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Runedar Write-up 4 (11/13/2019)

Chapter 2: On Our Way

Previously, Argon chose to head towards the Elflands to investigate his Obelisk mystery and left the traveling salesman Zaid Moro in charge of his home. In exchange, Zaid wanted to be allowed to build a shack on Argon's land, and wanted Argon to find his friend, the Alchemist. Argon agreed to both terms, and headed out on the road.

Now, I imagine that, depending upon how long you want the game to be, Blade, there will be a bit of general "wilderness travel" between Argon's place and the Elflands. You discussed how you wanted "monsters" to be handled before; that they're creatures from another world. As such, I imagine that they would be rarer than, say, your average bandit or wolf, and a much bigger deal.

So, imagine Argon's surprise when, halfway to the Elflands, as the rocks and dirt are giving way to a more jungle-like environment, Argon hears the sounds of battle. Coming into a clearing, he finds a small crowd of monsters surrounding a young Elvish soldier. The Elf looks to be *maybe* in his 20's, so he's extremely young for an Elf.

Seeing that the boy is at a disadvantage, Argon hops into the battle. If you'd like, we could give the player a choice between sneaking up *behind* the monsters and rushing up to put himself between them and the Elf. Either way, Argon rushes into the fight. With his help, the Elvish soldier defeats the monsters and survives.

The soldier sees that Argon was injured and, silently, helps him heal the injury. Then, he turns to find his food was destroyed in the fight. Repaying like for like, Argon offers some of his own food and introduces himself. The boy agrees, says that his name is "Callon..." and doesn't say much else.

In fact, the two eat their entire meal in silence. Even Argon, a fairly stoic man, is put off not just by how silent Callon is, but by how comfortable the boy seems with silence. He gleams that Callon is a skilled soldier (though he doesn't seem to know much magic) and that Callon is very young, but little else. But, at the end of their meal, Callon asks where Argon is going. Argon tells him he's heading towards the Elflands, and Callon offers to accompany him, as they're heading the same way. Argon agrees.

Partway through the journey, we'll have one other interaction between the two. It starts with Argon asking Callon where he learned to fight so well at such a young age, and Callon tells him he's part of the Elvish military. Argon asks what he's doing all the way out here, and Callon tells him he's a scout. Argon says he wasn't aware the Elves had scouts this far out, and Callon

shrugs. Then, Argon asks Callon what his last name is. Callon refuses to give it and, when Argon gets a little grumbly about that, asks Argon his. Argon doesn't answer, for obvious reasons, and the two lapse back into silence.

But, finally, the pair reach the city closest to the Obelisk (the military/farm outpost we were discussing before, which we'll be moving further out from the Obelisk). Just for a "working title" for the town, we'll call it "Bulwark." Anyway, upon approaching Bulwark, Callon stops Argon and tells him that they should go in separately, as though Argon doesn't know him. Argon asks why, and Callon stays silent, but gives Argon the impression that it's for Argon's benefit, not Callon's. The player will have a choice to stubbornly accompany Callon, anyway, or agree with him and go in separately.

Either way, Argon winds up seeing that the Elves at the gate flat-out ignore Callon, like he's not worth their time. This piques Argon's curiosity, but they separate upon entering the town and he loses track of Callon. Deciding to stick to the mission, he asks around for information on the Obelisk and how to get there. The Elves don't discriminate against him, but they *are* pleasantly surprised that a Dwarf came all the way here, saying things like "I can't believe your little legs made it through the brush!" But, Argon realizes this comes more from ignorance than malice, and just tries to ignore their treatment of him as "exotic."

After asking around, the player will learn that the Obelisk is in an abandoned research city, where energy from the Obelisk has had odd effects on the plants [In case you're wondering: yes, that's going to be an excuse for plant monsters for the player to fight]. They say it's hard to reach, but there are a few people practiced in going there for "whatever reason." He asks who, and they tell him there's an Alchemist in town that makes frequent trips out there for materials. Argon figures that the Alchemist is Zaid's contact, Natalie Davy [A small change I'm making to the character].

Argon goes to find Natalie, and discovers her in the midst of an experiment where she's mixing chemicals and drinking them, herself. He's fairly stunned, and Natalie, after hearing that he was sent by Zaid, goes straight to treating Argon like a friend she's known for years, and giving way too much information on the effects of her testing chemicals on herself. She reads his letter and says it'll take her some time to pack, and that she wants to finish up an experiment, first. Argon says he wants to hit the Obelisk and needs her help, and she says that works out, as she's trying to find some materials that will bring her in that direction.

Argon heads off with Natalie, the Elves treating both of them like fun oddities, and the player ventures into the jungle. We'll have a few interactions with Natalie. One includes Argon asking her why she's so ready to test chemicals on herself, and she seems stunned that anyone passionate about their craft *wouldn't* be willing to do so, strongly inferring that other alchemists are "half-assing" their work. He also asks about Natalie's relationship with Zaid, and she gives their back-story. She asks Argon how he knows Zaid, and he tells her that Zaid is his most frequent merchant contact. She tries to learn more about Argon's history, but he shuts up fast.

When the player finishes this “dungeon-ey” area and makes it to the Obelisk, they run into something unexpected: Callon is already there, leaning over the bridge and staring at the Obelisk. It’s hard to tell with how stoic he is, but he looks like he’s sulking.

Argon says hello to Callon, and Callon makes room for him to look at the Obelisk. It seems like Natalie and Callon know each other, and like Callon isn’t terribly big on speaking to her. She blazes on ahead with conversation, anyway and, at some point, says: “All things considered, Callon, I’m surprised you’re out here, with your father and everything.”

Callon, for once, looks a bit angry. Then, he ignores her, turns to Argon, and says: “I much preferred *your* company.” Natalie says he’s being rude, and the player will have the option to tell her to be quiet for a minute.

The group stares in silence at the Obelisk for a short while longer. Eventually, Natalie works up the nerve to apologize to Callon. He softens, after, and tells him she didn’t mean it as an insult. That sometimes she gets excited and forgets that other people have other things on their mind than science. Then, says: “It’s a bad habit, you know. To lose sight of the important things in life.”

That comment, more than anything else, seems to change Callon’s mood. He asks Argon if he’s curious about why Callon is out here. Argon says he is, but that he knows what it’s like to have secrets, and he won’t pry if Callon doesn’t want to talk about it. Callon shrugs... then explains.

As it turns out, Callon’s father was a renowned Elvish academic and politician. Among the most well-known and well-respected in the Elvish world, he had a child and moved out here... then developed an obsession with the Obelisks. It started out simple enough, but soon he was spending more time studying them than anything else. The rest of the academic community caught on and, as studying the Obelisks is looked at as a pointless endeavor, his reputation suffered. His friends told him to stop, for his good and the good of his kids, and he refused. Eventually, his opponents used his obsession to destroy his reputation, and his family’s with him. He died soon after (or, if you want to lengthen the story, we can fit in an arc with him).

Regardless, Callon was treated like the son of a nutcase, and he distanced himself from his family and tried to join the military. It didn’t help. His thoughtful, quiet personality made him an outcast there, too, and he eventually joined the scouts to do something that seemed valuable, while keeping him away from people. Argon, as another outcast from a powerful background, sympathizes strongly with Callon, and says he understands why Callon didn’t want to explain any of that, and that his secret is safe with him.

Finally, Callon says: “You know the crazy part? My dad’s obsession with the Obelisks destroyed my family. He was convinced there was something more to them... and I can’t shake the feeling either. I come out here every so often, trying to see if I can figure out what he saw, or convince myself that there’s nothing here. But, nothing changes.”

At this point, Argon tells Callon that there *is* something about them, and explains his discovery and the information about the “Veins of the World.” Callon’s behavior changes immediately. He seems charged and excited, and Argon tells him about his quest. Natalie gets wrapped into it too, and *both* ask to join.

At which point, a plant monster or something shows up and the player gets a nice boss fight. Natalie’s knowledge of chemicals helps Argon and Callon prevail. After which, they get the chemicals Natalie needs, and study the Obelisk. Callon says he can fish out his dad’s old documents, and Natalie tells Argon there’s nothing about this Obelisk they can’t figure out between her notes, Callon’s dad’s, and Argon’s info.

And so wraps up this chapter of the story. Where it goes next may be dependent on a few things, Blade: primarily, whether you want Argon to have a traveling partner. If so, he can take Callon with him. Or, you can allow the player to choose a traveling partner. Let me know what you think, and we’ll fine-tune this, figure out what Argon learns about the Obelisks, and what Zaid’s letter said.