

## **Cousin Curufea's Prequel Story**

**30th Year of the Great War (-830 Shattering)**

**Unknown Place in the Abyss**

**Kaffra War Prison**

**Fifth Month of Imprisonment**

**Sixth Month after the fall of the Eleven Day Empire**

The Cousin tested his bonds while he sat, as was his habit. Hopes that they might be loose or weak enough to exploit had dissolved by his second week. In the months since he had endured his stay at the Dwimmerlaik prison, they had remained firm, the oily-green metal of the links and fixtures that bound his hands and ankles well-suited to the task of keeping him a prisoner.

As had occurred many times, once each day since his arrival, he had been brought from his dim cell and dragged across a courtyard of uneven black stones, lit periodically at the perimeter by purple witch-lights under a sky-that-was-not, an inky blackness that bore a terrible weight down from above, suffocating and palpable.



The Cousin sat across from a table of polished wood and bone. He was quite familiar with office of the Dwimmerlaik across from him. It wore a uniform of blood-red tunic and trousers, with black braiding at the shoulders and leather gloves tucked under a trim belt. It had never given its name, but it was possibly of important status, due to the decoration that adorned its pointed ears, and the rings on its taloned fingers.

Behind the officer, two burly thugs framed the entrance door, each possibly bored, for they blinked only occasionally, and never regarded their prisoner unless called to do so by their superior.

The officer raised steepled hands under his chin, and what passed for a cruel smile crossed its narrow green face. "Greetings. Prisoner 75012. I trust you slept well? Have you any concerns today?"

"I have no concerns, sir", the Cousin smiled, "I find your prison amenities well appointed and entirely suited to contemplation and meditation."

Curufea eyed the bored thugs, the repetitious officer, contemplating whether they were actual people or just constructs on pre-programmed orders, merely doing a routine designed to cause death by ennui.

"How may I be of service to you?"

"Affable as ever, Prisoner 75012," the officer intoned with a nod. "You may begin by telling, as I have asked each day, on the whereabouts of your nation's home realm. Not the fabrication your brethren left behind, no. The actual one. The portable one. The one you stole away somewhere. Why be a recalcitrant? You were, as I have been informed, the rear guard, left behind, dross in the eyes of those who fled, rather expendable, if admirable."

"My name is Curufea. I am a Cousin of the House, and the House is my Faction. I am sworn to uphold the protocols of my family and to devote my efforts to the service of the bloodline, in the name of the Grandfather and by the will of the spirits", he says formally, testing the will of the officer and the guardians of the domain.

"My name is Curufea and I am of the family blood. I am of House Paradox and the blood that runs in me is my family's blood, and the blood of my House and you do *not* know me."

Curufea reached within, finding the warp within his own biodata, allowing that deepening essence to fill him, reaching out with it as he met the eyes of the Dwimmerlaik (OOC: a psychic link is required to use Umbra or Eidolon to adjust a target's mind).

His vision traced the energy flows of vitality, the eddies of imperfection, the lines of his thoughts, finding the patterns and the permutations of the officer's being. Curufea unleashed the Umbra within the mind, and with barely a token wall of resistance, allowed it to flow outward, feeding the well of forgetfulness within the officer's mind like as a man might carefully fan a spark into a flame. Curufea goaded it, directed it, channeled the forgetfulness, to its proper place.

*Let us see, Curufea instructed to himself, to a testing of these waters.*

The officer blinked. His yellow-irised eyes held a glassy expression for the passing of a heart-beat, and then the black barbell-shaped pupils widened, then contracted. "Why are you here, prisoner 75012? I did not yet summon you! Guards, you disturb my meditation prematurely, have the prisoner immediately removed from my sight."

Confused, but chastened, the burly Dwimmerlaik took hold of Curufea, and escorted him by

his elbows out of the office, shaking their heads and exchanging glances between each other. “That one is never satisfied,” they both agreed in their guttural voices. .

Outside was a series of stone hallways of blackish stone flecked with green impurities. The stone appeared poured, as there were no seams nor mortar joints. At points, a door would pass, of pale grey wood. Past a pair of large, armored bronze doors, and they crossed the courtyard again, under the sky-that-was-not, and thence back to the prison, also of the dark, poured stonework.

In the cell, Curufea found nothing changed - the simple cot with a thin blanket, a bucket for nightsoil, and a basin for washing in. No window, no door, simply a rectangular opening that became covered in a hazy purple mist once he was deposited within.

Somewhere, off the twisting corridors of the prison, someone sobbed, though overall Curufea found the prison silent in a way that was far more disturbing.

As Curufea considered the implications of his manipulations, a sound came from the opening into the hall.

Before him stood one of the servants of this place. The Dwimmerlaik called them the Ood. Curufea had never met one previous to his interment. Humanoid, dressed in dark grey, loose trousers and tunic, with a head that seemed mostly tentacles and eye slits.

It bore in front of it a tray of wood, upon which was dried black sticks of meat and a small loaf of dry, yellow bread. This it laid at the floor, and pushed it inside the room, ignoring the purple mist.



As it stood, the Ood remarked in a pleasant, well-modulated “voice” that seemed to reach his mind effortlessly, “Your midday meal is served. Is there anything else you may require?”

*Interesting creature, Curufea thought. It doesn't take the shadow spectacles of [Godfather Morlock](#) to see this creature is sharing biodata. Some kind of hive mind? To think it took me this long to realise...*

“Yes, perhaps you could help me. I’m curious about the Ood. Are you the only one working in this place?”

The Ood, as it called itself, tilted its head to one side, its peculiar face blinking once. “I am Ood. Oodkind are all one. Is there anything else you require?”

The eye contact, as alien as it seemed, provided Curufea with an opportunity, and touching out with the shadowy tendrils of his Umbral biodata, he sought out the Ood’s own. There, and there, strange, diffuse, resistant, but yielding to his will, tethers of connection beyond this place and to others, like a neural connection of the brain amid many bodies. A hive mind, indeed.

Somewhere, the brief touch of another, not Ood, Dwimmerlaik perhaps, goading lazily, with minimal attention. A herder? A monitor? The inartful and routine mental sweeps amid the mental connections of this Ood and perhaps a few dozen others in the camp, easily sidestepped, his presence all but unnoticed under the lack of scrutiny.

The Cousin probed, testing strands of connection, interrogating biodata in the neural streams. While he did so, the Ood merely stood frozen at the entrance of the cell, with only an occasional twitch of his tendrils.

There were 48 Ood, overseen by a Dwimmerlaik, who was known as the Ood Master. He was stationed in the main building of the interment camp. There were only six prisoners here. The Ood had been here for many months, memories before that curiously hazy and indistinct. The camp overseer was called Nazir, but the overseer answered to someone else who did not have a title, though the Ood knew her as Yaru. The Ood had no understanding of doors or Doors, though they did recall at the very edge of their collective memories arriving through a portal in a lower cave in which a great portal glowed with purple symbols.

Beyond this small camp under the black sky-which-was-not, the Ood had no other recollections. They were not particularly curious as a species, and were content to simply serve as they were instructed.

The Cousin pursued the memories of their arrival. Lines of grey-clad Ood marching down a black stone ramp from a circle of runes, in a cavern of black rock, up through a winding tunnel to a basement of black-flecked green poured stone, sealed beyond two round stone slabs. These were in the main building, across the uneven courtyard, separate from the jail cells.

Prisoners, it seemed, were also brought in from this cavern, though the Ood did not have any particular memories of Curufea’s own arrival. He had just been at his cell to their memories.

*What was it about the Ood that gave it free access into and out of my cell? Or perhaps it’s just the tray? Anyhow, time to leave, methinks.*

“Thank you for your service, Ood”, Curufea says, taking the tray from the servant. He waits for it to leave before turning to his bindings, and where they attach to the cell.

Moving his arms in an arc, he proceeds to chop his way into the wall around the mounting with his shadow weapon.

The wall carves with little effort, bits of stone falling down in crumbling bits. The shadow blade doesn't ring against the stone, so much as it makes dull thuds. Curufea kept cutting, expecting some sort of response, but none came.

Before long, the mounting around the door was a hanging shambles, and then the purple mist dissolved in a cloud of pungent odor reminiscent of vinegar.

Outside, the hall was quiet, silent. To the left an intersection with a side corridor. From the Ood's memories, that led to other prison cells. To the right, a bend in the wall, which would lead to the courtyard, toward the Gate.

Small purple wall sconces cast gloomy lighting, but it was enough for the Faction Lord to see by. After a slow count of ten more breaths, still, silence reigned. Either the Dwimmerlaik had not heard the sounds of his escape, or they chose not to issue a response yet.

Both possibilities were disturbing.

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