

Star Empress Trine: The Search for Unity: Freedom



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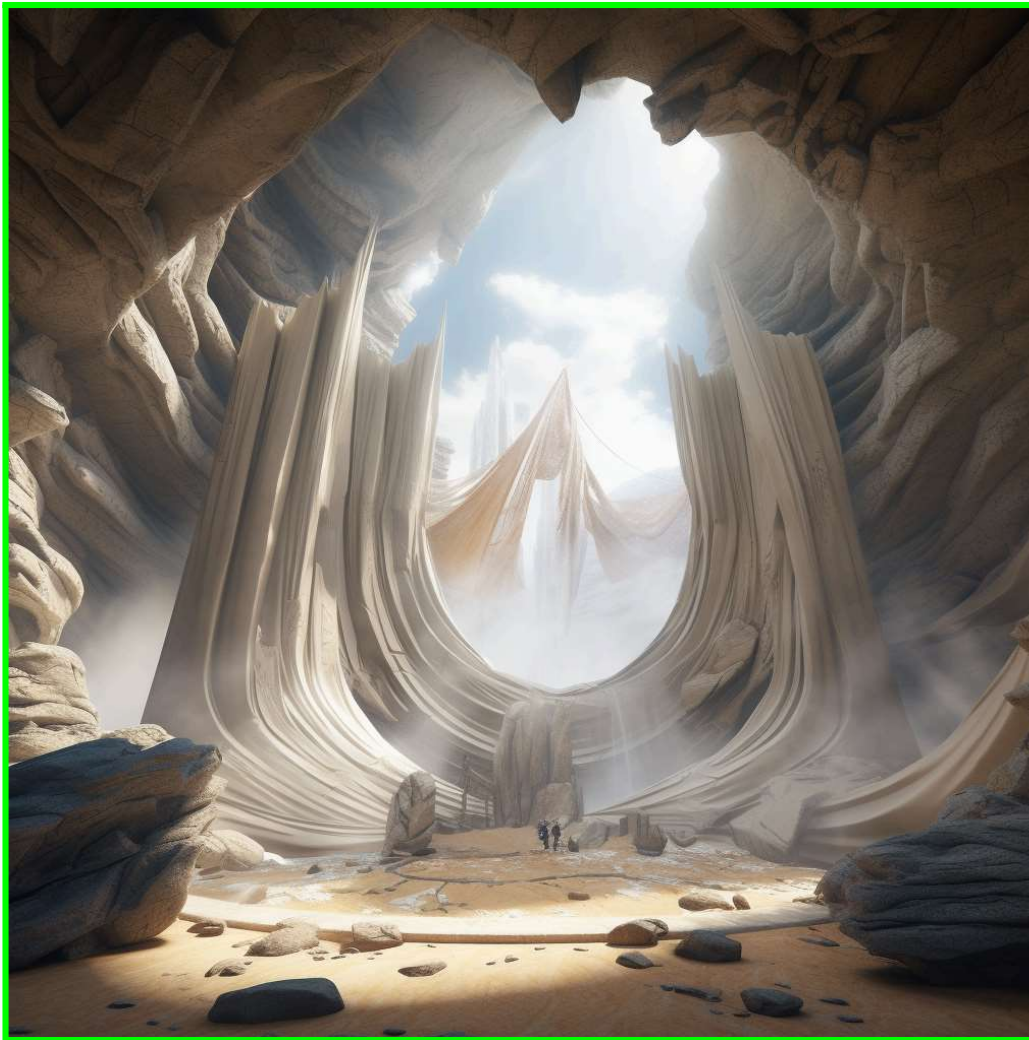
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Introduction

Not All Birds Are Free

Leandra walks through the breezy silk grass covering most of her planet, Yanna. She carries an eavesflapper bird tightly in her hands without hurting it. The eavesflapper flutters its wings feeling some anxiety, anticipating what shall become of it. Regardless of this, the bird still trusts Leandra's hands remembering she took care of it since it broke its wings so many months ago. Leandra makes it to the pebbled pathway leading to the pillared gust temple on top of the tallest hill within sight of the palace.



Inside of the temple, Leandra looks around to see that things are still intact and untouched just as she thought they would be. The temple, made of stone and decorated with silk, howled

lightly as the winds blew through the large openings on both sides of Leandra. Still holding the bird tightly, Leandra walks towards the end of the rectangular gust temple, and looks up to see the sky above, revealing itself. Leandra opens her hands and lifts them, releasing the bird into the air. The eavesflapper cries in delight as it flaps its wings taking the gust with it as it leaves through the sky window.



"I will cherish the time you gave to me to be with you." Leandra looks up and watches the birds far above as the eavesflapper joins them and disappears into the dark blue sky. Leandra thinks to herself if she did the right thing. She wonders if it will have more of a chance to live without her mending to its ailments, though the thought quickly passes. She realizes that the giving has been completed, and that she couldn't turn back the wheels of time even if she wanted to.

"I trust that you will accomplish everything you came here for. You can take care of yourself, beautiful creature." Leandra says to herself in a subtle soft voice.

Leandra continues to stare up into the sky long after the birds have passed. She uses this rare opportunity of being alone to ponder what direction she wants to take her people moving into the future. After some time Leandra turns around and is startled to see one of her advisers behind her.

"Klonn, I wasn't expecting you." Leandra says to her adviser.

"I've only come to let you know that your lunch is ready." Klonn tells Leandra.

"Thank you Klonn, I appreciate it, I will meet you back at the palace." Leandra says to Klonn with slight impatience. She watches as Klonn bows then leaves the temple in a vehicle and heads back towards the palace. *It's not like him to come to the temple while I am here. He knows this is one of the few times I do not want to be disturbed.*

Leandra starts to walk out of the temple when she notices above her a shooting star strikes across the sky. She feels an unfamiliar energy move through her body, then she looks up to see many other shooting stars dart through the atmosphere. *What is this?* She moves quickly out of the temple and looks up at the sky as it suddenly becomes dark and full of clouds. *This cannot be happening.* She sees a flash of memories run through her mind, only seeing brief images of times when she was a child living on an enslaved planet.

Leandra lifts her hand towards the sky and a gust of wind blows away the dark clouds. As the clouds dissipate, she sees another shooting star move through the sky and fall towards the ground not far behind her. She turns to investigate the anomaly but at first can only see a shadowy shape take form. *Are the shields not up? How could this be happening?* The shadowy shape continues to form and Leandra can see that it's a living being slowly walking towards her.

"Those winds." The shadowy figure says moving closer towards Leandra. immediately recognizing the woman's voice, she gets into a stance ready for battle. The shadow seems to lift from the woman and Leandra confirms what she thought to herself.



“Cogwa.” Leandra says just loud enough for the woman to hear with shock in her voice.

“You couldn’t bring yourself to completely shut me out, could you?” Cogwa asks Leandra in a condescending tone.

“Hiyah!” Cogwa yells as she comes flying towards Leandra with her hands sprawled in front of her. Leandra glides to the side, barely missing Cogwa’s hands.

“I don’t want to fight you Cogwa.” Leandra says as a yellow aura starts to glow off of her body.

“No, you’d rather banish me.” Cogwa flies forward a few times, attempting to swipe at Leandra with her fists. Leandra moves as quickly as the wind, dodging all of Cogwa’s attacks. She lands on both of her feet, then blows Cogwa back with a powerful gust of wind. Cogwa

flies back far away from Leandra and towards the capital city, steadying herself in the air floating.

“I am counting on that.” Cogwa yells to Leandra as she looks over her shoulder at the Capital city.

“Cogwa, no!” Leandra runs as quickly as the winds could take her towards Cogwa who flies into the Capital city out of Leandra’s sight. She feels a sense of regret that she left Cogwa with a key to pass through the planetary shields, knowing that she could come back, still being hostile. *The throne room!* Leandra thinks in her mind, remembering that Cogwa still has access to the throne room. *I’ve hoped for so long Cogwa would return, but not like this!*



“Klonn!” Leandra taps the communicator on her wrist, signaling her adviser Klonn. “Klonn can you hear me?” Leandra says, louder this time hoping to get a response. *He was just here earlier, why isn’t he responding?*

Leandra makes it to the entrance of the Capitol city, hearing screaming not too far ahead of her.

“Help us!” A woman screams while running towards Leandra. “Please help us Leandra!” The woman runs to Leandra then falls to her feet, appearing to be knocked unconscious. She touches the side of the woman’s neck to make sure she still has a pulse. She notices a pollen-like material covering the woman’s face. *Cogwa’s doing, I assume. Where are the guards?!*

“Guards!” Leandra yells looking around for someone to respond. She notices an eerie silence as more people appear to fall to the ground. She uses the winds to glide through the city towards the throne room, noticing her people including the guards passed out on the ground.

As Leandra glides through the city she continues to think about Cogwa, pondering why she’s come back after so many years. She lowers herself to the ground when she reaches the towering throne room. She looks around to see more of her guards and some of her other advisers, sleeping on the ground. After passing through the main corridors, Leandra finally makes it to the main door of the throne room. She notices that the doors don’t open immediately as they normally would.



Leandra shakes her head in disbelief then finds a control panel hidden behind a rock near the bottom right side of the door. She pulls open the panel and places her hand on top of it, hoping it will read her signature. All Leandra can hear is a beep sound, indicating to her that her signal is denied entry.

“Damn!” Leandra puts the control panel down onto the ground. She looks around her seeing if she recognizes any of the people in the corridor. She sees one of the security guards, Mintelle.

“Mintelle, Mintelle.” Leandra lightly shakes Mintelle to awaken him, but he does not respond. She notices the same pollen-like substance covering his face. Leandra stands up and holds out her hands, summoning a gust of wind that blows away all of the pollen on Mintelle’s body.

“Uh...” Mintelle shakes his head as he starts to awaken.

“Mintelle.” Leandra kneels down and supports Mintelle’s back with her hand, holding him up.

“Empress.” Mintelle says in a weary voice. “A strange woman with wings came flying through here. Our weapons seem to just absorb into her, like we’ve seen happen to you.” Mintelle slowly rises to his feet, steadying himself on Leandra’s shoulder.

“I know who she is.” Leandra tells Mintelle. “This is something I should have taken care of a long time ago.” Leandra tilts her head down for a moment, knowing in the back of her mind she left this part of her life fragmented.

“Mintelle.” Leandra says as she grasps Mintelle’s shoulder. “I need to find a way into the throne room but Cogwa seems to have found a way to lock me out. I wonder if she’s threatened Klonn and forced him to lock me out of here.”

“Yes, Empress.” Mintelle says. “I work the security through every corridor of this palace, and one of my crewmen found something that might be of importance. Please come with me.” Mintelle chauffeurs Leandra through the castle into a narrow passageway, where on the other side is a room Leandra didn’t recognize. A large archway with a door beneath it stood in front of them. The archway is covered in gems and jewels that lit up the room.

“Hundreds of years have passed, how could I have not known about this room?” Leandra asks Mintelle.

“We only discovered it recently.” Mintelle responds. “The two walls seem to have opened on their own, revealing the passageway into this room. But if my palace schematics are correct, the other side of this wall should lead to the throne room.”

“Great work Mintelle.” Leandra lightly taps Mintelle on his shoulder showing gratitude. “Now how do we open this? I don’t see any handles or contraptions to open it. Only these crystals in the archway.” She lays her hand on top of the colorful crystals in the archway, and the archway lights up, illuminating the room. She keeps her hand on the crystals while covering her eyes with her other hand. A beam of light covers the doorway and makes a humming noise.

“Empress?” Mintelle asks Leandra while covering both of his eyes with his arm.

“You’ve done great work Mintelle.” Leandra looks over at Mintelle. “This is a portal. Watch over the castle for me while I’m there. If I don’t return, you are to lead the security forces and take back the castle by force.”

“Understood Empress!” Mintelle yells back at Leandra as the hum noise becomes louder.

Leandra walks through the portal of light and appears in her throne room. She looks around and sees her advisers scattered about the floor, appearing to be asleep. Leandra notices the same pollen-like substance she’s seen before, covering their faces. Up ahead she sees Cogwa at the main control panel, working hastily at something.

“I see all of my advisers here asleep on the ground.” Leandra says to Cogwa. “All of them but one.” Cogwa turns around with an angry scowl.

“I only needed one.” Cogwa says to Leandra, still working her hands on the main control panel.

“You didn’t need any of them, Cogwa.” Leandra states. “You know that I left the shield key unlocked for you. You could have returned home anytime. But why now? Why like this?”

“Ha.” Cogwa attempts a laugh but quickly returns to her scowl. She continues to work on the main control panel, tapping on buttons. “Klonn!” Cogwa shouts.

“Yes my dear.” Klonn says from above as he slams to the ground in front of Leandra.

“I don’t have time for this and I’ve never cared for reunions.” Cogwa says. “Get her out of my way, I think I’m almost there.”

“Of course my dear.” Klonn replies, all the while having his eyes locked onto Leandra.

“Klonn.” Leandra says in a hesitant tone. “You know you are no match for me.” Leandra’s aura begins to shine a bright green. “How could you have done this Klonn? Stand down.”

Leandra takes a few steps back as Klonn transforms into a large monster with huge claws protruding from his hands.

“Klonn.” Leandra says with disappointment in her voice.

Klonn, in his new form, swipes at Leandra with his gigantic claws. Leandra twirls through the air through Klonn’s claws, dodging all of his attacks.

“Stand down!” Leandra shouts as she shoots Klonn with a blast of wind knocking him back. “Heyah!” Leandra moves at an intense speed pointing her foot at Klonn, knocking him directly in the face. Klonn falls to the ground, destroying some control panels but quickly gets back up to his feet. Leandra can hear some garbled noises coming from Klonn’s mouth but nothing

she can understand.

Leandra raises her hands and a miniature tornado sweeps up Klonn and slams him to the roof. Klonn falls face first hundreds of feet to the ground, creating a small crater in the floor. Leandra watches as Klonn's body slowly starts to morph back into his original form. She looks over at Cogwa and notices that she has stopped her motions on the main control panel.

"You'll never stop Urvit." Cogwa tells Leandra.

"Urvit?" Leandra asks. "Is that someone working with the Befallen? Where have you been all this time?" Cogwa looks away from Leandra and back down at the main control panel. "You've indoctrinated Klonn to work with you? To get you into the throne room? To take down the planetary shields? Why?"

"BeFALLEN!" Cogwa starts to laugh. "Bah! Their minds are weak. But yours. You might be of use."

"You're deranged Cogwa." Leandra takes a few steps closer to her. "This isn't you." Leandra looks at the main control panel and notices a green notification. *She accessed the shield controls.* She can see Cogwa moving her hand towards the green symbol.

"Cogwa, no!" Leandra raises her hand and a gust of wind blows Cogwa up and away from the panel, locking her in place hovering above Leandra. She sees Cogwa's hands attempting to reach and grab the control panel, but Leandra's wind funnel prevents her from moving away.

"I've lost you, again." Leandra turns her head away from Cogwa and walks to the main control panel. She turns off the shield shut down program, making the green symbol disappear. She then selects another program to open the sky way doors above the throne room, revealing the sky. "Goodbye, Cogwa." Leandra tilts her head down while holding out her hand and blowing Cogwa through the skyway doors into space until she could no longer see her. Leandra slowly lowers her hand and looks back over at the control panel.

Feeling distraught, she remembers when she had first met and taught Cogwa. Cogwa, born from another planet, was left on her doorstep as a baby. Leandra took Cogwa in as her own child, never knowing why or how she was left at the palace door steps. Later in Cogwa's life, Leandra realized that she was also a guardian, tapping into her own innate powers. Leandra remembers being overjoyed that she had found another guardian but still was guarded, remembering all of her slain brethren she used to rule the planet with. She can see images in her mind of training Cogwa and regaining her sense of trust in the universe in the process. Then Leandra sees darker memories of when she caught Cogwa communicating with who she thought to be the Befallen, and would not return to her senses. She remembers blasting

Cogwa into space before, just as she had done a few moments earlier. She assumed at that time it was a familiar enemy, the Befallen, but now she is not so sure. *It must have been this force called Urvit that she mentioned.*

Leandra reawakens from her memories and she disables Cogwa's signature from the shields, no longer allowing her to come back. She then opens up the throne room doors where she sees Mintelle waiting outside.

"Mintelle." Leandra says to him as he runs towards her with other security forces with him.

"Empress!" Mintelle moves up the stairs to the control panel and places his hand on Leandra's back. "You're ok."

"I am, and thank you again for your help Mintelle." Leandra tells him. "You just helped save us all."

"Of course Empress." Mintelle says to Leandra.

I know that there is something bigger happening here. Cogwa must have been involved, and most likely just a decoy, to distract me from something. I sensed that those other shooting stars were entities too, probably headed somewhere important if they wanted to distract me.

Leandra looks at her other advisors on the floor with the pollen-like substance on their faces. She extends her hands out and summons winds to blow off all of the pollen from their bodies. The advisors all start to awaken one by one, with Mintelle's security team coming up to them to ensure they're okay. She walks up to one of her advisors and helps her to her feet as she awakens.

"Leandra." The advisor says to her in a worried voice.

"Don't worry Cellis." Leandra tells her while looking into her eyes. "Cogwa is gone. I've banished her again and blocked her from ever returning."

"Empress." Cellis says to Leandra, with a sullen expression on her face. "She was like a daughter to you. That must have been difficult for you."

Leandra tilts her head down, with tears pooling up in her eyes, then she raises her head back up. "It isn't easy. But I need you to hear me right now. There were others in the sky that passed by when Cogwa came to our planet. I need to find out where they went and stop this threat once and for all. Otherwise Cogwa may return one day, but with an army."

“We can gather some of our troops to go with you.” Cellis says to Leandra.

“We could, but I am going to go alone.” Leandra tells Cellis. “I should be back quickly. Whatever those energies were, flying across our sky, may be the ones that were controlling Cogwa. Maybe I can save her, and stop this once and for all.” Cellis looks at Leandra and slowly nods her head.

“We will watch over the people while you are gone Leandra.” Cellis says to Leandra in a shaky voice. “We will be awaiting your return.”

“I will come back, Cellis.” Leandra says, then she turns to everyone else in the room, her advisors and security team. “To all of you, I will return. I trust that you can watch over this planet without me for a short while.”

“Yes, Empress.” The advisors and security teams all say in unison.

Leandra leaves the palace and heads back towards the tallest hill where she visited the Wind Temple earlier. She looks at the Capitol City one last time, then looks up and disappears into the sky as a beam of energy. She flies through space in her semi etheric form, glancing at the beautiful stars far off, light years away. While flying, she senses a powerful energy coming from a large, uneven asteroid floating in space. She stops moving for a moment, then flies in towards the asteroid to investigate. She finds a giant crater where the energy signal gets stronger. *I sense something familiar down there.* She moves in closer to find an entrance to a gigantic temple-like structure, carved inside of the asteroid itself.



Leandra lands inside the temple and finds that there is gravity and breathable air. She is startled to come across such an amazing find. *What an amazing structure, way out here in the middle of space. How could we not have known about this place before?*

Leandra walks around Inside the temple where she finds carvings of people she doesn't recognize and of symbols she's never seen before. *There are carvings of art from other worlds here, but why does this feel so familiar? I've never been here before. Or have I? Did the previous guardians on Yanna come here before? Is this them?* Leandra lightly touches the carvings on the walls, as though touching their energies, then continues investigating.



In another room, she finds a large green crystal, in the middle, hovering slightly above the ground seemingly by itself. For some reason Leandra feels drawn to it, thinking she can almost hear the crystal talking to her in her mind. She moves in closer and touches the large green crystal with her hand. Instantly, she sees flashes of memories in her mind and can hear and see almost a thousand different things at once, not quite sure what is being said or being shown to her. After a moment she pulls away her hand, clearing her head. Not realizing what had just happened, she continues moving through the temple.

Leandra finds many stone doorways that do not have any apparent locks or openings, except for some small crystal shards at the sides of the doorways. She touches the crystals in an

attempt to open the doorways but notices nothing happens, unlike the large crystal she had found before. She blows some wind through the crystals and when she does, the doorways slowly open for her.

Moving through every doorway she can find, and passing by even more rooms and carvings of places unfamiliar to her, Leandra makes it to a large room where she can't find any more doorways to move further. Ahead of her though, she finds two shadowy figures in the dark, hidden from the natural glowing lights in the room, emanating from the crystals on the walls. One of the figures turns around when it hears Leandra enter. Leandra is startled for a moment as she sees a massive red creature with horns protruding from her head and hooves for feet, turn around. The other figure stays in the shadows making them indiscernible to Leandra. The figure in the shadows starts to walk off, deeper and out of sight, but before she leaves she says, "Inferno, take care of her."

Leandra is startled, but stances her body, ready to fight as the large creature slowly turns around to look at Leandra.



“Inferno?” Leandra asks the woman. “Is that who you are? I sensed you earlier passing over my planet. Where is Cogwa?” Inferno holds out her hand, unresponsive to Leandra’s questions, and a ball of flame appears just above her finger tips. Inferno doesn’t waste a moment and shoots the fireball directly at Leandra.

Leandra moves, and weaves away from Inferno’s fireball, and continues to dodge her balls of fire until one large explosion knocks Leandra to her feet.

“I don’t want to fight you!” Leandra yells as she summons a huge gust of wind to blow back Inferno. She notices that Inferno simply smiles, unmoved by the winds, then a large red energy blast emanates from Inferno’s body until it envelops the entire room.

Leandra falls to the ground, and can feel her life force starting to leave her body. *No. I must*

get up. Leandra attempts to move her body, but realizes that she cannot move. As she starts to feel her energy leave her, Inferno walks up to Leandra and holds out her hands, as though to grab Leandra's life force as it leaves. Just as Inferno is about to touch Leandra's green life force energy, a spark of energy blasts away her hand.

"What, is this?" Inferno asks out loud. She attempts again to grab Leandra's energy, but again, her hand is blown away by the spark.

Down below them in a different part of the temple, and unbeknownst to anyone else, there is a guardian. She waves her hands summoning a field to protect Leandra's life energy from being stolen by Inferno.

Inferno attempts many times to blast down the energy barrier with her powers, but even as Leandra's body starts to fade away, and only her essence remains, Inferno could not break through the barrier.

"Continue along your journey." The guardian in the temple down below says to herself, casting a spell that sends off Leandra's essence back on her original journey. Inferno looks puzzled as Leandra's life essence zooms off out of the temple. Inferno flies through the temple and back out into space to try and follow Leandra's energy, but she's gone from her sight, lost into the vastness of space. Inferno spends some time flying around looking for Leandra's energy but eventually gives up, realizing she's gone from her grasp.

Chapter 1

The Landing



Crash! Like a meteorite, Leandra's soul essence crashes in the middle of a vast, blazing desert. Sand and dirt blast high into the air and a giant crater is formed in the ground. In a flash, Leandra's soul essence begins to take solid form once again and Leandra's body

becomes fully visible.

Leandra lays on the ground on her side, semi covered in shadow from the edges of the crater she just created from her landing. After a few minutes, Leandra slowly awakens, feeling the intense heat from the yellow sun beating above her. She gently rises to her feet, feeling dazed and disoriented. Leandra uses her hands to cover her eyes from the rays of the sun, unable to remember anything. *I don't recognize this place. What is this material on my hands?* Leandra watches as sand sifts through her fingers.

Leandra steps closer into the shadow of the edges of the crater to get herself out of the sun. She holds out her hands in front of her, and looks at the clothing she's wearing. *Who am I? Why can't I remember?* Leandra makes her way out of the large crater and looks down into it as she reaches the top. *Did I make that happen? How am I still alive?* Leandra looks around and sees the desert sands stretching as far as she could see, hardly any plants in sight. Far off in the distance she sees a thin pillar of smoke billowing from behind a dune. *Maybe there's someone over there.*

Leandra heads towards the smoke, noticing how difficult it is to move quickly in the sinking sand and the extreme heat. After walking over a dune she sees a sign post made of wood. There are signs pointing in multiple directions with writing on them, indicating a fork in the road. Leandra focuses her eyes on the sign post and at first cannot decipher what the strange writing says. After a few moments she sees flashes of images in her mind and hears different voices she's never heard before. She cannot remember when she's had this experience before, but she feels as though this is not the first time. When Leandra looks again at the sign, she realizes that she can now understand what it says.

"Clan." Leandra reads aloud the sign pointing towards the smoke. "Caves." She reads the sign pointing to her left. "Cairo." Leandra reads the sign pointing to her right. Leandra walks for at least an hour to her right thinking that Cairo must be the name of a city. She walks until she makes it to the edge of a cliff. Looking down, she can see that the road continued down hundreds of feet down the steep cliff, but she knows she would probably die if she continued down that pathway.

"Who could go down a pathway like that?" Leandra says to herself with slight annoyance, feeling the incessant heat warming her skin. She takes a moment to feel a strong breeze blowing up from the bottom of the cliff, giving her a slight reprieve from the heat.

Back at the fork in the road, she decides to follow the direction towards the "Clan", where she can see a plume of smoke billowing in the distance. There she finds huge metallic gates covering a large rectangular building complex that appeared to be piecemealed together of different types of materials. Two men dressed in hodgepodge outfits made from different

substances quickly spot her and wave their hands in the air. Leandra feels cautious but decides to move towards them.



“Over here!” One of the guardsmen yells at Leandra as she moves towards him. “Where’s the shipment?”

“Shipment?” Leandra asks the man. “I think you might have the wrong person.” Leandra tells the man, still feeling cautious about speaking with them.

“Well then what are you doing here?” The man becomes agitated and tells Leandra to leave. Rather than argue with the man, Leandra realizes she should leave and probably isn’t safe

there anyway.

Back at the fork in the road, Leandra decides to try the last location labeled, "Caves". Halfway there though, she could hear loud vehicles coming up from behind her over the sand dunes. They roared in front of her and all around her until she's surrounded. A group of men get off their vehicles and begin to harass Leandra for whatever she has. Leandra recognizes one of the men from the Clan where she visited earlier.

"Hey pretty lady, what are you doing way out here?" The guardsman from before asks Leandra. Instead of responding, Leandra remains quiet, looking around herself. "Aw come on lady, you thought you could just stroll up to the Scorcher's base and go tell everyone where we are? We know you don't have any shipments, but what else ya got for us?"

"Please leave me be." Leandra pleases with them.

"Well maybe we could at least add another slave to our ranks." The guardsman tells Leandra. Suddenly, a flying vehicle, much larger than the Scorcher's, flies down into the fray. The woman controlling the flying vehicle snaps it back and forth knocking out Scorcher after Scorcher. The woman jumps off the bike and continues to fight them off with a metal pipe.

Leandra, at first scared, feels a huge surge of energy and emotions flow over her. She feels flashes of memories and experiences of fighting before. Leandra's fear dissipates and she poses for battle. She joins the fight, using her fists and feet to fight off the Scorcher's advance. The woman helping Leandra takes off her helmet, and uses it as a weapon, knocking out the Scorchers, one by one. One of the thugs recognizes the woman and yells out, "Mava!"



"Ellis," Mava says to the man while she stops advancing her attack. Leandra senses that they know each other very well. "Yeeeahhh!!" Mava yells as she runs towards Ellis. A battle ensues and Leandra joins in to help Mava knock out the man named Ellis, who is the last Scorchers still standing. The other Scorchers jump back onto their flying vehicles, then fly away as quickly as they came.

"You Scorchers are worse than sand in my boots!" Mava yells at the men as they fly away. "Get out of here while I give you the chance! And don't think that you can scare me just because there's more of you than there are me! I know this desert better than the desert vipers! Get out of here!" Mava continues to yell even as the Scorchers are long out of earshot.

The man Ellis that Mava spoke to earlier, limps to his motorbike and muffles under his voice, "We're out of here, but you'll be dead before you know it." Ellis pushes a button on his vehicle

turning it on, then he flies away out of sight in the desert.

"That's some pathetic fighting, but at least you didn't get your butt killed." Mava turns to Leandra and tells her after realizing the Scorchers were completely out of sight. Leandra is offended by Mava's remark, but more grateful to be alive.

"I don't even know how I was able to defend myself." Leandra says. "I stopped thinking and just moved my body." She looks at her hands as though they were more powerful than before and realizes that they can be like weapons. "Thank you for your help. Mava, Is it?"

Mava holds out her hand towards Leandra. Leandra at first struggles with understanding what Mava is waiting for and thinks that what Mava wants is to meet her hand with hers, so Leandra stretches out her hand to clasp with Mava's. Mava looks at Leandra's empty hand and swipes it away.

"I'm not looking for some lovin'!" Mava shouts. "I'm looking for some payment! Some crystals?" Mava starts to lose her little amount of patience she has. Leandra looks all around her as though looking for something to give to her, but realizes that she has nothing.

"I don't have anything to give you." Leandra tells Mava. "I don't even know where I am!" Mava crosses her arms and looks at Leandra in disbelief.

"You're probably lying like everyone else who ends up in this crazy desert." Mava forces her way with Leandra, frisking her, looking for something to take. Leandra is upset by Mava's actions, but lets her check anyway, knowing that she has nothing to give. Mava is irritated, realizing that Leandra is telling the truth.

"Well what do ya know?" Mava says. "The one time someone is honest with me, and I end up with the venom up my ass!" Mava doesn't hesitate to show her anger and disappointment in her tone and demeanor. Mava takes a moment to shake it off, and then walks over to her flying vehicle and gets on.

"Wait!" Leandra runs towards Mava.

"Don't." Mava interrupts Leandra. "Even try to bother me. I'm not your mom, and even if I was, I don't even know what a mom is supposed to do with a helpless child like you."

"But, I'm not asking you to be my mother!" Leandra shouts, but Mava cuts her off before she can continue.

"Well good! I'm glad that's settled!" Mava turns on her flying vehicle, drowning out any

possible noise that Leandra could make. Before putting on her helmet, Mava shouts, "Don't die!" Mava veers away from Leandra and drives off into the distance.

Leandra feels puzzled regarding the whole situation. She considers that Mava probably is just trying to take something from her, just as the Scorchers probably were. She lets herself have a moment to think before heading back on her way to the caves.

After a few hours and with the sun constantly beating down on her, Leandra makes it to the entrance of a cave. The only entrance that she sees is blocked and locked by a large wooden door. By this time Leandra feels exhausted and the sun is beginning to set. Leandra finds a small covered cave that is somewhat warm. She finds a small round mechanical device in a rocky niche. She holds onto it and falls asleep.



Leandra wakes up a few hours later when she hears a few men talking. When she looks she

sees that they are dressed in brown robes, entering the cave door that was locked earlier, but is now open. The men in robes don't see her in the niche she's sleeping in. After the men enter the cave, Leandra comes down from the niche and follows them.

When Leandra enters through the large wooden door, she notices that the men are gone. Leandra looks around a room filled with different colored crystals and gems that glimmer. It's a circular room with a stone column in the middle. Leandra sees murals on the wall depicting a story of a mystical woman who is decorated in shining crystals and gems. She figures out a pattern in which the stones were to be lit up that matched the sequence of the murals' story. When the gems are lit in a certain sequence Leandra can hear one of the doorways unlock. She heads through the now unlocked door leading further into the cave. She finds a new hallway with different closed doors on both sides.

Leandra looks around and sees what looks like books sitting on shelves all around her. *This is obviously some type of library, but what are these men reading?* She grabs a few of the books and skims through some of the pages. She finds sketches and an illustrated book about the woman in the murals, but she can't recognize the text. In a different room there are beds with lanterns next to them on end tables.

In another room Leandra finds a metal contraption with a lens at one end. She follows the path of the metal piping and notices that it goes through the roof of the cave. She also finds maps of the stars and constellations. Leandra feels a slight sense of *deja vu*. *Why do I feel like I've looked at these sorts of things before?* She looks into the lens of the metal pipe and sees the current night time sky, along with stars scattered about. She maneuvers the device around to a point where it's focused on the brightest star she can find in the sky. When she does this she hears a **click**.

She leaves the room and tries to open the last door she hasn't entered yet. She places her ear against the door and hears people behind the door conversing with each other. *Well, here we go.* Leandra pushes the door open and sees the men in robes from earlier. The men all seem startled except for one; he stands up and introduces himself.

"How did you get in here?" says the eldest looking man dressed in brown robes.

"This place is secret and I do not know you." Says the eldest man. "Does anyone else here know this woman?" All The Monks shake their heads.

"I'm Reswet." One of the younger looking men tells Leandra. He too is dressed in brown robes just like the eldest man. Reswet, stares at Leandra, seeming intimidated by her beauty.



"I'm sorry for coming in like this, really." Leandra protests and apologizes. She explains how she couldn't remember anything, about who she is or where she is. After some time the men in robes begin to believe her. There are five of them; Race the eldest, Reswet, Wenem, Min, and Akha. They also call themselves monks living in the Monk Society. The Monks know by Leandra's strange clothes that she's not from there. They feed her different types of meats and plants and explain who they are. They tell Leandra that they're a society of people who are hiding from the dark forces, and collect wisdom from throughout Earth's history to hopefully one day restore it to peace. Akha brings her to the bedroom.

"We study all of the time. Read books, make stuff. Nothing like Cairo." says Akha. Leandra is unsure of what he is talking about.

"What is Cairo?" she asks. Akha looks startled by the question. Race tells the boy to leave

and so he leaves Leandra to sleep and says he'll return in the morning.

Leandra thinks to herself for hours. *Where am I? Who am I? Should I trust these people?* Before she knows it she falls asleep. In her dreams a character visits her and speaks to her. This person is all light, no details of her body are visible. All Leandra can remember herself saying is, "Remember", then she wakes up saying her own name, "Leandra."

Leandra can hear the clamor of people moving about and talking in the other cave rooms. She gets out of bed and bumps into Min.

"Breakfast is in there." He points to the last room, with a sign above the doorway which says, "Convening room". Leandra goes into the room and joins them for breakfast. They all enjoy conversation and laugh over some jokes about their daily tasks. They also joke over guessing who she is, and Leandra tells them what she thinks her name is, Leandra.

"She's a dream princess!" jokes Wenem.

"No, a fairy elf mistress from Gornelf!" says Min. Leandra joins in with the laughter. The jokes are new to her and very unfamiliar but she feels comfortable with these men. Reswet continues staring at Leandra while keeping very quiet.

"Is there a reason you keep staring at me?" says Leandra.

Reswet smiles. "I'm not staring, I'm just thinking." says Reswet.

"About me?" Leandra replies.

"Maybe." Reswet turns his face to look away from Leandra. Leandra leaves it at that and smiles back at Reswet.

Race moves her away to the back door which leads to a staircase. He wants Leandra to follow him to their village. Race assumes she must be from Cairo, the largest city near them. Race warns Leandra that it is dangerous to get there from their village.

"I want to remember somehow, can't you help me?" Leandra asks. Race informs her of a very old woman that many call The Oracle who was last seen in Cairo. He lets Leandra know that this Oracle might be able to help her.

Leandra and Race walk together to the heart of The Monk village. So many monks about, male and female, not all in robes as the first group of monks that she met. There are structures of all sorts made from wood and other types of plants. Leandra meets all different

types of people who all have unique stories on how they ended up at The Monk village and how grateful they are. Some used to be part of a gang called the Scorchers. Other people tell Leandra they used to be part of a group called the Coilers. While other people tell Leandra that they used to be citizens of Cairo or stragglers traveling the desert just to be free from the dark agents controlling the major cities.

Race takes Leandra to a place that he calls the main hall. Here they allocate her a backpack and a note for The Oracle that Leandra can give to her when she meets her. They also give her a map of Cairo, pinpointing The Oracle's location in what is called the "Broadcasting District".

Leandra takes a gulp of bravery and inquires into how she's supposed to get to Cairo. Race lets her know they have a boat that could take her down the Nile to the sewer entries of Cairo. Leandra feels unsure about her upcoming journey but assumes she could figure it out.

Leandra explores The Monk village before trekking out. She meets many helpful people, and learns some great skills too like apothecary, how to mix items into potions that could aid her on her journey. She finally agrees to go down The Nile on the ship Race had mentioned earlier, trusting her new friends.

Down The Nile she meets a roadblock, branches and rocks in a narrow part of the riverway. She breaks her way through the first batch of twigs and branches, but eventually overturns, losing the ship, the letter for The Oracle and her map.

Leandra swims ashore easily as she's not far from the edge of the water. She looks around for a while but finds no one in the hot desert sun. The next thing she knows she sees a hoverbike come up the river. Leandra recognizes right away that it's Mava, the woman who saved her earlier from The Scorchers.

"Hey! It's you!" Mava shouts, sounding oddly welcoming to Leandra.

"Long time no see." Leandra replies. "Maybe you could help me again?"

"Need a lift?" Mava asks.

They exchange words but eventually Mava agrees to take Leandra to the city of Cairo. They ride on Mava's hoverbike to the Broadcasting District in Cairo, which is the only thing she can remember from what she lost in the river. Luckily, Mava says she had planned on heading over there anyway. As they fly to the city, Leandra looks down and marvels at how the city is mostly submerged in water. The people seem to live above the water in gigantic buildings that emerge out of the water, and even have additional buildings built on top of them. They arrive

around 6pm at night, the sun still not set.



Leandra lets Mava know that she doesn't really know where to start searching for The Oracle. Mava suggests the bar nearby where they can ask people there about The Oracle. Leandra feels an aching feeling as she enters the first bar with Mava. She sees people that resemble the Scorchers that she ran into in the desert. Mava whispers something to the bartender, and Leandra is unable to hear her.

"You stay here, I'll be right back." Mava tells Leandra. Mava walks towards a room in the back of the bar, then she turns towards Leandra. "I mean it, this place is dangerous."

Leandra feels a spring of fear and adrenaline. The bartender hands her a drink and says. "On me." He then looks away and starts wiping a dish with a towel.

Leandra looks at the drink for a few seconds, then gets up from her seat. "I need to um, you know." Leandra pauses.

"Use the ladies room?" The bartender asks her.

"Yes!" Leandra says. "Where is it?" The bartender points towards the entrance.

"Thanks!" Leandra slowly moves out of the bar then runs for the exit and leaves the bar.

Down the street Leandra explores nearby buildings, but can't find the woman who's named The Oracle. Some people Leandra ask have heard of The Oracle, but no one has a clean trail. Leandra passes by what looks like a storage building, previously blocked by a truck, and hears a clamor behind the doors. She makes her way in and watches from a safe place upstairs, able to hear the conversation. There are three men who look similar to Scorchers, two small and one larger one that looks monstrous and cat-like. An old woman sits in a chair while tied up and blindfolded.

"You either succumb willingly or die here today!" The Large cat-like character says.

"Giving into Chaos will bestow upon them my ability of foresight." The old woman speaks.

"Here's a prediction for you..." The old woman's face looks up as if looking at Leandra. "The Pharaoh's and Queen's reign will soon end!"

"Bah!" Shouted the large looking thug. "Leave her be, she obviously can't predict the future."

"But the Pharaoh says he wanted her alive and transformed." One of the smaller thugs says.

The larger thug smacks the smaller looking one on the back. "I know that! Come on men!" The three thugs leave the room. Leandra climbs her way down through the open window to the old woman.

"You're here!" Says the old woman.

"Shh!" Leandra shushes the old woman as she whispers. "What do you mean you're here? Were you expecting someone?"

"My child..." the old woman begins saying. "I am The Oracle."

Leandra stands up and looks at The Oracle. "I figured. Now let's get you out of here."

"Leave me!" The Oracle tells Leandra.

"But," Leandra attempts to start her sentence before being interrupted.

"Trust me, leave now!" The Oracle's voice becomes louder. "Through the door behind you! Hurry!" Leandra thinks for a second, but trusts the woman and dashes out the door, out of the building. She ends up behind the building next to a huge metal tower.

Back at the bar, Mava enters a barely lit room. A shadowy woman sitting cross legged on a chair sits up to look at Mava. "She's here." Mava tells the woman.

"Good." The shadowy woman speaks slowly.

"I'll retrieve her." Mava assures the woman. The woman turns her head away from Mava and no longer speaks to her.

Mava leaves the room and goes back to the bar, and notices that Leandra is gone. "What?!" Mava questions the bartender. "I don't know what this woman will do to me if I don't find her." Mava whispers to the bartender.

"Well you know what to do then." The bartender tells Mava.

"Damn." Mava says under her breath. She storms out of the bar looking for Leandra.

Leandra finds a wooden plank under the tower but it's screwed shut. "That woman told me to go this way for some reason." Leandra says to herself while looking around. She finds a toolbox in the area and tries to use a device labeled "electromagnetic". Using the device allows Leandra to unhinge the plank easily. She lifts it to find a spiral stairwell that leads deep, deep down to where she can't see anymore.

Leandra goes down further and further into the hole. There are some bats fluttering about until she makes it to a tunnel that echoes sounds of water moving and dripping. It is large enough for her to get in so she does.

She lands in a sewer that shoots her very, very deep and far. She swims her way up to the side and climbs out. She looks around and marvels at the construction of the huge sewer system. Leandra notices that the water gushing out all seems clean.



"How do I get out of here?" Leandra asks herself.

Leandra is wet and cold but keeps on moving through the wet corridors. There are doors that lead nowhere and some that lead to unknown tools and items. In one room she finds a man who introduces himself as Widd. He's a willowy, thin man who wears glasses and a lab coat. Leandra notices that his clothes are very dirty.

"Oh you startled me. Who are you?" Leandra introduces herself and they talk with each other. Widd explains that he and his friends are hiding from the Cairo rulership. He explains that he used to be a mechanic for the Pharaoh's army but now lives in the sewers. He lets Leandra know that he found a way to grow food and filter the water to make it drinkable.

"Can you help me out of here?" Leandra asks.

"Hmm, that's tricky, but I can lead you to the outer city that leads to the desert." Widd explains.

"Alright let's go." Leandra tells Widd. They travel the sewers and Widd gives Leandra insight on where to go and where not to in the area. He also uses a green balm type of medicine on her wounds and Leandra notices how quickly she begins to heal. She also notices a boost to her energy. They continue to walk until they make it to a dead end.

"That's strange, my map shows a way out of here behind this wall." Says Widd. A group of six people approach them from behind. Leandra notices that they appear extremely dirty and have a strange dark glow around them. *This is not good.*

"Come on Widd!" Leandra grabs Widd and dives into the waterway leading to the other side of the wall. The group of people follow them, jumping into the water. When Leandra and Widd emerge from the canal they find a way to seal the waterway before the group of six could reach them.

"Come on Widd!" Leandra yells.

"Great survival skills!" Widd compliments Leandra.

Before they make it to the next room though a tall mean looking man bursts from the airway above them. He wields a huge metallic staff. He says nothing but tries to attack them with the staff, swiping left and right. Widd and Leandra fight the man off even though he seems very strong. They make him follow them into the next hallway then release the water to flood him over and run upstairs. Widd points to the manhole above them.

"This leads to the outer city." Widd says in a hurried voice.

"Come on Widd!" Leandra reaches out to Widd with her hand.

"I can't! This is the safest place for me." Widd tells Leandra.

"You consider this safe?" Leandra asks, bewildered.

"I know, I know." Widd waves at Leandra as he starts to walk away. "Good luck Leandra!"

Widd takes off and Leandra climbs up to exit from the manhole. She sees the desert not too far ahead, just beyond some ruined buildings. Behind her she can see the towering city of Cairo that she had just left. Mava rolls up in front of her in her hover bike as if she was waiting

for Leandra.

"Mava!" Leandra shouts. Mava crosses her arms.

"You'll never make it back before nightfall, and at night, the desert is a death trap." Mava tells Leandra. Leandra almost doesn't know how to react.

"How did you find me?" Leandra asks.

"Hmmm, well I live just over there, I guess it is lucky you happen to be here just as I am coming home." Mava tells Leandra. Leandra peers at the building, a huge 12 story apartment complex, looking half destroyed. She looks up and sees that the sun is almost completely set.

"Come on Leandra, you can stay at my place." Mava assures her. Leandra is hesitant but follows her. Mava asks about The Oracle, but Leandra keeps her lips sealed, diverting the conversation.

There is almost no talking before they go to bed. Inside Mava's apartment is a bed, a kitchen, everything spaced out and the windows are huge open spaces of wall. Mava pushes some buttons on the wall, and it seems to trigger an electric force field around the room.

"I can take you back to The Monks tomorrow if you want." Mava tells her.

Leandra doesn't trust a word Mava says. "Alright." Leandra complies.

They go to their separate rooms, Leandra sleeps on the bed in the living room. A few hours later, she wakes up to the sound of marching feet outside. She notices that the sun is just beginning to rise. She looks outside to see a child playing in a courtyard. She goes looking around the room, and finds some useful items, and what appears to be books. She sees the panel Mava activated earlier. She hears a whispering voice in her head. "Careful." Leandra removes the power cells from the panel and she sees the force field deactivate.

She leaves through the front door. Going downstairs and eventually to the courtyard. She thinks of going into the desert but she has no idea which way to go. She finds the child she heard earlier out in the courtyard. The child doesn't speak, but prances around. Leandra follows the kid around to another building. Here Leandra meets some of the Outer City residents and gets a better idea of what is going on in the Cairo area and the world. One person reveals to her the way back to the caves, following the stars. Leandra decides to leave, but again, Mava is waiting for her, this time with a gun in her hand.

"What is that?" Leandra asks.

"Ha! You really must be from another world!" Mava replies.

"What?" Leandra says with anger.

"If I pull this trigger, you'll be scorched and fried, now I'm sure you don't want that to happen." Mava tells Leandra.

"What do you want?" Leandra asks.

"Go to bed and stay there," Mava commands.

Leandra follows and doesn't say a word. In the apartment she sees Mava do something to the force field panel. Leandra falls asleep again and so does Mava in her own room. She wakes up again to footsteps, and notices that it is daylight. When she looks outside she sees the thug she saw earlier with The Oracle. He is accompanied again with his two smaller thugs.

Leandra panics. She sees that Mava's room is open and she is gone. The thugs are headed towards the apartment. She can't leave out of the front door as she did before because there is some kind of code lock. She finds that Mava's bed lifts and there is a secret staircase that leads downward. She goes inside and puts the bed back down to cover her tracks.



Atop Mava's apartment building, Mava sits on the roof watching the thugs approach. "Dabu..." Mava whispers to herself.

Leandra follows the path back into a sewer. She makes her way again through unfamiliar rooms and locks. She finds useful items though, like wrenches and clothing. She makes it to one hallway where she sees the six people from before in the sewers minus the guy that washed away. They see her and begin to run after her. A guy wearing a hard hat, wielding a wrench, and a woman in tattered clothes wielding a crowbar come from behind her. They knock out two guys then turn to Leandra.

"Run!" The woman shouts. Leandra contemplates running but then stops.

"No!" Leandra puts up her arms and is ready for battle. Widd comes from behind her too with

a weird slingshot weapon.

"You're back!" Widd says to Leandra. They battle the thugs and win the battle. The thugs withdraw into the waterways. Leandra sighs and rests for a moment while Widd heals her wounds with some type of device Leandra has never seen before.

The woman turns to Leandra and asks, "Are you ok?" Leandra notices that her voice is sweet and reassuring.

The man in a hard hat hands her a flashlight. "I'm Angel." He says.

"And I'm Rachel." The woman says.

"These were the friends I was talking about." Widd tells Leandra.

Leandra thanks them, and they converse for a few moments. They explain to her that these people were tormented by darkness and somehow ended up in the sewers. They don't know exactly how it happens. Leandra is unable to explain who she is, but tells them that she needs to escape.

"Escape?" Angel asks. "This is our home."

"You could stay with us since you're in trouble and all." Rachel tells Leandra. Leandra shakes her head.

"I'm worried." Leandra explains her story to them of what's happened to her since she woke up in the desert, not remembering who she is. She also lets them know about The Monk Village.

"Another city?" Widd asks. "We have never considered that. Is it safe?" Widd makes a perplexing expression.

"I hope so, nothing seems certain here, but I know it's safer than the sewers." Leandra assures them.

"Let's go! I can't live like this anymore either!" Rachel says.

Angel is resistant for a few moments but eventually says, "Alright." Widd finds a map to the sewer ways that lead to the open Nile River, and leads them in that direction.

"Let's go." Leandra says to the group.

They go through more mazes and arrive at an open sewer. "No!" Leandra hears someone screaming above them. There is a staircase that leads to a manhole opening.

"You'll get her, I promise!" Leandra recognizes it as Mava's voice.

"Please! No!" Mava yells. **Boom!** Leandra hears more ruckus above them.

"Let's go Leandra!" Angel shouts.

"No! I can't just leave her." Leandra says while looking up.

"Who?" Rachel asks.

"Mava, she's in danger." Leandra says as she starts climbing. "I know it has something to do with me."

"Wait for me! You can't do this alone!" Widd yells.

"I'm in." Rachel begins to climb.

"You're all crazy!" Angel says as he follows behind.

They make it above land to find Mava's hover bike destroyed and Mava being held by the two thugs. They have guns pointed at her. Mava's gun lays on the ground.

"Leandra!" Mava shouts. The large thug looks at Leandra.

"Dabu don't!" Mava yells at Dabu. Dabu starts to reach his hand for Leandra but Rachel jumps in front of her

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"Hmm...." Dabu ponders. "Hahahaha! Give yourself up now or she gets it!" Dabu points at Mava.

"Why do you want me?!" Leandra yells. "How did you find me?" Leandra asks.

"Don't ask me." Dabu replies. "Just do as I say."

Leandra looks at Mava, noticing her looking down.

"No." Leandra feels a powerful sensation within her body.

"Raaarr!!!" Dabu rears up for an attack on Leandra.

"Ahhh!!!" Leandra holds her hands out. Dabu flies back from a powerful gust of wind. "Let her be free now!" Leandra yells at the other thugs. They look at Leandra and point their guns at her. They fire their weapons at Leandra but the energy from the weapons seems to absorb into the green aura around her body. A huge tunnel of wind surrounds Leandra blowing the remaining thugs away.

"Remember." The voice in Leandra's head returns. Leandra closes her eyes, safe within the wind funnel. She opens her eyes and Leandra notices the aura of light emanating from her body. Rachel, Angel, Widd and Mava look shocked at Leandra along with the thugs. Mava sees her chance and wiggles free to join Leandra and her new friends.

"So you really are special!" Dabu gets up. "You're coming back one way or another." A battle ensues. Leandra and her new friends along with Mava are able to knock out all of the thugs, including Dabu who falls to the floor. Leandra's colorful aura around her body dissipates until it disappears.

"What is that?" Widd asks. Mava looks away.

"That is awesome!" Says Rachel.

"You saved our butts Leandra." Angel thanks Leandra.

"Thank you guys, but we have no time, you should head to the sewers!" Leandra says. The group all agrees.

"I'll follow shortly." Leandra tells the group. Widd, Rachel and Angel all go back down to the manhole into the sewers. Leandra walks up and approaches Mava.

"What the hell do I do now!" Mava asks angrily.

"Come with me." Leandra tells Mava. "Back to The Monk village. We can escape this place."

"Easy for you to do." Mava replies. "If I join you I'll be sought after just like you. There's no turning back. The Pharaoh's army won't restrain itself."

"We can worry about that when it comes." Leandra says and she pats Mava's shoulder. Mava shakes her head.

"Don't you hate me?" Mava asks.

"There's no point in that." Leandra tells her. "We can get out of here together and leave all of this behind." Leandra awaits Mava's reply while she looks at her hover bike.

"Damn! It's destroyed!" Mava yells while stomping her foot.

"I know another way back, through the sewers." Leandra tells Mava.

"Alright Leandra, let's make them pay for this." Mava says with vigor in her voice. Leandra watches as Mava heads down the manhole with Leandra following. The trio isn't there though when they make it to the bottom of the ladder.

"They must have already left." Leandra says in a bewildered voice. Leandra and Mava go down the waterway ending up at a Nile opening. She sees her boat she lost the day before, docked at the river bend.

"Your boat!" Mava exclaims. Leandra and Mava get on the boat and head down the river.

"I guess Rachel, Widd and Angel went somewhere else." Leandra says to Mava. She looks away and feels saddened that her new friends are nowhere to be found.

"Oh well." Mava replies.