idea that Theace has stepped aside and has become a purely advisor figure. If you go up, the trend is that people go to Theace to ask for decisions. If you go down, you'll see it's Niji the one who takes the reins

will have it tough the month or so until we win, but otherwise, we risk never getting there.

```
if (Spare him; var spareAssassin = true) {
```

Vicmit: ... Milady, I can't express enough my gratitude! I promise you won't regret this decision.

Theace: ... I hope he's right... For now, let's go rest. Tomorrow will be a long day of formalities

```
}
```

```
else (Don't spare him; var spareAssassin = false) {
```

Theace: Good choice. Niji, let's go rest: tomorrow will be a long day of formalities.

```
}
```

34.

As Theace predicted, the reunion about the incident with the Lords occupied all the morning. However, what the two Camellias had been waiting for wasn't that. At four o'clock in the afternoon, the reunion they had convoked with the whole Rose's clan started at the Rose's main building.

Niji: It is an honor that so many members of the clan have decided to assist to this reunion. Many of you already know an assault to my residence took place before today's dawn. Again. The first one took place due to Lady Quo's abandonment of the smaller factions of the family. This second one, due to her resentment over my victory, giving instructions to the guards to stop fulfilling their duty. A leader that, as I'm sure you all know, has done nothing for the family, trying to sustain only the necessary pillars, overseeing the cracks that appeared all over our domain. Ours, not hers. Nonetheless, I am not here to complain, but to offer a solution: my purpose today is to organize an **election** to decide whether the clan wants me as their new leader.

The room stood surprisingly quiet. Niji was expecting disapproving screams, boos, even laughter and mockery. Of course, Quo wouldn't stand for it.

Comentado [UdW214]: Democracy is so rampant because other methods were tried but failed: if everyone has powerful forces, the strength of a majority is more important than the logic of a certain decision, because that many people can overthrow you, it's not a case of you have militarized power; everyone has it

Quo: The fact that you are seen as weak for so many is your own problem. I suppose no one is missing on the absurdity of a lesser member trying to become leader of the clan out of the blue.

The leader of the **Ilex** family spoke.

Comentado [UdW215]: Scientific name of the holly, the flower of foresight. Basically, since they help Niji achieve power, it's a way to say they are able to see what is better for the family

Holly: This "lesser member" beat you in a fair game. As she said, you haven't exactly demonstrated an exemplar leadership, and since your only redeeming quality was that leaders earn more points than normal players, Lady Niji seems a more fitting family head than you.

To Holly's words, many other factions followed with their agreement, finally being given the chance to take Quo out of the position she had been placed in for so long. Of course, the wave of support was immediately countered by Quo's fervent supporters, the ones who parasitized her power avidly. Among them, Quo herself counterattacked:

if (PhoenixAlly == true) {

Quo: Before any more discussion, I want to remember to the assistants that this woman took in the Tobira's Liar, Phoenix, a shameful stain to the system, a woman so vile that she betrayed the Lords she had trusted in. With such a person as family head, how do you expect from her a shred of decency? Respect? Compromise? How long can the Rose's clan survive under the rule of such an immoral mind, **a Liar, herself, to power and blind greed?**

Comentado [UdW216]: I was going to make Quo call Niji a "whore of power and blind greed", but then I remembered prostitution in this world has a high reputation, so "whore" wouldn't be used as an insult. Damn it, worldbuilding

Niji angered at the blatantly false picture Quo was painting of her, but she could not prove nor disprove anything, and no Lord felt comfortable with her decision of taking Phoenix in. Except maybe...

if (Offer to give Phoenix to the Tobira; var PhoenixBetrayal = true) {

Niji: The only reason I accepted her was out of pure need. Needless to say that if you elect me as the new Rose's leader, there is no place left for her in my household, and will be put under the Tobira's guard.

That seemed to sway some Lords to her side. Quo took a moment to think something to counter that with, as the other Lords kept their mumbling.

}

}

if (spareAssassin == true) {

Quo: Not to oversee how inconsistent those supposed attacks at your family have been. You inform twice of supposed attacks at your residence, but in both cases you end up with no clue or trace of who the perpetrators were. Be it because you lied, or because you are so incompetent you can't even defend your own home, it's more of a reason to reject this ridiculous proposal.

Many Lords began pushing the idea of Niji's dishonesty, uttering insults to the Camellia head.

}

Theace gave a loud kick to the wood floor. Silence was made.

Comentado [UdW217]: Nais

Niji: I understand there may be discrepancies and doubts. I am not perfect. I recognize it more than anyone, but think about what is the current situation. Three opponents until I become Lord of Lords. Do you want to miss on being the winning family because our current leader opposes fervently to my protection out of pure selfishness?

if (spareAssassin == false) {

Niji: We already determined the last attack was from a family under Lord Iso's control. He won't miss a chance to kill me because I'm a thread to his victory.

}

Niji: I'm lacking people who support me, but I can win. I've already played against Lord Iso, I can counter his playstyle. And we all know how the Bluemoon's have been using some Retainers as bait to crush their opponents with their stronger units. I can counter that. I ask you to believe I can win one blind fight. One fight I know nothing about, like many that if fought before, and I win.

if (Niji won all games) {

Niji: Believe in The Invicted!

}

```
else {
```

```
Niji: Believe in the miracle of the new generation!
```

```
}
```

The discussion expanded many more hours, until the Lords were tired enough to not want any more rhetoric. One by one, they raised their hands when their names were called, their palms open to agree, their first to disagree. Ten minutes passed before all votes were counted.

```
if (PhoenixAlly == true && PhoenixBetrayal == false && spareAssassin == true) {
```

```
Niji thanked the assistants for coming, as the ceremonial reunion was concluded.  
In her way back home, she couldn't stop looking at the bright moon, resigned to  
their decision.
```

```
}
```

```
else (var NijiClanLeader = true) {
```

```
The bright moon that had risen over the clouds imprinted in Niji's memory the day  
in which theirs would be the Camellia clan.
```

```
}
```

```
if (PhoenixBetrayal == true) {
```

```
That same moon saw Phoenix return to the world she knew wasn't worth leaving  
behind.
```

```
}
```

35.

After such an eventful day, Niji expected a calm morning of relaxation. Novelty, however, doesn't wait for breaks.

```
if (AstroAlly == true) {
```

```
An unexpected letter arrived early in the morning, from Astro, saying he would  
pay a visit at the afternoon.
```

```
}
```

```
if (NijiClanLeader == true) {
```

Theace entered the room in a sprint that almost ended with his face through the silky walls.

Comentado [UdW218]: If you've seen japanese mainstream traditional walls, you know what I mean (shoji)

Theace: Micci, bring Batten to the reunion at the Ilex's house. Blacksnow, the packages from the Rose's house are ready, go get them! Ah, Niji! Our opponent from the Scry match has decided to surrender, so go with Dwale to see if you have your new opponents assigned!

Just as he came, Theace left.

Niji: You could go alone... – said looking at Dwale.

Theace: It's that or you come with me at the reunion! – shouted Theace from the hallway.

}

else {

Theace entered the room somberly.

Theace: I bring some good news. The opponent you were going to face for the weekly match has decided to surrender. – Niji simply nodded. – I'm occupied with Micci for some preparations regarding defending the perimeter. Could you go with Dwale check for your new opponent?

}

As Theace had said, they had their new matches scheduled. Scry match: head of the Cloud family, Bise Cirrocululus; Tournament match: head of the Tobira family, Varna Tobira. Niji tried dissimulating that she was well aware of both names, which had caused her left hand to twitch uncontrollably, by offering Dwale to play a wordplay game. Luckily, Dwale had enough common sense to read between the lines.

Dwale: ... That Iso bastard will keep trying to win no matter what he has to do, won't he?

Niji: ... Probably.

Dwale: He wouldn't stop even if you won, I'm sure of it. For Travelers, there are some rules, but one of the more basic ones is "Do not show your fangs if you aren't ready to bite". That's because there's even a more fundamental rule, one for every human on this world: "Don't bite unless you are prepared to be bitten".

Comentado [UdW219]: This line gets me wet. I would argue I'm really tired of writing after hours, but not really, I just had lunch. Was re-reading some things. Saw this. Felt like I had to express it. I mean, when a line gets that response from the person that wrote it, it has to be good. Or I'm weird and no one else likes it. Oh well :v Also, the "Do not show your fangs if you aren't ready to bite" seems like a stupid idea, but makes sense in the world of Niji, because there if you pretend, you are going to get emotion-waved instantly. Which only makes it the more hilarious that Niji does exactly that and it works

Niji: Dwale, I don't like where you are taking this...

Dwale: I didn't want to talk about it in front of the others. They would oppose it, and then you would as well. Your father told me that you are now the true head of the Camellia family, so I can only ask permission to you. I can do it.

if (Ask him to do sabotage; DwaleSabotage = true) {

Niji: You know I would never ask you to kill another person without a better reason than fear. But... It is true that I would appreciate having an upper hand against him. Take our own bite, sort to say.

Dwale: What do you have in mind?

Niji: How good are you at spying?

}

else (Don't give the order; DwaleSabotage = false) {

Niji: You know I would never ask you to kill another person without a better reason than fear. And there's no need to put yourself in harm's way. I'm a master at playing defense, after all.

}

36.

if (Astro is ally (blacksnowBetrayal == false)) {

Punctual as usual, Astro arrived dressed in odd clothing: his chest and back were covered, as well as his legs, now hidden behind a long skirt. Niji asked her Retainers to leave the room to keep their conversation under privacy, but Astro stopped her.

Astro: Let me explain myself. I've been thinking for a while what could I do for our alliance. The conclusion I reached is that the best support would be to become your guardian and another weapon to your arsenal. That's why I would like to be taken as a Retainer of the Camellias.

Dwale: Isn't this guy kind of an important deal? Are we sure we can trust him? I don't see why someone from outside would see any winning chance in us.

Astro: I know I'm incurring my own naivety, but I want to believe you can achieve it. Or rather, if you didn't reach victory because I stood back, I wouldn't be able to forgive myself. That's why, at least, I had to come and ask.

```
if (Accept Astro; AstroJoins = true) {
```

Astro became visibly more relaxed, almost exhibiting a smile.

Astro: I wish I will provide a service at the level of the Karanamudra name. To begin with, would it be fine to discuss stationing some of my people to help with defending the outsides of the house?

```
}
```

```
else (Reject Astro; AstroJoins = false) {
```

Niji: I trust your good will, Lord Astro, and precisely because of that, you would become a Retainer whose memory I can't enhance. It... may only prove to be a hindrance to my clan.

Astro: ... **I see**. Still, would it cross the line to put some of my people under your service to defend the house? Even if it's only on the outside.

```
}
```

Niji: If you are fine with it, I'm sure it would be of great help. Right now, Father and Dwale are on charge of the residence's defense. Let me call for them so we can discuss the details further.

```
}
```

Comentado [UdW220]: That moment when you realize you are being rejected politely

37.

On the day before Bise Cirrocumulus' match, Micci had come back from a quick visit to the Ilex family, clearly shaken.

Niji: Has something gone wrong?

Micci shook her head, her brain squeezing all its strengths to think of a proper explanation for her lividness.

Niji: Okay, I was being rhetorical. Just tell me what happened.

Micci: ... Would it be too presumptuous of me to leave without giving any explanation?

Niji: ... I didn't think the Clouds would be getting their hands dirty as well... – Micci blinked in awe at Niji's accurate guess. – What? We've been living every day together for some time now, and the only occasion in which I've seen you show half this much concern was when the Clouds were involved. It's no brain-teaser. If not, you would have arrived and said – Niji did her best to let out a stoic, more mature voice. – "Lady Niji, the world is burning down under the weight of calamity. Would you like some tea prepared?" or something like that.

Micci: Niji!

Niji: Sorry, sorry, I know it's serious. But you have to tell me about it.

The one-armed Retainer cursed her luck for not having been able to manage the situation any better, but ultimately decided to explain the new circumstances.

Micci: On the way back I crossed paths with an ex-coreainer, and he brought me instructions from Bise. That I was supposed to destroy my memory in the middle of the game, or else he wouldn't secure Lady Windia's brother protection.

Niji: What a bastard, going for a 4 versus 15... Oh well, we'll have to deal with that.

Comentado [UdW221]: This has to be the most humoristic way to introduce a "we are fucked situation" I've ever written, and to be honest, am kind of satisfied with the results

Comentado [UdW222]: Rare footage of Micci actually cracked

Micci: ... Milady, aren't you a bit unconcerned with it?

Niji: Maybe you are right. A 4 – 15 can be tough, but I feel more confident if my opponent is so pathetic that they have to use those kind of tactics to ensure they can win.

Micci nodded in silent, an itch in her heart.

Niji: What, are you worried about losing a memory?

Micci: N-no, I understand it's necessary to...

Niji: Are you kidding me? You really are dense when it's about Windia, don't you? Think about it: they just said "drop your memory". I can just extract a very minor one and use that for the match. It's still a shame we have to waste one of your memories, but...

Micci's face brightened.

Niji: Hey, if you want to praise me, now's the time.

Micci: Dwale is influencing you in the worst of ways. – she said while giving Niji a thankful hug.

Niji: Say... – Niji patted Micci on the head, unsure on how to proceed. – When this all ends, if you want to, you can go back to the Coiledthreads. To Lady Windia.

Micci pushed away from her in surprise.

Micci: That would be most improper! I'm bound to the Camellia family, that's what I swore.

Comentado [UdW223]: They are not implicitly lesbian, I swear. They may be. Or maybe not. Haven't asked yet. But. Girls can be touchy and not be necessarily gay. Unlike guys, which clearly become super gay if they come into a radius of like ten meters of each other. As it is common knowledge. Sorry, it's late, I want to sleep. Doing corrections is worse than programming

Niji: Hey, I don't need you walking around home to know we are family, but if your heart is so homesick, maybe it would be better to be with those who you want the most. Not that I want you to go, more like the opposite, and yet, it doesn't feel right seeing the face you make every time we cross with Lady Windia.

Micci shut, taking Niji's words for a moment.

Micci: ... Lady Windia holds an irreplaceable spot in my heart, that's true, but I live for my duty. And my duty is to your family.

Niji: ... You'll have three more weeks until this ends. I hope to listen a more heartfelt answer by that time.

38.

Relentlessly, days passed until the match arrived. The way to the Temple, painted with cherry trees, felt more oppressive than usual: Niji was used to facing the unknown, but an adversity she knew of got her uneasy.

Windia: I'm sure you'll emerge victorious again.

Niji jumped in place from the unexpected approach, but manage to calm down when seeing it was Windia, without forgetting she used to be part of the Clouds.

Windia: Try to keep your units together. – muttered Windia at Niji's ear. – Good luck!

As Windia merged back with the crowd, Bise Cirrocumulus appeared. With him, five people came, but two of them weren't wearing the retainer's clothes, instead using the ceremonial dresses typical of Lords. Among those two, Windia's brother. Niji couldn't stop thinking how much she wanted to see Bise's confidence crumble down.

10th game (Micci can only be deployed with weak memory; Micci drops her memory mid-battle, "dying"; Bise's units have big range of movement)

As Niji recovered her senses, she turned around to Micci, checking if she was fine. The memory that should have been connected between her and Niji was gone, but that aside, she was.

Under Niji's unawareness, Micci scrutinized Bise rigorously. She knew he wasn't the kind of person to break traditions pointlessly: having the Lords who became his retainers dress flashily wasn't his style. It smelled of trouble; Blacksnow and Dwale quickly caught up to Micci's tension.

Comentado [UdW224]: Hitchcock told me to put a bomb under the table. I obey. Actually, it wasn't such a good example of immediate tension seeding, but meh, let me mention Hitchcock from time to time

if (Bise was defeated) {

With all, they were the victors, so they had to be the first to leave. As Niji congratulated her companions for the victory, the three who knew that something was to come sharpened their ears and waited. As they expected, they heard something unfolding from the Lord's clothes.

}

else {

At least their loss would make them leave first, reducing the chances of any possible action they wanted to take. Satisfied, Bise stood up, his retainers following him. However, as they rose, they pointed their arms towards Niji: under their sleeves, the metallic heads of two crossbows shined.

}

Comentado [UdW225]: Unlike good ol' dense Niji, some have perception

Two arrows flew towards Niji's heart. Blacksnow, predicting where they would shoot, managing to catch one the fly, but the other pierced Micci's shoulder as she tried to move Niji away from their trajectory. Windia entered the room, alarmed by Micci's scream, ordering one of her Retainers to bring her family's doctor and running to Micci to check on the injury.

Meanwhile, Dwale and Blacksnow pointed their fingers at the Lords, and vice versa, no one daring to shoot with the rest of Lords peeking from outside. Niji had her eyes stuck on Micci's wound. At least it didn't look like she would die too soon from bleeding, although her face said otherwise. Niji turned to Bise, who was pointing at her, and moved her index towards his forehead. She had been told she wasn't capable of emitting intense emotion-waves, and that she was excessively receptive to them, but with the anger that was burning in her, she felt like she could bend Bise.

Bise: Are you sure you want to do this? Those two are getting exiled for sure, I'm sure they wouldn't care getting a bit rough, and you are already one down...

Niji: Shut your mouth before I show you what twenty years of broken bones feel like. – Bise didn't seem to like the idea, so he complied. – Lords like you have made this system rot! Have you no shame?! No regret?!

Bise: ... You'll never see a cloud worry on how it drifts. It goes where it has to, free in the sky. That's the sacred knowledge past down in our family. And when this storm calms down, the Clouds will be at the highest summit, as we have always been.

Windia: How is following that man's threats freedom?! I didn't remember the Clouds to be so pathetic!

Comentado [UdW226]: Classic Iso

Bise: Spoke the Coiledthread's dog. It's the fault of people like you and The Kite's that the Clouds have to bow to other families. Difficult to say what makes you two any different from Liars.

Niji pressed her fingers on his forehead.

Niji: Coincidentally, I can exactly tell how little of a Lord you are.

Bise wanted to strangle her, but understood he wasn't in a position for that, so he turned around, taking his three Retainers.

Bise: Good luck out there. – he said to the two Lords who stayed with the emptied crossbows.

Once the situation descaled, two guards came to subjugate them, taking them to a cell for their trial for attempted murder.

Dwale: Well done there, Lady Niji.

Comentado [UdW227]: Dwale's respect earned (in case I'm being too dense, Dwale calls Niji "Niji", without honorifics)

Before they could leave, though, Niji stopped the entourage:

Niji: When I become the Tournament's victor, I'll make sure all Lords come back and work towards a common goal. You better prepare an apology to your lady sister when that happens.

Not long after, the doctor arrived, and gave his opinion while treating Micci: the injury wasn't mortal, but it would hinder her arm's performance, and it would take a long time to heal. Once they took Micci home, Niji asked to be left alone together with the injured and Windia. The two Lords sat near Micci, each on one side.

Comentado [UdW228]: The idea is that Micci lost an arm for each of the Lords she served wholeheartedly, and leaving aside thematic implications, each Lord sits on the side of the arm that Micci sacrificed for them. Because symbolism

Niji: I'm sorry I messed up. Again.

Micci: I should be the one apologizing. Not only I put my Lord at a disadvantage on her match, I also managed to lose the one arm I had left and went against Lord Theace's instructions to keep you safe. – Micci's eyes clouded over – And Lady Windia's brother is going to be exiled despite all.

Windia caressed Micci's hair.

Windia: Didn't I tell you to stop worrying about me, dummy? I don't deserve your thoughts after what happened.

Micci: Lady Windia, you know that isn't... – she stopped. – That was also my fault. My failure.

Niji: Listen up, Micci, you have saved my life. I don't care about Lords or Retainers, I owe you more than I will ever be able to repay. I can't make you proud of it, but I want you to know the kindness you have shown me means a lot.

Micci: ... May I ask you something in return, then?

Comentado [UdW229]: Denotes that Micci is understanding that Niji wants her to be people on the same level, not just Lord - Retainer

Niji asked her to go on, intrigued by what she would ask.

Micci: Please, never do... what you did with Lord Bise. At least not while we are there to protect you. The only thing worse than being incompetent would be causing your demise. No punishment from Lord Theace would be enough to forgive myself.

Niji: ... I hate that you are right. Fine, I'll try to be less reckless from now on. Is that everything?

A smile formed in Micci's lips, as she nodded.

Micci: I am truly blessed, despite being an impure Retainer.

Comentado [UdW230]: The classic social implications of a Retainer that has served under more than one family. Because worldbuilding ;)

Windia: I should leave. It is not appropriate for a Coiledthread member to stay more time here. It already means the world that you hosted me.

Niji: I suppose you will come back. Micci will surely appreciate your visit.

Comentado [UdW231]: Niji demonstrating she has an ounce of social awareness!! I'm so proud of her :) In case, I'm being too dense, she is taunting Windia because she expects her to reject Micci due to social bullshit

Windia: ... It would be best that I didn't. The less troubles you have, the better for Micci.

Niji: How come you too are such a lost cause? Who could care if you two met from time to time?!

Windia: ... Well, to begin with, Micci's reputation would go down because other clans would see her as unfaithful. I would be pressured to obtain information of your family through her. And when you were defenseless against other families because you didn't know how to keep your distances, regrets and complaints would come. Take this as a favor.

Comentado [UdW232]: Why does it end up feeling like I'm writing lesbian couples all the time? Because it's consistent. I suppose it's because I tend to do characters that are very open with one another, because now that I think about it, all my male characters with deep friendships feel gay. Not to me, but that's what I've heard from people :v

if (WindiaAlly == true) {

Niji: You are both intelligent enough to know what you can say and what should remain secret. Isn't that weight worth carrying if that means reconciling?

Comentado [UdW233]: I will admit it's a bit cheap to tie the knowledge of Windia from Niji's perspective to a decision that was taken when we barely knew her, but I haven't had time to implement an arc for Windia based on that decision. Because time. But it is in the list of things to add to the narrative

Windia: It... It would be selfish of me if anything happened to her because I wanted to enjoy my time with her.

Niji: ... Now I understand where Micci got those skills of justifying everything through her duty. Sounds like a pile of excuses.

Windia: Well it isn't, that's how I am.

Niji: Whatever you say, just keep in mind that if you don't come from time to time, I'll keep her all by myself.

Windia turned around to leave, ignoring Niji with a `dumb smile` she couldn't have hidden otherwise.

}

`else {`

Niji: I don't think you could be the type of person to do that.

Windia approached Niji fiercely.

Windia: I assure you, after chopping my friend's arm for a family I hate, not betraying you sounds like a bad joke.

After saying that, she turned around and took her leave.

}

39.

`if (spareAssassin == true) {`

It was a night with no moon when the order was given again: Vicmit slowly stepped forward on the wide hallways of the Camellia's mansion. His presence was silent as ever, but as usual his head was filled with thoughts that wouldn't quiet up. What was the deal with that girl, living in such a small room when she had this huge house to stay in? And who in their sane mind lets an assassin free? It was clear that death was the only thing that awaited such a naïve mind. If he didn't do it, someone else would. When a Lord gives an order, the trash obey, or they suffer the consequences. Right, she was nothing but another Lord. Stupid, conceited, living outside of reality. That's why he had to kill her. Even among Lords, she was too much of a nuisance. He was doing a service. It was for the best. Plus, she had a terrible bone illness. She would surely be able to accept it easier. Maybe she would even thank him for his piety. Vicmit stopped to appreciate the irony of his idea. `As if anyone would do that.`

Comentado [UdW234]: Very satisfied I didn't end up writing another "But we can all be friends" cheesy moment. Which would not be the first time, by a long shot. In fact, this dialogue exchange started with a messed structure, but I think I managed to save it more or less, even if the WindiaAlly == true path is still a bit tension-less

Comentado [UdW235]: Life is more of a bitch than usual when you don't listen to sound advice :/

Comentado [UdW236]: Okay, this is just a rant of how good I am. But seriously. I was like, "how can I present this scene in which Dwale kills Vicmit", and I must say presenting the whole deal from Vicmit's perspective seems like genius. Because first of all, I can really smoothly go into the guys head, and be like, yeah, he kills people, but it isn't pretty, but without actually having to say that (subtext, fuck yeah). This points the reader towards feeling like the guy is having doubts, and what he will do, and that he may join Niji because he sees the light and whatnot. Then Dwale comes from behind and murders the guy. Which tells us that Dwale has no chill with snakes, as well as being somewhat of a structural plotwist, and having narrative repercussions. Like. Nice. Although for the player it's pretty shitty, because choosing this option already came into play at the Rose's election, and now it comes bite her/his ass again, but hey, you should have picked better options

Dwale: You had to do it.

From Dwale's fingers, a spark flew straight to Vicmit's head. Suddenly, he felt a cold sensation crawling up his body, slowly slithering towards his chest. His lungs dried as his heart shrank more and more, a tiresomeness crammed his muscles. Dwale held him from his clothing as the man felt dead. He begun dragging the body outside when a door opened.

Batten: Is... everything fine?

Dwale: ... Come with me for a moment. And stay silent, please.

Controlling his initial confusion, Batten helped Dwale lift the man and carrying him to the back of the mansion.

Batten: Is he... dead?

Dwale: You bet he is.

Batten: ... Shouldn't we inform Lady Niji of such event?

Dwale: I'll bury this guy where no one can find him, so listen, kid: Niji will never know about this. She will keep thinking she did the right thing, and that this scumbag is doing his things wherever he should have been, okay?

Batten: Sure.

Dwale: ... Good. Now go to sleep. There are things you don't need to see.

Comentado [UdW237]: Casually implying Dwale is about to mutilate a corpse. What can I say, love my tonal shifts. Hunter X Hunter taught me well

Batten experience gained is reduced by a quarter

}

40.

The sun shined over a better day, as Micci, still laying down due to her recovery, heard a dry sound. It was Theace, who had hit his own forehead due to regretting the education he had given to his daughter.

Theace: Please don't do it.

Niji: You can't stop me.

Theace: What's the point?! You can't use them! This is an unnecessary risk!

Nji: It's the right thing to do, dad.

```
if (PhoenixAlly == true) {
```

Niji: I'll go get Phoenix and we are off to the Temple.

Phoenix gets a quarter per cent more experience

```
}
```

```
else if (Libra == true) {
```

Niji: I'll go get Libra and we are off to the Temple.

```
}
```

```
else {
```

Niji: I'll go get Batten and we are off to the Temple.

```
}
```

Theace was left alone, caressing his read forehead.

All retainers get ten per cent more experience

41.

```
if (DwaleSabotage == true) {
```

Comentado [UdW238]: I've been loudly discussing with myself over a minute whether to put a comma here or not. I decided not to, because it helps transmit a sense of urgency. What a sad minute this has been

Comentado [UdW239]: I want the player to be surprised to find Niji's memories are now usable, because I don't want them to run out of memories. Just in case. This way we also get some Niji development):3 The boost may screw balancing, but hey, narrative > everything else. And now you will say that if the game is too easy the narrative conflicts with the game, creating a dissonance that hurts the narrative itself. But that's why we have re-balancing :')

Dwale scratched his head. Overworking wasn't his thing, yet there he was, planning on infiltrating number one prick's residence. The worst part was that he had to pass close to the Bluemoon's residence to reach the Coiledthread, and already knocked two people out to avoid being discovered. Theace told him that as long as it couldn't be proved that he was infiltrating to commit murder, Niji was safe from exile, but at that pace, things could get less than pretty for him.

More footsteps were approaching. Dwale looked around and noticed a huge fallen iron plank that rested besides a small storehouse that was brimming with carpentry tools. It didn't stand out, but he noticed the plank was slightly raised, enough for a person to fit under it. And fit he did. It was really tight, especially for someone built up like him, but at least he didn't have Blacksnow's physique. As he entered though, he saw the space became wider, so he went even deeper.

Not even two meters in, the ground dropped down. A ladder emerged from the darkness, inviting for a trip into the unknown, an offer Dwale couldn't resist. The darkness was absolute. Once he reached the bottom, he began feeling about for any walls: it was a narrow hall. Before he had the chance to advance further, he heard noises of someone dragging themselves through the dirt. Unsure of what to do, he went back. Steps from someone going down the ladder. There was space behind it, and Dwale deemed it the better option to remain unseen. The unknown figure descended at a regular pace. Dwale contained his breath as the unidentifiable person completed their descend. The steps moved away for some meters, ending in a metallic sound. Silence. Right after, a small engine was being moved. Then a door opened. From inside, a feeble light emerged, which uncovered various mysteries: the metallic door had a padlock of symbols. And it rested on Omo Bluemoon's hand. The inside of the room seemed to be an empty space, but something resembling a shelf seemed to occupy some space on the left. He couldn't see for much longer, since Omo closed the door, and locked it from the inside.

Was it safer to leave now, or should he wait for her to come out? The light from the room probably would not reach where he was, but that may mean staying there for many hours. He was too curious about the contents of that room to leave without another glimpse, so he stayed.

Dwale felt sleep from time to time, but being trained to wake up at the minimum sound, he constantly was awakened by groans coming from inside the room, followed by panting, then back to silence. Some time later, the door opened again. Dwale saw some sort of shine on the shelf he had glimpsed earlier. Again, Omo closed the door with haste. Bathed in darkness again, the Bluemoon Lord advanced through the hallway. Then, something falling on the ground. Silence. A minute passed. Dwale's alarms were ringing non-stop. Did she die? Fall unconscious? Was she carrying anything? Was she approaching him in silence? Dwale started sweating profusely. Omo groaned, her face against the ground, as she rolled around with an effortful push and stood up again, muttering something unclear. She reached for the stairs with shortness of breath, a mere meter and a half away from Dwale, and began her ascension until disappearing upstairs.

Comentado [UdW240]: Iso

Comentado [UdW241]: Big brain geography planning to make it line up with the narrative. Definitely not something I would have needed to change but that was luckily perfectly aligned to work by default, probably because I had some stupid thought like "put the bad guys together" or something. Yeah

After half an hour, Dwale was still behind the stairs. Having seen no movement in all that time, he hurried towards the metallic door. The padlock was a combination of four, which made it almost impossible to decipher without knowing the key. He couldn't even see the symbols, just barely feel them from the forms made in the iron. Seeing there wouldn't be anything he could explore, he began his ascension as well, getting out from below the iron plank, making sure no one saw him, and walking away as fast as he could. Niji would receive him, made a bundle of nerves, and attentively listened to what he had seen.

}

42.

if (DwaleSabotage == true) {

Despite the intriguing information Dwale had brought, Niji had a bigger priority.

}

The day had begun with a clear event on the Camellia's household: the Tournament match against Varna Tobira. If Niji managed to win this one, they would reach semifinals, which would probably be disputed against Omo, or the head of the Lake clan if some unexpected twist occurred.

Once there, Lady Varna attentively examined Niji. She seemed curious to know who the newcomer was, with no signs of pressure or willing confrontation.

if (PhoenixAlly == true && PhoenixBetrayal == false) {

Varna: I heard you took Phoenix in. Is she around here?

Niji stood steady, indecisive on how to respond. Phoenix came out from behind the whole group.

Phoenix: ... You wanted to see me.

Varna: ... It really is you. You run away, yet here we are again.

Phoenix: Indeed. I... must apologize. Leaving out of nowhere was improper to who I truly considered my friend. But trust me when I say I would have already left if it hadn't been because I saw a glimpse of hope in Lady Niji. Hope of change.

Comentado [UdW242]: Since their only function is to be crushed by Omo. After all, lake's only ehance the moon's beauty

Varna: What a pity. Weren't you happy outside?

Phoenix: It was better than here, that's true. But the forest grows and breathes in harmony by itself. People don't.

Varna: Well, good luck with that, I suppose. Except in this match. It would be great if you lost this one. – Varna turned, but then looked back at Phoenix, squinted her eyes and frowned. – I'll never understand that fixation with wasting time on nothing.

Niji: Are you sure you can say that to someone who has reached the Tournament's quarter-final? I would say change is very close to reality.

Varna: ... I hope you are not speaking seriously. – Niji said otherwise. – ... This makes me feel old. Let's see. Just to be sure, you really believe you can come out of nowhere, win a tournament that was organized in the most underhanded and barely legal way, and begin doing changes to an eternal system, and that nothing will go wrong. At all. – Niji nodded, her cheeks getting redder. – ... I'm getting tired. Let's go play before I lose all my strength to think.

}

She turned around to enter the building, inviting Niji to follow. After each did their family hand sign as a promise of fair game and determination, they sat down, joined memories with their Retainers and created the board by joining each other's thoughts. Three opponents before the summit.

11th game

Theace patted Niji.

Theace: Only two more and your job will be done.

if (PhoenixAlly == true && PhoenixBetrayal == false) {

Varna: How sad you'll get when you realize all this effort has been for naught.

Comentado [UdW243]: Wink, wink, there will be a certain something waiting for Niji if she even reaches the end

Comentado [UdW244]: Oops, did I just drop my exposition to grow tension and expectation while explaining detailed but unnecessary concepts to follow the plot, but which people who greatly care about internal consistency will appreciate? Dummy me ;P

Niji: Yeah, yeah, it must itch a lot to lose so close to the end. Don't worry, when I win I'll pay a visit to show you how happy I am. Then maybe you feel a bit more inclined to help, **aye**?

Comentado [UdW245]: Dwale really is a bit influence

Varna: That's not what I meant. Not to say I reject your invitation, thought. I'll make a party or something and we'll have some fun.

Niji: ... Why does it feel like I'm missing something? Are Lord Iso and Lady Omo up to more shady business?

Varna gave it some thought.

Varna: Probably, but that isn't what I meant. I'm talking about power. Even if you got ahold of power, which you won't, it would be worthless. Power elicits change, but it doesn't dictate it. You'll try to make things better for yourself, but what will happen... Who knows what it is.

Niji: So what? Suggesting I sit down and do nothing then?

Varna: Exactly that. I have only been attacked due to this stupid Tournament, but apart from it, I've been living very peacefully. Full of great memories, exciting matches, friends and no preoccupations. Being a Lord is great, even with the occasional discussions, so don't ask for more.

Niji: ... Then I'm glad I don't understand what being a Lord is.

Varna: ... Uhm, Phoenix, can you explain me what your Lord, who is a Lord, the Lord head of her family in fact, is saying?

Phoenix **smiled** discretely.

Comentado [UdW246]: I like people smiling :)

Phoenix: Who could you possibly be talking about? **I don't remember being under any Lord's service.**

}

Comentado [UdW247]: That was smooth, come on. It's almost like planning dialogue allows the writer to do interesting presentation of themes :0

43.

if (DwaleSabotage == true) {

Everyone in the Camellia household had gathered at the reunion room to discuss about their next step.

Dwale: We are going to do something with that suspicious door, right?

Theace: I'm more concerned about what Iso may do, but it's undeniable that Omo is an equally formidable opponent. The fact everyone knows of her sacrificing strategies, and yet no one has beaten her in the last two years, says all there is need for.

Blacksnow: As Micci said, her match is in two days. We can take advantage of that moment to enter with a small group.

Niji: The question is if what's behind the lock serves for anything. And more importantly, how do we open that lock. Four slots, from zero to nine, that makes... how many combinations is that?

Theace: At least ten thousand.

Dwale: Wait, it's not that kind of padlock, it didn't go by numbers. They were drawings of some kind, more like symbols. But I think it's fair to assume there were around that many for each.

if (Libra == true) {

Libra: Moon, memory, death, moon.

Everyone turned around towards Libra, who sat down behind everyone in the room.

Libra: W-well, I'm not sure, but I it was not a year ago that Lady Omo ordered to construct a mausoleum under the Bluemoon's residence. The project was cancelled due to unstable structure, but while it was on-going I was responsible

Comentado [UdW248]: I had designed the icons for those, but as for many things, didn't have time to include them. Anyway, the death icon was a closed eye with a cracked egg over it: refers to that which has ended, that can't be recovered. This would traduce to a tradition to clean with the egg's white the forehead of deceased people before burial. The moon was half white – half black, because to their culture, it represents justice, that which changes in form but not in essence... Memories are represented with an eye to represent the humanity they embody, with the eyes being the window to the soul

Comentado [UdW249]: I was going to have Dwale make a joke about how Omo shuts herself there at night and screams and pants where a mausoleum has supposedly been built. But I haven't. Because I have self-control. Sometimes. Clearly not now

for getting the lock. And... may have peeked the note were the unlocking combination was written.

Niji turned to Theace with a smug expression.

Comentado [UdW250]: Karma is powerful

Theace: That's great. It doesn't guarantee it's the same padlock, but it seems like a strong start.

}

else {

Theace: Considering she will be out... say, half an hour on the worse case, supposing we can input a combination per second... that's a thousand eight hundred combinations we can try? Yes, that seems right. It isn't much.

Niji: We can only hope we are lucky, then.

}

Theace: With that settled, who should go?

Niji felt the impulse to raise her hand, but didn't. Stay out of danger. It was harder than she had anticipated.

Comentado [UdW251]: Happy Micci noises

}

44.

if (DwaleSabotage == true) {

As planned, the day Omo Bluemoon left her home to participate on her quarter-final match, Dwale and Theace made their way into the darkness that surrounded the metallic door. Since the sunlight did not reach there, they had brought an oil lamp.

Comentado [UdW252]: The place is away from light because it's a place where acts of self-sacrifice are committed, acts that require a certain "dark morality" to be done. Let me be fancy

if (Libra == true) {

Moon, memory, death, memory. Worked like a charm. The door opened, bathing the two in the weak light that came from the various glowworms that occupied the room. As Dwale had explained, it was mainly empty. Only two pieces of furniture

stood out. They went towards the smaller one: a desk with shelves on the right side.

On it there was a mirror with silver filigrees, together with a refined handkerchief that had two red stains. Everything was dustless. In the shelf's drawer, there were various sheets. A chair. They found nothing else, so they decided to back off and go to the shelf on the left. At least that's what Dwale said he had seen, but there were multiple of them, six shelves of over two meters of length. All of them had orbs, most of them filled with memories, stored in packages of twelve. Theace came closer to examine them, and became very surprised by what he realized:

Theace: Those memories... Look, each pack has the exact same patterns.

Dwale: Gotcha... So?

Theace: Each memory is different, which is reflected on its patterns. But those are all the same.

Dwale: Aha... That obviously means...

Theace: I... don't know. It shouldn't be possible. If you extract a memory, it can't be split. If you have it enhanced, you can't remove it. You can shock someone with the emotion-wave of an enhanced memory, and create a weaker memory with it, but even if it's the same essence, you still have two different memories, thus their patterns are different. The only explanation I can find is that the differences are so subtle that I can't see them with the naked eye, but... What are the chances that would occur with so many memories?

Dwale: So... we wreck this place.

Theace had to control himself to not smack Dwale on the back of his neck.

Theace: If Lady Omo knew someone entered, she would either change the padlock's combination or move those things away. It's always better to have this ace up our sleeve than break everything for no reason. We ought to leave now.

Dwale: Why does it feel like we have learned nothing useful...

Comentado [UdW253]: Anyone called for some environmental storytelling? Well, in case you don't want to think too hard about it, Omo does shady things here: duplicating her memories. Now, the player isn't supposed to deduce that. In here, we present the evidences: there's an expensive mirror (she uses to see how badly her health is going, because seeing your dying while living gives quite the anxiety) and a handkerchief stained with blood (when she forces herself too much). Both objects are remarked by their finesse, items Omo wouldn't be using on Retainers or Trash, in case she was using the room as a place to extract their memories secretly. Thus, it's fair to assume that she uses that room for personal use. The sheets are there in case she's too tired to not be able to go back home. Since the only other thing in the room is the shelves with the memories, we know she's doing something that drains her and is related with suspiciously similar memories. Even if the player doesn't get it, we are planting a seed for that "ah" moment when they do. And if they get it with this, chapeau

Comentado [UdW254]: I am so happy I managed to sneak exposition as a way to move the plot (even if it is at a micro level). It's like so natural... :) The thing is that since this is a linear narrative, making environmental storytelling be relevant is difficult because either you assume the player got it, and s/he gets it, and goes with it, or the player doesn't and you start building plot on something the player doesn't understand, which is a really, really bad idea. So I use it more like a foreshadowing tool more than a full narrative story

Theace: ... I'm not so sure about that...

}

else {

As one tried as many combinations as he could, the other kept an eye on the sand clock. Thirty minutes of tense silence passed by without any results. Theace indicated Dwale that it wasn't worth staying there: they climbed back the stairs and left the place before anyone could notice them. Sadly for them, with nothing of value on their hands.

}

}

Ikebana

45.

The day had come. Niji made her way to the Temple. The cherry trees had been decorated with metallic chains that depicted the symbols of memories, from the annual celebration of the First Scry Duel. Many were also hanged up from the Temple's ceiling. Many curious Lords came with their better dresses. It could be felt that the end was near. Omo's Retainers were all inside, but the Lord herself was waiting for Niji outside. When seeing Niji, Oukan went towards them, but Omo told her stay back.

Omo: I have something to tell you. – Niji felt shivers down her spine. – In private.

The two Lords moved to a corner of the Temple's inside.

Omo: Now, I don't want you to get the wrong idea, but I would appreciate if you didn't bring any memories on this match. Let me explain myself. Oukan has an excellent memory, one that can beat anything Iso has in reserve. But I don't think I will be able to gain enough of her trust in time. That is, unless I beat the girl that peaked her interest in a record time. I get the best unit this building has ever seen, and when I reach power, **I swear for my family's name** I'll give you a privileged position to do as you please.

Niji: ... Even if that meant eradicating the Lord system?

Comentado [UdW255]: Refers to the art of floral arrangements, thus that what is left is the final aesthetic touches to complete the garden that we have been taking care of (remembering that the garden is the metaphor for a utopian society on the island)

Comentado [UdW256]: Unlike later, when she swears it for nothing. It's like I'm actually becoming a writer, integrating subtle hints like this... Now no one will be able to say that the betrayal isn't player fair

Omo: ... As long as you keep my family out of that, sure.

Niji: ... I'm surprised to see Omo Bluemoon chicken out.

Omo: Like I said, don't get the wrong idea. I will win, but I respect your strength. The same way I respect Iso's. But think for a second that the spot at the top won't be mine, and you will have already lost. – Omo turned to go to her place. – Just don't attack my units and I will take it as an agreement.

Oukan: What did she say? – she asked from afar with expectation.

Omo: She doesn't have any dogs. And she doesn't want to come see yours. – Oukan made a surprised face. – Now focus, I wouldn't want you dropping your memory in the middle of our duel.

Comentado [UdW257]: Surprised Oukan face

Oukan: But have you explained the benefits of petting a fluff ball like I told you?

Comentado [UdW258]: I don't know at what moment Oukan became a goofball, but I love it. I guess when I established she was a shounen protagonist, I had to a) Include a scene where she demonstrated she likes animals b) make her an airhead that is really good at doing a very specific thing

The two wandered to the other side of the room, as Blacksnow and Theace approached Niji.

Theace: What was that about?

Niji: She... asked me to surrender.

Blacksnow: ... To the cuteness of dogs? – Niji squinted her eyes. – You mean... actual surrender?

Niji: Yes... I always had this vibe that she was bad news, but... Somehow admitting that she could lose makes it even more unsettling.

Theace: Indeed. For a Bluemoon to recognize someone else outside their family... Sometimes I forget we are in the path of glory.

Comentado [UdW259]: She swore for her family; the Bluemoon only care about family. Subtly saying that she was for serious...

Two more obstacles stood. Niji and Omo sat down. They closed their eyes. The match begun.

12th game {

if (Oukan is the last unit left for Omo, and any unit from Niji can't escape Oukan's attack range; var: OmoPlea = true) {

Omo: Wait! I admit my defeat! Don't destroy that memory!

The referees stood silent. After all, one couldn't surrender from a Scry match.

Omo: I swear I **will cheat on the next turn**, then I'll be expelled. Please, spare Oukan.

if (Niji gives Omo a chance) {

If Batten's Life in A Day memory hasn't been destroyed, it unlocks secret level and reaches maximum level

}

}

}

if (Niji didn't press attack once) {

ENDING: **The Bluemoon's Age**

In the year 777, Omo Bluemoon was declared the first Supreme Lord. Her first decree was Iso Coiledthread's execution for his many murdering plots, including those of two of her brothers, during the Tournament run. Her second decree would be to make Niji Camellia the island's Legislative Lord, giving her full power to govern, under Omo's judgment.

The Camellia's remained a humble and small family, but that didn't stop them from revolutionizing the known world, regulating memory enhancement and making it accessible to everyone through public and free memory markets. A solid and specialized economy emerged from social organization. The Lords remained behind the city's walls, and kept many luxuries and privileges, including the Scry system, which Omo wouldn't abolish for risk of a generalized uprising. Such permissiveness and their efforts to bring a better lifestyle to the people outside the walls allowed the duo to be re-elected multiple times, ending their reign many years later without a shade of conflict in the island. Having developed a deep

Comentado [UdW260]: Okay, technically, she could cheat by acting during Niji's turn, but a benefit of writing a naïve character is that you don't have to worry about logical arguments... Right? Ugh. I mean, I thought this from the gameplay perspective, because at some point I thought that the player could have the option to cheat, but since it wasn't particularly meaningful thematically (you quit to save a unit, okay, but there isn't much else to go to without doing a whole other narrative branch), but because the idea was "you have an action to use in your turn that is cheating", I kind of applied same mindset when thinking of this, when diegetically it doesn't work like that, Omo can cheat whenever she wants. You know what. The referees control the actions of the player. That's why she can't act right now, because it isn't her referee's turn. Even if she wants to cheat she can only do it on her turn, because otherwise the referee would be doing its job incorrectly. Boom. Easy pitfall avoided. Time to write a whole paragraph on why that makes sense. Excuse me

Comentado [UdW261]: And now someone could say "ugh, this is such a dissatisfying ending, why you did this, it only allows the player to skip the actual ending of the game". My philosophy is all decisions should have positives and negatives, or some kind of emotional weight. You decide to surrender? Sure, that may be logically right, and a valid solution to reach your objectives, subjugate to others. Good luck feeling like shit because you didn't accomplish it by yourself. Niji won't have that problem, but that player will. The thing is, the player chose it. Can't be anymore fair than this. After all, if in a story about how utilitarianism can be a solution, behaving in such way ended in no results... We would be saying exactly the opposite: that it is useless

respect for each other they brought a progress that, despite getting destroyed years later, would never leave fables and legends for centuries to come.

}

if (OmoPlea == true && no unit was killed by Oukan after Omo's plea) {

Both Omo and Oukan stood in disbelief. Niji, the victor, stood up first, taking out one of the camellias she had sewed in her dress and leaving it in front of the Bluemoon Lord. When the doors of the Scry Temple opened, surprised whispers invaded the surroundings.

if (Libra == false; var OmoAlly = true) {

Omo: Wait! Did you... Did you know what I would do?

Niji: ... I wasn't sure. But I could prepare myself and pardon you at the same time, so there wasn't really a choice to be done. The only disappointment was that you didn't keep your word.

Omo was in awe. After seconds of silence, their eyes meeting intensely, Omo raised her right hand. She moved it close to her mask. And she took it off. Behind it, Niji saw a pallid skin with visible hollow cheeks topped with large eye bags. The head of the Bluemoon was pressed to the ground.

Omo: I apologize for having thought you were an idiot! And I apologize for trying to take advantage of you! And!!! – Omo lifted her head, looking at Niji's eyes with a determination that overflowed her deteriorated body. – I promise I will repay this offense. Oukan! We are leaving.

Seeing the eyes that once looked down on her glow so strongly on pure admiration brought a warm feeling to the Camellias.

}

else {

Omo: ... Why do all great players have to be such blinded idealists? – asked Omo for herself in low voice as she closed her fists.

}

Comentado [UdW262]: Because social conflict will exist as long as there is social inequality. Probably even when there isn't, there will still be conflict, because ideological polarization, but that isn't completely factual. Inequality is guaranteed to bring conflict (thing is inequality perceived != real inequality, but this is supposed to bring closure, so let's not go too deep, this is not about society, it was about utilitarianism vs emotionality)

Comentado [UdW263]: This... feels very Fire Emblem. I mean, in a way, this is trying to be the evolution of how the Fire Emblem saga should have evolved in my eyes, but with another esthetic (or even aesthetic). But still. Not that I don't like it, though

Comentado [UdW264]: Tricking you into thinking she will be attacking Niji (remember this will appear in a relatively small text box, so what's most likely is that they will see this first sentence, and then, when they press A, the next, so there will be a limbo of intrigue there. If only I put some much thought in every phrase :')

Comentado [UdW265]: YOU GET IT? BECAUSE SHE'S THE HEAD OF THE BLUEMOONS! BUT SHE'S PRESSING HER HEAD TO THE GROUND REVERENCE STYLE. SMART

Comentado [UdW266]: Can't say how emotional this hits, but there's something I can say. I love this lines. Firstly, phrasing is more than serviceable. Second, the "And!!!" really conveys that extra energy that she puts to it, meaning her next sentence is really the important one. And more importantly, the thematic relevance of this phrase. If this game is literally "get to know people by playing a dangerous board game and bond with your friends in this extreme situation", this is the other side of the coin, is meet and discover who people really are through the act of play, is getting to respect them by elevating their capacities to an ideal to follow, even if it's only something that can occur thanks to situational luck. It's elucidate the intentions and essential emotions and thoughts behind their actions, is the connection beyond two people beyond the words, is reaching the ideal of understanding beyond an arbitrary system of words that loses meaning by perspective, context and so many more factors. Oh my god. Videogames are sex. This goes straight to my presentation about why games are art. Excuse me as I go take notes for something completely unrelated to completing this task.

Anyway, all of this to say that Niji genuinely plays Scry to win the game. Because the game is not a flawed way to obtain power, is a beautiful communication tool to her opponents and her Retainers, and respects the dangers it brings, it's not something to be seen from outside (reminder that she is literally using her own memories to compete)

Comentado [UdW267]: The point of this is to have something that balances choosing to safe Libra when she loses all memories. Because otherwise, there isn't a choice, it's the question of "do you want this chest or you want nothing". And that would be wrong in a game in which a premise is that being an idealist is not always the way to go. The narrative justification of this is that Omo can't bring herself to respect someone that is that idealistic. To her, Niji is amazing, yes, but isn't in "touch with reality like she is", thus can't put her in the pack of people she is willing to risk ...

Niji and her friends descended the stairs of the Temple with the proud beats of their hearts echoing on their heads.

}

else (OmoPlea == false || (Oukan killed a unit after Omo's Plea && OmoPlea == true)) {

Omo: ... So this is it. Fair enough. – Omo bowed her head. – You are an amazing player, Lady Niji. However, keep this in mind. If during your reign you dare to prejudice my family, I'll make sure to take the top spot from your hands. – she stood up. – Make sure the Coiledthread deranged doesn't win this.

Oukan observed Niji with a fire in her gaze and a wide smile: without taking her eyes off her, she patted Omo in the back and closely accompanied her outside, to return to their home. Niji turned to her friends, who all looked at her with hope and disbelief, and confidently raised her right fist in celebration.

}

One man stood between them and the end of the injustice.

Comentado [UdW268]: Yes, Omo just said hell no to the tradition of letting the victor leave, what are you going to do about it

Comentado [UdW269]: The injustice, not injustice. I know what I'm doing

46.

For better or for worse, the dice rolled an unexpected result: their last match was to occur on the first day of the week, meaning they had only two days to prepare.

if (IsoDefeatedEarly == true) {

Having defeated Iso once, relatively early, meant it was unlikely he could gather stronger memories for this last match, but just in case, the whole of the Camellias passed a long day planning and discussing what were Iso's options and how to prepare for them, specifically what he could do outside the board.

if (WindiaAlly == true) {

As the day ended, a young girl arrived at the Camellia's main door. Dwale was the one who brought her in, subduing her with mild emotion-waves. With the situation secured, Niji asked her to say what was the visit for: she said to be Windia's Retainer, and that her Lord asked for Niji's help on a matter regarding

Iso's conspiracies, establishing the outsides of the Coiledthread's domains as a meeting point. Niji looked at Micci inquisitively.

Micci: It is true that she has served as Lady Windia's Retainer for many years. I trust her words.

if (Go assist Windia; var WindiaHelped == true) {

Niji: Very well. Dwale, can you deal with this?

Dwale: ... Alright, guess it's time to work.

The party of two advanced through the humid night, away from Niji's sight.

Niji: ... Let's fortify ourselves. Without Dwale around, we are the most vulnerable.

The night advanced in silence, everyone on their nerves. Around two hours after leaving, Dwale arrived back. His humble clothes were full of mud and grass, as his face was.

Dwale: That was a fun adventure there.

He proceeded to explain what happened: there was a reunion of Iso with many minor Lords that were under his command, trying to organize an attack on Niji. Since Windia couldn't risk to ask help from other members of the Coiledthread, she requested Niji's help to enter the place to do some espionage while having someone to cover her back. Together, they learnt bits of the plan before a guard found them out and they had to run away at full throttle.

Micci: What happened with Lady Windia?

Dwale: She's fine, they couldn't recognize us with the dark. She thanked my help and went back to her residence.

Theace stretched, lost in thought.

Theace: They probably won't risk a suicide move tonight, so if they try something, it will be tomorrow... I have an idea on how to solve that. And the first step of the plan is Niji going to bed.

On the following morning, Niji was told to convoke an emergency reunion: in an hour, all Lords were reunited at the Scry Temple.

Niji: Dear Lords, I have a proposition to do. Yesterday I got news that Lord Iso here, who has decided to bless us with his radiant presence, has been planning an assassination attempt against me. – no one seemed surprise by her words, but there was a certain expectation. After all, with no action and no prove, there was no reason to punish Iso, thus, to convoke an emergency Reunion of Leaders. – With that being the case, I have a very simple proposition: let us celebrate our Scry match today. There's no need to give this man an unfair victory.

Iso hesitated. As much as he hated to admit it, he feared. Without Kouzui, he had nothing that resembled a winning bet. In fact, after his last match, he lost another two of his important pieces. He was out of worthy memories to confront Niji with. For a better chance, he had to kill her that night, even if he had to do it himself.

}

else if (Don't go; var WindiaAlone = true) {

Niji: ... I'll have to decline. In the middle of the night, under those circumstances... Even if you spoke the truth, it would be too dangerous. Please, tell your Lord that she must understand it, and that she is welcomed to ask for my help tomorrow on the morning.

The girl left with a conflicted obligingness, leaving a dense silence in the room.

Micci: ... You did what was right. It was an unreasonable demand.

Niji: ... Let's hope that was everything there was to it.

}

}

if (WindiaAlly == false || WindiaAlone == true) {

On the next morning, unsettling news flooded the Lord's domains: Windia and twelve more Lords were declared dead in the Coiledthread facility. An emergency trial was declared to clarify what occurred.

if (WindiaAlone == true) {

Micci took the news with stoicism. She turned to Niji, and spoke with a cold voice:

Micci: Win. That's all. I'll take the morning off to grieve. **Excuse me.**

She bowed and left the room. Niji closed her eyes focusing on washing the culpability away.

Niji: We are leaving.

}

All Lords quickly gathered in the Scry Temple: a mass assassination on the day before electing the first Supreme Lord was to be expected, but not exactly on the Coiledthread's household.

Iso: ... **Where to begin speaking of this tragedy. I will narrate what occurred. I was celebrating my pass to the finals of the Tournament together with many friends, when three Lords, members of my own family, entered the room in a murderous rampage. My friends tried to protect me, but until they could take the maddened traitors out, nine of them died. And I suspect that the voice that drove them to this suicidal acts was none other than the small fry who thinks to be the next who-knows-what. Niji Camellia. That is why I would like to announce a voting to expel her from the Tournament.**

All eyes turned to Niji.

Niji: I wish to know who would align with a Lord so frightened of losing again against me that would murder thirteen people to hide how pathetic they are. – the room remained silent. – Anyone?! Raise your hand if you would! – **no one did so.** Niji turned her eyes to Iso. – Seems like we don't need to vote.

Comentado [UdW270]: So, I didn't want to be overdramatic, and I think this fits very well the more closed personality of Micci. Take the morning off to grieve. It's like. How do you even do that. She's all like "my duty this morning is grieving", because that's the only way she can cope with it and not have a mental crisis. She doesn't even ask for it. She announces it, which points at how much she needed it. If she wasn't given the morning off, she would break, so the only thing she can do is taking the decision directly, since it would make no difference otherwise. And of course, that's because Niji is how she is. Also, try not to think too hard and how devastated she must be by that fact that she reinforced Niji to not go help Windia. I didn't want to go there (since Windia's death is more a plot device than a thematic one), but it wouldn't feel fair to kill her and have Micci exhibit no reaction

Comentado [UdW271]: So basically what happens on the other route, but Windia has to go with some people who she didn't trust 100%, things go south and they died

Comentado [UdW272]: As if anyone would vote for Iso to become Supreme Lord for free

Iso didn't respond. If no one would even hesitate to vote for his cause, it didn't make sense to push it any further. As much as he hated to admit it, he feared. Without Kouzui, he had nothing that resembled a winning bet. In fact, after his last match, he lost another two of his important pieces. He was out of worthy memories to confront Niji with. For a better chance, he had to kill her that night, even if he had to do it himself.

Niji: With that out of the way, I have a proposition of my own. Let us celebrate our Scry match today. If we don't, more deaths could occur. There's nothing impeding us to move the date to the day before, especially when I was the participant who had the last match. What I'm getting at is that there is no need to give this man a victory won with blood.

}

Iso: ... I oppose. It would be a disrespect to those who died to omit the burial ceremonies because of arguments with no real basis.

Niji: The dead can take their time, Iso, but I can't wait to destroy you. Fellow Lords, let's vote. Anyone opposes to moving the match ahead? – only Iso's faction voted against it, very much insufficient to revoke the proposition. – I'll see you this afternoon on this same floor.

Iso: ... Wait! I have a proposition to do myself. – Iso's expression showed bitterness mixed with his angry eyes. – I doubt I could do my best after what happened tonight. The undeniable – he cleared his throat. – talent that Lady Camellia has shown would mean my defeat, no doubts. That's why I wanted to propose someone as a new contender. I wish Oukan Cigne to take my place.

Comentado [UdW273]: Eyes are the windows to the soul and no one can convince me otherwise

Comentado [UdW274]: I'm so glad I managed to add this somewhere. Because I really thought I couldn't make a timeline where this happened with 3/4 of the story done. But I was wrong

Cold sweat felt down Niji's neck, as many Lords excitedly discussed their decisions. It wasn't too complicated to understand what was going on: Oukan would not care much about being the Supreme Lord, so it would be as if there was no Supreme Lord. Essentially, it would be like having no winner. Oukan, who had been napping, made a celebratory scream when she was told what was going on. Niji crossed eyes with hers', which were opened widely and lost in a single thing: Niji herself. The voting began. Iso's faction voted in favor. Omo did the same. Many Lords from smaller families followed with their example. That would be enough to settle it. Oukan left the Temple the first, leaving with the energy of a hurricane. The news made a racket among those who didn't assist at the Reunion of Leaders. The afternoon arrived implacable, without time for preparations.

Comentado [UdW275]: How in the world would she not? Either by interest or to see the two best players (if Niji beat her the special way) ducking it out, she had to vote yes

}

else (IsoDefeatedEarly == false) {

They had all gathered, trying to figure out a safe approach. However, when facing someone who managed to come on top of an emotion-wave clash with Oukan herself, strategies seemed futile. Iso's Retainer, Kouzui, made it feel like the only option they had was to play well and trust Niji's strength.

}

47.

The sun shined splendidly, yet a soft drizzle felt upon the island. The doors of the Camellia residence opened. Niji breathed the clean air to soothe her nerves. She looked forwards and advanced. Dozens of people made a line from her home to the Temple: all families had come out of their houses to wait with expectation the results of the last match.

if (NijiClanLeader == true) {

Many of the people who stood at the sides of her path were people from the Camellia clan, who all cried out for their Lord:

if (Niji hasn't lost any memory in any match, and she has played all of them) {

across the entirety of the Lord's domains, the name of "New God" made the mansion's walls tremble.

}

else if (Niji hasn't lost / surrendered any match) {

across the entirety of the Lord's domains, the name of "The Invicted" made the mansion's walls tremble.

}

else {

across the entirety of the Lord's domains, the name of Niji made the mansion's walls tremble.

}

Comentado [UdW276]: Meanwhile, on another much less convoluted timeline

Comentado [UdW277]: Just friendly reminder that Kouzui is bad news. Also, maybe somewhat of a temptation to try confront her when the option is given. You'll know when you see ;)

Comentado [UdW278]: The very classic climate foreshadowing. Because it's hopeful, but things can go south. Really fast

Comentado [UdW279]: The sweet enjoyment of partaking...

Comentado [UdW280]: Had to write it like this, because since no one has addressed Niji this way before, if I didn't construct the sentence in an "a → b" manner, and instead separated them, it could look like they are crying out for Niji's opponent, which would be a huge misunderstanding

Comentado [UdW281]: You are welcomed, hardcore player

Comentado [UdW282]: Symbolically saying that she will tear down the structures that have served as foundations for the Lord system? Maybe

}

48.

if (IsoDefeatedEarly == true) {

Oukan had been sitting on the Temple's floor for over half an hour, dressed with a finely sewed golden dress, the same she wore on the victory that earned her the nickname of "God of Scry". She had no need for words: the hand signs were made, the doors closed together with their eyes. Everything went dark. The match began.

13th game vs Oukan

Oukan and Niji looked at each other's eyes intensely, as though they had to ensure that the match had, indeed, ended.

if (Oukan won) {

Oukan slowly stood up, wholly shaking. Her spine tensed up steadily, her hair obfuscating her expression, her hands crawled up, reaching the chest, the neck, the face, as her backbone curled backwards, her gaze lost in her own victory. Suddenly, her arms sprung to the sides, her hair falling behind her back, and stayed in that position, as if the roof were to open so the sky could shine glory upon her.

As her lungs breathed the joy of the moment, her arms slowly felt down. Once her mind recovered focus, she looked back at Niji. The Camellia's head hadn't been lifted, consumed by frustration and impotence. Oukan got on her knees, putting her open hand in front of Niji's eyes.

Oukan: You have been the best opponent I've ever had. It should be a reason for pride.

Niji accepted the handshake, sprinkled by the streams that felt down her cheeks.

The doors were opened, the expectation finally ceasing. As Oukan left to celebrate with her family, every Lord returned to their homes, urging to decide whom to ally and whom to betray, unwilling to give power away so easily. Before the tides stroke again, for a moment, there was calm. Even when no one else was left around the Temple, Niji remained inside, surrounded by those who had supported her until the end. It was a bitter end, but there was a comfortable feeling

Comentado [UdW283]: I love that this occurs no matter who wins, because the emotion isn't about the consequences, the first thing they feel when coming back from their duel is the disbelief of having fought somewhat so formidable

Comentado [UdW284]: I did it again, no one can stop me

Comentado [UdW285]: How can someone not love the shonen protagonist archetype. Also, originally this said "Oukan got on her knees and offered her a handshake". If you don't see anything wrong with that, stay pure and innocent like a fluffy dog

Comentado [UdW286]: Call me idealist (which I am), but even though it has a certain cliché feel to it, this may be my favorite scene yet (or not and I just forgot, but whatever, you get the idea). Cinematically, put a dynamic camera close-up following Oukan's hands rising up, and then as she explodes in satisfaction, the camera pans out, the background disappears, and there's only Oukan, looking to the roof in ecstasy. Then you do a low-angle (FUUCK RAP IS THE SOUL OF A MAN HAS STARTED TO PLAY AM ABOUT TO RANT LET'S GO) shot slightly inclined from the side with Oukan taking most of the frame, Niji relegated to the left down corner. Then Oukan offers the handshake to Niji, and the camera moves to the side putting both in the same frame, erasing the background, it's just the two of them, who despite the outcome feel like they have lived something truly wonderful, as equals. Even if in the visual novel format it's not very doable (although I could do an animation for it, try me), there would be at least two or three images only for this scene. In fact, I very much planned the flow of this scene, and am very satisfied with the results. We have the first paragraph, were it's just Oukan enjoying her victory, taking all relevance and attention. Then deescalate back to Niji, the protagonist, and then we have the moment between the two, which ends with the "cheeks", ending the paragraph there, because even though what comes (AND NOW BEFORE MY BODY IS DRY WHAT IS THIS) happens right after, it exists separately to this moment between them. Also, note the finesse of not saying that Niji was crying, and instead being all poetical about it ;) Also, note how what I started putting some fluff between this and the ending, because that puts Oukan on somewhat of a very negative note, and it would be very harsh to arrive at it when coming from the more wholesome of Oukan in the whole game

in her heart, surrounded by a peaceful silence and released of a burden that had been tormenting her for many days.

if (OmoAlly == true) {

Within the quietness, Omo emerged from behind the Temple's door, entering the room, sitting in front of Niji. The two looked at each other, captivated by the inevitability of Oukan's victory.

Omo: When Iso proposed Oukan as a new participant, I knew you would be able to give her what she had been waiting for. Never have I seen her so radiant.

Niji answered her consolation with a feeble smile.

Omo: And... After the voting, we discussed something together. We thought it was fair that you joined me as the new Supreme Lord's advisor.

A barely repressed laugh came out of Niji's mouth. Omo smiled in return, amused by her reaction.

Niji: Excuse me?

Omo: As you heard. We judged that a woman of your caliber would make a great partner to rule all the idiots that will be under our command from now on.

Niji: ... Thanks. I will give it my all. And... For now, we will be going home, so tell Oukan this: I'll win the next match. And also, that when it happens, we won't have to risk anyone's memories.

ENDING: The First Triumvirate

In the year 777, Oukan Cigne was declared the first Supreme Lord. The first law that was made public was the abolishment of memory destruction: from then on, memories wouldn't be taken out of their containers when used in Scry matches, keeping them safe. Many Lords opposed it, since it would suppose a reduction of the speed at which memories were enhanced, but the union of Oukan, Omo and Niji trampled all complains.

Despite Niji's best efforts to bring equality, Omo and Oukan's concerns with power decentralization kept her at bay, barely managing to bring a more stable and organized system that could bring a dignified lifestyle to the people. Many remained poor and at the mercy of Lords, but thanks to the government's efforts to bring prosperity, their reign would be remembered fondly by most, and extended many years.

}

else (OmoAlly == false) {

ENDING: The Era of The God

In the year 777, Oukan Cigne was declared the first Supreme Lord, with Omo acting as her counselor. They exiled Iso from the Lord's domains for the many murdering plots he participated in, including the assassination of two of Omo's brothers. The two remained rather static during their initial months of governance, gathering power and monopolizing more resources and manpower to work under their service. Slowly but surely, the other Lords lost many privileges, and couldn't do anything to rebel against their rulers without facing Omo's overwhelming retaliation.

With the power centralized on two Lords, Niji had less complications to move her plans forward: Omo didn't care much about what happened to the outside people as long as it didn't threaten her, and since Niji propositions stood by creating structures that would employ the people to produce resources and give them a dignified way of life, Omo opposed none of them. Despite the suffering from the Lords' abuses and their dependency on them to obtain enhanced memories, a situation that would not change by many years to come, Niji would become and adored figure for the people, marking that as a relatively benign and prosper era in the history books of the island.

}

}

else (Niji won) {

Niji looked back. Her friends returned the gaze, filled with awe. Her father proudly smiled. Had she just... Oukan bounced impatiently on her knees. Niji stood up and dramatically ripped the second and last camellia of her dress, handing it to Oukan.

Niji: I must express my gratitude, Lady Oukan. This was the match of a lifetime.

Oukan: I'll be waiting for a rematch.

The eyes of both competitors shined in the promise of a reencounter on the board.

}
}

else (IsoDefeatedEarly == false) {

Iso looked like a kid who was about to receive the biggest present of his life, walking impatiently with a permanent smile.

Iso: Look who has arrived! Lady Niji Camellia! Please, come in, get comfortable!

Niji sat down on her place as Iso did exaggerated reverences and mockery.

Niji: Sit down Iso, or else I can't beat your ass.

Iso: That's the attitude! – at that moment, Omo and Oukan entered the room. – I can't wait to relive this memory every single day of my life! But before that, I've got a little proposition to do! – Iso noticed the newcomers. – Oh. What are you two doing here?

Omo: We have only assisted to make sure you don't proceed dubiously. – Iso's expression showed he still didn't like the idea. – Lord Theace has given us permission to stay, so we have the right to it. Plus, it's not like Oukan would allow me to intervene without reason.

Iso: ... **Dear Lady Niji!** Let's not deviate from what is truly important! I had a proposition, did I not! Let's see, you must have met my newest Retainer, Kouzui. I hope the small spectacle I made with Lady Oukan didn't deprive you of your very important sleep. And if it did, let me give you a breather. You may choose a Retainer to duel with mine. One clash, and let's see who wins. If you are lucky, you may even incapacitate Kouzui! That would put me in quite a pinch, don't you think so?!

Niji: ...

Comentado [UdW287]: I want to play my own game just to beat Iso

Iso: Come on, Lady Niji, it isn't that complicated! Pick one! There isn't much quality to choose from, after all!

Theace: There's no reason to follow this stupid game. He has no legal ground whatsoever.

Comentado [UdW288]: Not at all, this is purely for hype, exposition, and seeing if the player has understood that this is the god damn final boss and doesn't try to cheese it

Iso: Another party killer. Seems like a pest within Lords.

if (BattenChosen = true) {

Niji: Batten. Show him.

Comentado [UdW289]: The logic of those options is simple. Oukan is Oukan. Batten had been foreshadowed to have an amazing memory. Dwale is Dwale. Blacksnow, Micci, Phoenix, Theace, even Omo. They are cool, but don't have The Memory to stand to Kouzui, and nothing could make Niji think that they had that potential

Batten nodded, hiding his insecurity. At the count of three, Batten and Kouzui shot each other.

if (LifeInOneDay == maxLevel) {

A second passed. Another one. None seemed to have been affected by any memory, so the duel was considered a draw.

Iso: So he did have it after all... Enough games then. Let's begin.

}

else {

It wasn't enough. It had the potential, but it wasn't enough. Batten froze in place, caught by Oukan before he fell down after dropping the wood crutches. Niji clenched her teeth, frustrated that it didn't work.

Iso: Had he come to my family like he was told to instead of following his sister's stupid advice, he now would have a powerful memory on his hands. Life really is full of mistakes. – Iso sat down in front of Niji. – Now that we've had our fun, we can start the game.

}

}

Comentado [UdW290]: Sad Niji noises because Iso doesn't like Scry

else if (DwaleChosen = true) {

Niji: Dwale, can you do it?

Dwale stood up, confidently walking towards Kouzui.

Iso: You seem to trust yourself very much. I like that. Wouldn't you like to come to my side? Considering that would leave your Lord with four Retainers, it's basically jumping on the winning boat.

Dwale: ... Thinking of my brother under the command of someone like you makes me retch.

Iso made a sign for Kouzui to step forward. At the count of three, Dwale and Kouzui shot each other.

if (AbandoningATreasureProudly == maxLevel) {

A second passed. Another one. None seemed to have been affected by any memory, so the duel was considered a draw.

Iso: He matched... Enough games! Let's begin.

Comentado [UdW291]: Dwale protects, Dwale attacks, but most importantly, with Kouzui he is matched

Despite Iso's distress, the more surprised of all was Dwale himself, who thought he could surpass Kouzui. After being told to sit down to his place, they were ready to begin the game.

}

else {

Immediately, Dwale could tell that something had gone wrong. He could recall the memory, but... it came out much weaker than it should. Before he could react, Kouzui's shock reached him. Everything became dark as Iso started laughing uncontrollably. Niji shook Dwale, to no effect.

Comentado [UdW292]: This must feel really cheap. It's justified. Just not here. Should have listened to Theace :/. Basically in one of Dwale's memories, his master tell him that he has to pay him a visit from time to time to recharge the enhanced memory. The thing is that because it occurs in a memory, Dwale forgets it until he levels it up at maximum (unlocks it again). Thus, if enough "time" passes, he loses the enhanced memory, despite still remembering the original memory, because he forgot the one in which the instructions that he had to recharge it were said

Oukan: ... He won't come out of it for some time.

Iso: Right, right. Ah, that was fun. Well, now we can start. Unless you want to surrender. But no postponing it anymore.

```
}  
}
```

```
else if (OmoAlly == true) {
```

```
if (OukanChosen = true) {
```

Iso: Perfect! Genius, even! How great that I found Kouzui after the young Cigne came to your house! Otherwise I wouldn't be able to witness the Scry God defeated a second time!

Comentado [UdW293]: I'm not sure it's explained anywhere, but basically Iso expected to win the Tournament using Batten's super memory, but that didn't go that well because Oukan does as she pleases :3

Oukan took that comment to heart.

Omo: Use it. Make it easy for Niji to win.

Iso: What are you going to do? – Iso couldn't stop enjoying the clearly angry look of Oukan's eyes. – My confidant told me you are nothing but a fanatic of Scry. What memory could you have to face Kouzui?

Comentado [UdW294]: Is what happens when you just play Scry instead of attending your political responsibilities...

Oukan: Maybe you would know if you spent a second training instead of murdering. I assure you the only thing I will regret is sharing this feeling with your dog.

Iso made a sign for Kouzui to step forward. At the count of three, Oukan shot. Kouzui rolled to a side. The room stood in silence for a second.

Oukan: Good enough. – she said in a better mood, going back to where Omo was.

Comentado [UdW295]: It is being implied it was a really wholesome memory (either her victory with the "It was the Year 776" memory or one with his brother when they were kids), but I don't need to go in detail, so just here for the hype

Iso walked to Kouzui and slapped her in the face with his palm wide open. The Retainer felt to the ground from the impact.

Iso: Can you explain what was that. – all joy from his voice had left, substituted by his usual dryness.

Kouzui: ... I sensed danger. I'm not throwing away my shot for your stupid game.

Iso kicked Kouzui, angered by her words. He turned back to Niji, anxious to begin the match.

}

}

else if (Don't participate) {

Niji: Did you not hear me the first time? Sit down and let's begin.

Iso shrug his shoulders and followed her petition.

}

Niji did her hand sign. Iso ignore it and closed his eyes directly. Niji took a last breath before the world blurred. The day had come. The day to make history.

13th game vs Iso

if (Iso wins) {

ENDING: The Age of Calamity

In the year 777, Iso Coiledthread was declared the first Supreme Lord. The first thing he ensured was to take control of all family's Retainers. After that, he impeded any Scry match to be done, legislating against it and burning the Scry Temple to the ground. Without new retainers whose memories to enhance, and with no chance to renew the enhanced memories shared with the Retainers that Iso had under his command, many held hostages, Lords began to leave their domains in search of somewhere else to get memories from. Most of them were hunted down. Those who remained, lost all enhanced memories in the following years, and harmless as they were, were expelled by Iso with the other inhabitants of the island. With no one to oppose him, and giving an adequate treatment to the Retainers that served as his personal army, he maintained power for many years, until death by old age payed him a visit. Leaving a seat of power that was painted in red by the internal factions that served him, the country entered an era of anarchy and violence that wouldn't be reverted until many, many years had gone by.

As for Niji, she would be one of the few who managed to escape Iso's hunt, homeless and sick, accompanied only by Dwale and Micci, the ones who survived after the many persecutions that they felt victim of. Hopeless that they would outlive the country's ruin, they set sail to find a better land to live in. That hope, however, would die with them, sunk under the waves.

}

else if (Niji wins) {

Iso had gone absolutely livid. Niji dramatically ripped the second and last camellia from her dress, and threw it at Iso's feet.

Comentado [UdW296]: Frieza, Frieza, Frieza...

Niji: I hope you relive this memory every day of your life.

}

}

Comentado [UdW297]: This was a bad idea in-world, because you are breeding an important hate-based memory, but as a response to his previous bullshit, it's lovely

Niji walked outside. The drizzle had disappeared, the shining Sun bathing Niji in light. The multitude remained silent as Niji descended the Temple's stairs, before they exploded in cheers and a disbelieved burst of applauses. Never the news of a Scry victory had spread so fast among the inhabitants of the island. Blacksmiths, hunters, retainers, lords, travelers, fisherman, farmers, weavers, there wasn't a single person who didn't learn that day of who the Supreme Lord was. Had the birds and fish spoken too, further the news would have reached.

Comentado [UdW298]: Yes, this is about Blacksnow's father, Kas and Dwale's master

if (NijiClanLeader == false) {

As betrayals and alliances were discussed at every clan, a small celebration took place at the humble house behind the huge mansion of the Rose clan.

}

else {

As betrayals and alliances were discussed at every clan, a small celebration took place at the humble house behind the huge mansion of the Camellia clan.

Comentado [UdW299]: The distinction is important to the feel of "hell yeah I won"

}

As an abundant feast was served, they enjoyed their glory, laughed for the good moments, toasted for the hope that pain wouldn't visit their hearts again, screamed of joy and promised to do their best to change the island into a place

where everyone could live with dignity. Together, no more Retainers and Lords. When they were done with the food, the night had already come, and Theace called everyone's attention to read a letter he had started writing when the Tournament was announced. His desire to see the Camellias flourish, all the stress and hardships, but most importantly, his deep and sincere appreciation to all of them for their trust in her daughter, the highest pride and most precious thing that had ever happened in his life. Theace burst into tears as he embraced Niji. The way from there on would be harsh, as it had always been, but that moment, it would become a truly precious memory.

```
if (WindiaAlly == false || WindiaAlone == true) {
```

Once the celebration calmed down, Niji and Micci took their time to visit the Cloud family, who were taking care of Windia's burial. They would keep her memory alive by doing what they had set out to do. When they went back, silence received them. Everyone except Dwale and Blacksnow slept calmly. For a moment, Niji had feared something would have happened, but it was fine. It could, it would be fine.

```
}
```

49.

The last Reunion of Leaders was convoked. In it, Niji would be officially given the title of Supreme Lord, and would begin her reign for an entire year, as it was established during the Tournament's voting.

Iso: Before we begin, there is something I would like to propose: let us vote to invalidate the results of the Tournament. Let everything go back to how it was.

Everyone discretely moved their eyes to Niji. She didn't need to be driven to speak:

Niji: Do not dare, Iso Coiledthread! Do not dare to have the impudence to say those words after the blood you caused for this same Tournament! Do not dare to ignore the decisions we took on this same room when everyone had the chance to win! You have no right to it!

Iso: What right do I need?! I'm a Lord! I take what I want from whoever I want, because I give people a reason to live! You, a Lord that hasn't sold a single memory in her life, barely qualify as such! I'm not giving away my spot to a farce of a Lord! Not a single Lord will!

Comentado [UdW300]: Am I referring to the party or the inhabitants of the island? Yes

Comentado [UdW301]: ;)

Comentado [UdW302]: You don't know how much I wanted to write Theace crying. Like, I had a whole bulletpoint just for it. And as stupid and visceral as that sounds (which it is), think about the actual situation with Theace. First his wife has to leave and go live to the forests or towns made out of trash (none seems very good). Then her daughter enters the conspiracies of the Lords, which they had tried to keep away from Niji at all costs. Then Niji decides she win the Tournament and bring social revolution. 2 (and a half, if we count what happened with Windia at the end) assaults on Niji. Having to get Retainers from nowhere to give Niji a damn chance. Having to manage inheriting the Rose clan if Niji won the election. All of that showing an absolute confidence on Niji, always supporting and giving the best advice he could. Theace is best dad, no discussion whatsoever

Comentado [UdW303]: You see what I did there? Planting the seeds for the sequel, I'm telling you

Comentado [UdW304]: I prefer the end to be a positive "I support Niji" rather than "I don't like Iso's proposition". From this perspective, we are going from down to up, which feels more like a victory. Although it's pure phrasing styling

Oukan: I will. Niji proved herself, and did so with fair play and many guts. I don't know of anyone better for the title of Supreme Lord.

```
var Supports = 20;
```

With her words, some other Lords also shown their support to Niji.

Iso: Of course, the other fool of a Lord and her entourage of sheep. As if that would be nearly enough.

Comentado [UdW305]: ODEN-SAN!!!

```
if (NijiClanLeader == true, var Supports += 25) {
```

Many of the Camellia's Lords stood up.

Holly: It seems like Lord Iso here forgot who is Lady Niji, head of the Camellia clan, the largest one in the Lord's domains.

Iso: ... Even then you don't reach half of the votes. No matter how many minions you bring, you won't achieve what is impossible for you.

```
}
```

```
else if (WindiaHelped == true || (WindiaAlly == true && IsoDefeatedEarly == false), var Supports += 10) {
```

Comentado [UdW306]: If he was, WindiaAlly doesn't codify Windia being alive, that is codified by WindiaHelped

Windia: Lady Niji has my vote as well. May you all understand one day how much of a golden heart she has. One that will guide us away from all the killing and conflict we live so afraid of.

Three more Lords from the Coiledthread rose their hand, drawing pure hate in Iso's face. Some other minor families decided to join Niji as well.

```
}
```

```
else if (PhoenixAlly == true && PhoenixBetrayal == false, var Supports += 5) {
```

Varna: Count me in. If she was capable of accepting Phoenix, she will be a more tolerant leader than anyone else.

```
}
```

```
else if (AstroAlly == true && BlacksnowBetrayal == false, var Supports += 20) {
```

Astro: The Mudra clan supports Lady Niji. And everyone who desires a better future for every person on this island should do the same. Otherwise would be as foolish of an action as to oppose the Sun itself.

```
}
```

```
else if (OmoAlly == true, var Supports += 30) {
```

Omo: The Bluemoon family joins Lady Niji. Never has there been such a strong hand to guide all of us towards a new era. One that has the determination to care about all of us, but also the strength to protect such kindness. Anyone who knows what the kindness of a sibling feels like will understand why Lady Niji is what we need, maybe more than ever.

```
}
```

```
if (Supports >= 50) {
```

There was no point on voting: it was clear to everyone that Iso's proposal would go nowhere. Before the sun reached its peak, Niji had become Supreme Lord.

```
}
```

```
else if (Supports < 50) {
```

Iso: ... If that's all the idiots, we can begin counting the votes. Then we can end this useless reunion.

The counting was done under great expectation, but the opposition to Iso's proposal run out of votes before the fifty per cent threshold was crossed. Despite all that she did right, all she had accomplished, it wouldn't be enough. Maybe if she had her father by her side, he would have had the words to convince everyone. Niji's body froze when thinking on how she would explain what happened. It felt like she could break down at any second.

```
if ((PhoenixAlly == true && PhoenixBetrayal == false && PhoenixExplainedThings == true && DwaleSabotage == true) {
```

As Niji was leaving the Scry Temple, a thunderous jolt crossed her brain. Her heart began to beat uncontrollably. She run with all of her strengths for the first time on her life, forgetting that she was supposed to have a severe bone illness.

Comentado [UdW307]: Playing on Astro's name, but also his sun-like aesthetic, on top of delivering the idea that anyone who doesn't side with Niji is asking to live in chaos

Comentado [UdW308]: I know there will be people who disagree with giving a good / bad ending based on an apparent single decision, because it is very harsh to the player, especially when they were not told this selection would occur (let's omit the narrative context that clearly points the player towards getting connections because they are weak in comparison to other Lords, and the foreshadowing that has be done about the final match not being the end of all, ehem Varna, ehem). I understand the complaint, and it's not the smoothest implementation player-wise, but hear me out:

- 1.Astro and Windia are really easy to get, and the player is most likely to accept their alliance. Together with Oukan, who is a guaranteed, they already make 50% (reminder that both have two occasions to be joined)
- 2.It's extremely thematically relevant. Even if the previous reason didn't exist, just for the fact that I want to present the idea that success can exist for everyone with the right amount of idealism (effort) and utilitarianism (honest support (yes, my utilitarianism is idealistic, welcome to my world)), it would already be worth it. Because to me, the player will be affected by my work much more if they have to face the idea that they were missing something than if I just give an ending because you played enough time. Don't get me wrong, Thracia 776 does it, Genealogy of the Holly War does it, and they are my favorite Fire Emblems (not in that order though), but why wouldn't I take it a step further if that meant a deeper connection to actually getting the ending that one wants (now that I think about it, many Visual Novels already do this, but let me sound like I'm original)
- 3.The ludonarrative integration of this is so good. As I said, story about connecting with people through play, about emotion vs utilitarianism, about rising up. What is a better representation of that than literally people coming out on your defense to say you are a really cool and worthy person? Literally all your decision become relevant at the last moment, and that the fact that the player doesn't know anything about it is what makes it such a hard-hitting (or so I want it to be :) moment
- 4.With the appropriate music, it would be epic as heck, you can't win this argument anymore

Comentado [UdW309]: I was going to say "What is this, a Japanese Visual Novel? Ha!" then realized that, well, this IS a Visual Novel, so close enough I guess. And yes, this is an AnimeMind reference, partially

PD: This was funnier when there was another condition, and it went up to two lines of conditions instead of one. Sad
PD2: Joke on the joke, we go back to the two lines

Comentado [UdW310]: Me every day I go outside with music. "But you are wearing two masks, how could you breathe with that on?" Me: Yes

She quickly reached Omo and Oukan, who were headed to the **Bluemoon residence**.

Comentado [UdW311]: Oukan is absolutely that friend who literally lives the other way from your home, but still comes to get you and accompanies you back there every time because. Because shonen protagonist >:D

Niji: Please Lady... Omo... accompany me... – she said heavily panting.

Twenty minutes later, they had arrived at the Camellia's house, and gotten everyone updated with what occurred at the Reunion of Leaders.

Niji: But I've thought of something. Lady Omo, wouldn't you want to achieve power with me?

Omo: ... You've got my attention. Continue.

Niji: Okay, let's see... What is the biggest amount of people that we can easily convince to fight to get us on power?

Omo: ... The Rose's?

Niji: ... The people outside.

Omo: ... Is that your plan? Imagine you manage to get a thousand Trash. The amount of Retainers and Lords in the capital exceeds that of five hundred by much. Without enhanced memories, any attempt of resistance is futile, and you'll only manage to get yourself killed early if your plan is to go one by one and enhance their memories. That's more than a year living in filth and sickness. For each enhanced memory.

Niji: ... Let me be frank. We know of your room under... you know where. We know what is inside there. The question is how many you can provide us with.

Omo: ... It takes a while. And the only thing you get are unenhanced memories. Could you stop wasting our time?

Niji: Phoenix, could you teach someone how to **uproot** an enhanced memory?

Comentado [UdW312]: Plants themes intensify

Phoenix: ... Yes, it should be fairly simple to anyone with a bright mind.

Omo: What are you...?

Niji: Put it simple, Phoenix discovered a way to extract enhanced memories from the brain once they have taken root. And what I think you do in that room is...

Omo: Memory duplication... So if didn't understand this wrong, you want to get a bunch of Trash, give them my most precious enhanced memories replicated, and take over the Lord's domains with their help.

Niji: Y-yes, that would be the gist of it.

Niji squinted her eyes, unable to read if Omo was considering the plan or how to more painfully kill her for such offense.

Omo: ... If I didn't have to modify the base memory, the process would be much faster... But that would mean stop providing to the Lords who are under my service...

It seemed to be the first, but Niji still hadn't had the certainty.

Omo: ... Two questions. First: can you rally a thousand people behind your cause without being discovered? Second: can you survive at least half a year out there?

Dwale: She can. I'll make sure of it.

Blacksnow: If it's about surviving out there, I'm the man for it.

Phoenix: There's enough desperate people out there willing to do whatever for a glimmer of a more decent life. And I'm sufficiently good with herbs to not let those three airheads die of sickness and rottenness.

Omo: ... I'll make it in four months. Let's go Oukan. Someone decided to swamp me with work. – she said while leaving.

Oukan: ... You'd better not die. It would be no fun if my closest rival died because of pointless ideals. – her seriousness left as spontaneously as it came. – Bye!

Theace: Niji...

Niji: I'm leaving, Father. I'm sorry to put the weight on you again. Do whatever you have to do to survive. When I come back, I'll solve everything. I'll recover what we rightfully won.

Four silhouettes disappeared into the broken outside, a city of uncertainty that encircled the Lord's domains.

ENDING: **When it Rains, it Floods**

Niji passed through one of the Lord's domains doors five months after her departure. As her left eye had gone missing, hundreds of people had joined her cause, accompanying her on the return to the Lord's domains. All Lords were surprised by this entrance, and immediately deployed their Retainers to expel the invading forces. Despite Niji's will to accept a non-violent rendition, the Lords didn't want to listen, convinced that the trespassers were nothing but an angry mob. Over sixty people died before they surrendered.

Niji rose to power as a murderer of many, accompanied by her accomplice, Omo: the hate they earned traduced in continuous assassination attempts. Caught between a rock and a hard place, they exiled all the Retainers to the other populations of the island, leaving the Lords defenseless and guarded by those loyal to Niji's cause. It took over four years to build anything stable. While conspiracies tainted the Lord's domains with red yet again, sustainable economies were created in the more populated settlements outside the capital. Once Niji managed to open a public service for memory enhancement, Lords finally lost all relevance and power. Slowly, the island gained a soothing breeze, its people recovering their right to simply be humans and losing the need to be anything more than that. The consequences of Niji's takeover, however, would cowardly end up her life at the age of thirty.

}

else (if Niji lost voting and the Phoenix B-plot isn't entered) {

Comentado [UdW313]: Truncation of the idiom "When it rains, it pours". Basically to stop an auto-perpetuating abusive system, let's commit a massacre. What the truncation serves for is to reflect how Niji feels about herself for what she is doing: she isn't going to waste all her effort, but she is about to be responsible for potentially more deaths than Iso has on his hands

Comentado [UdW314]: No more class structure. Yay! We only needed to kill too many people for it

Comentado [UdW315]: Because you can become a genocider for the good of the many, but you really shouldn't

ENDING: And Lord Was No More

For a while, everything went back to normal. As discouraging as the situation was, Niji knew she wasn't the same Lord that entered the world of Scry long ago. Even if her voice was a minority, she could build more allies, more support, make small improvements for the people. Everything changed after two months. Many Lords replenished the memories they had lost in the Tournament with those of new Retainers, and at the moment they felt powerful enough, a hail of perpetrations felt upon the Camellia household. After many deaths, driven to a corner, Niji faced two choices: engage in a war of assassinations or resign.

It would be the first time that Niji touched the sea. Only **wild flowers grew so far from the capital**, but they had a beauty that could outshine that which she saw as a Lord. And with all, there was **one that Niji was decided on finding sooner rather than later**. Accompanied by her father and friends, Niji set off for a long journey, one where she would find a happiness that couldn't exist **atop of hundreds of forgotten memories**.

}

}

50.

ENDING: The Golden Garden

In the year 777, Niji would change life in the island forever. Her first decision was to abolish the Business of Joy system, which sustained the Lords power, and transformed them into public spaces for memory enhancement, where Scry matches would be conducted while guaranteeing the safety of the memories. The only catch was they would be limited to once per week, with the exception of those who worked as Masters, who would get two chances per week.

Niji's next decision would be to have access to food and water be public. In a record time, violence dropped to almost disappearing from the streets: there was no point on killing each other when food was abundant and enhanced memories were accessible to everyone. A massive exodus of people entering and creating many masterships occurred, **ensuring food production augmented**, and setting the bases for many disciplines in the process.

Finally, Niji widened the Reunion of Leaders to include people from every part of the island, perpetuating her stay in power by gaining the favor of all those who weren't Lords. With their help, a squadron was gathered to serve as the National Guard. It would be a small group of well-trained citizens who would serve to keep public order, but with numbers limited, in order to not become a threat to the nation. The idea needed some time to flourish, but once it did, they became respected people whom others relied to in the face of wrong-doing.

Comentado [UdW316]: Talking about the people, not the actual flowers

Comentado [UdW317]: If it's not obvious, I'm talking about her mother

Comentado [UdW318]: Obviously referring to a system that is sustained by making innocent people sacrifice their most defining memories in favor of an enslaving power

Comentado [UdW319]: Makes me very happy that it ended at such a round number :)

Comentado [UdW320]: Communism. I know. But. It's a relatively small island. Resources are scarce. There's nothing to achieve by getting power that is worth confronting a bunch of people with equally powerful emotion-waves. People who mind you, are perfectly happy

Comentado [UdW321]: Smells really strong like Easter Island... But hopefully they will get it in time :')

Throughout her entire life, Niji worked for the progress and well-being of the citizens, becoming the precedent of what a rightful governor would be like for millennia to come, dying from old age with a smile on her face.

Extra ending

If Niji loses all her Retainers' memories, or if she loses a single game of the Tournament, the default losing ending is triggered:

ENDING: The Bluemoon's Supremacy

In the year 777, Omo Bluemoon was declared the first Supreme Lord. With many families eating from the palm of her hand, the power to take away most of the Retainers and get them under her orders was everything she needed in order to secure her new position. After that, she executed many families that had committed crimes against her own.

Before Lords could begin planning how to oust her, Omo announced the position of Supreme Lord Right Hand for that who won the Scry competition with an eighty per cent of victories. That who could achieve so, would be granted power second only to Omo herself. Like rabid dogs, all families poured their efforts on the same fruitless struggle they had been fighting in for centuries, while Omo enjoyed the happiness of her brothers and sisters, who would live in opulence for the rest of their life, consolidating the first monarchy of the island.

Meanwhile, Niji did all she thought was in her hands to make a change, from proposing social initiatives to the Bluemoon, to dueling at Scry with renewed strengths, to talking and supporting the people outside. Despite her best efforts, the tides of time would soon forget the small progress the Camellias brought.

Memory-unlocked-driven narrative

- Blacksnow – Astro: they have a quiet talk while taking a break, and Blacksnow, even if he knows he is disliked by Astro, thanks him for giving him hope, and eventually bringing him to Niji. As they depart, Astro mutters that maybe he was right after all, seeing that his good-willed actions can in fact reach even those out of his world
- Blacksnow – Dwale (if both high level memories regained): Blacksnow wants value on what he wants to be of use. Dwale appreciates the value of what he obtained, and what it means to him. Blacksnow has not achieved anything, he was born with it, while Dwale gained something by luck, and grew close to it. Despite being able to achieve very different results, they strive for different things, because the nature of what they have is different.
- Blacksnow – Niji: about their different perspective on what Astro did that day
- Niji – Dwale: about Niji's mother

Ideas to integrate

- Omo should have more interactions with Niji to develop that respectful rivalry that it's supposed to be reflected at the end of their match, at least from Niji's side. This way, the player understands better what I had in mind while writing them. In fact, there's already a conversation I had in mind, in which Omo was painted in a more sympathetic light to show that she has good intentions, and that her methods towards others exist only because the system forces her to, in defense of the constant violence that occurs behind the curtains.
- Interaction between Omo and Astro, in which the second argues that if the people outside had a way to live better by producing for the Lords, both parties would benefit. Omo argues that people outside would take that power and capitalize it against them. Astro responds that it wouldn't happen if they didn't live in barbarity. Omo fires back asking if he knows where he is living (Astro's conception that poor people are evil because of the conditions they are born into are challenged by the reality that he omits to justify his reasoning).
- Consider that some description can be cut off to speed up the reading flow using visual cues of the videogame.
- I made a mess out of the end of point 6, which should be rewritten
- Give more time to Drugic, because he doesn't feel like a threat, and instead feels like the rushed plot device that he is right now
- Space out events between plot points 7-8, 9-10, 10-11; to have story feel more organic and less rushed, expanding characterization (maybe add plot beats if it seems pertinent)
- Micci tried serving on the Rose's family, but was discarded for being "useless" and "impossible to treat with", due to her not progressing on her memory enhancement. That is drama I have not yet exploited
- Windia should have a miniarc before her final conversation (38.) with Niji, to showcase that they have at least understood each other better. Otherwise, it feels rushed
- Make story beats that are purely for getting memories to a certain level, to create more connection between game and narrative