

Raegis and the Gluttonbrand: The Ruins of Cocoa

By Prowler Purple

Raegis Kingdom Southern Plains, Age 299

After a long night's rest and a swift goodbye, Atten, Theo, and Saia made their way up north to the jungle that housed the Ruins of Cocoa. The only known location nearby was a small outpost used for harvesting cocoa beans. The only thing of value that came out of the distant jungle was chocolate, so Atten assumed this rumor of a chocolate temple might not be completely fiction.

The group traveled for days on end and watched grassy plains turn into forests, and forests turn into jungle. The humid atmosphere and intense heat seemed to make the shade of the trees seem useless. The crew had reached their first major roadblock, the weather. After only a quarter of a day's travel into the jungle, they got turned around, bitten by small insects, and tripped on vines apently.

"I can't... go on... much longer..." Atten was on his last legs. His fur was mangy and disheveled, his eyes were red, and his legs were wobbling. The wolf clearly wasn't prepared for the climate whatsoever as he suddenly fell to the floor.

"Come on, Atten! I thought you lot were made of tougher stuff than this? Maybe I need to track that bloody Permafrost group myse..." Saia suddenly stopped in the middle of her sentence.

"Uhh, Saia?" **THUD** The chunky tigress hit the floor. "Huh! Wait, that wasn't from the weather! She should be used to this kind of climate! What's going on?" Theo was now shaking as he knew he was being hunted. He looked through the dense treeline but found nothing. **SWOOSH** A shadow dashed between two trees. **SWOOSH** **SWOOSH** Shadows danced all around the otter.

He hid behind his shield and threatened, "If you don't back off, I'll be forced to attack! I mean it!" Theo looked behind him to see a large shadow

lurking over him. “Goodnight, fresh meat...” Was the last thing Theo heard before his scream was silenced.

Atten woke up in a strange tent. He was about to yell for help, but a young jaguar walked into the tent holding a bowl of water. The cub held the bowl up to Atten, urging him to drink. Atten’s head was pounding and his body ached, so he was in no position to protest. *GLUG* *GLUG* “Ahh, that’s better. Where am I, kid?” The young jaguar seemed to be too shy to answer Atten’s question.

“Ah! I see our guest is awake.” Atten heard a hoarse sounding voice come from outside the tent. A spotted paw opened the covering and revealed a middle aged jaguar in a small jacket and thin, baggy pants. They had a pipe in their snout, round glasses, and a large brimmed hat almost covering their face.

“My name is Augusto Oliveira. My family has exported cocoa from this humble site for generations. I assume your name is Atten? Your friend Saia told us about you.”

“Oh! Yes I’m Atten. Saia is okay? That’s a relief. What happened to us?” Atten rose up from the hammock he was resting on.

“Well, my sister recently discovered a temple that is said to house the treasure of our ancestors, pure chocolate that does not melt. She has gone mad with the legend, and has gathered followers to kidnap travellers who she believes can open the way. We came just in time to save your group. Your friend is waiting outside at our dinner table. I assume you would like to partake as well?”

“I can’t thank you enough, Augusto. I’m sure you can tell, but we like to eat!” Atten exited the tent and saw Saia eating at a long table with a group of jaguars surrounding her.

“And so I told those bloody nobles, you’re either six feet under or six figures in debt with you lot!” The entire table lit up with laughter at the punchline of Saia’s story.

“It sounds like someone’s the life of the party.” Atten took a seat next to the tiger. He saw the gigantic pile of clean plates stacked up to head level in front of her.

“You know it, lad. They don’t eat like us out here, so we can have as much as we want!” Saia grabbed a steaming bowl of stew and began chugging it like it was water. **GLUG* *GLUG** “Ahh! You all are amazing cooks! Coming, Atten?”

“Don’t mind if I do!” Atten sat down with a table shaking **THUD** and began grabbing entire serving platters of food. In the first large bowl was a large fish laying in a spicy smelling stew. Atten grabbed the fish and began eating it with his paws like it was corn on the cob. He bit down on the entire center of the fish and ate every bite of the spicy meat that he could. In mere seconds, all that was left of the fish was the bone.

Atten then grabbed the bowl of stew that was as large as his head. He challenged himself to drink the whole thing faster than Saia did. **GLURK* *GLURK** In a couple of gigantic swallows he completely drained the hearty stew. He set down the bowl and licked his snout. **BWOORPH** “Hehe! Sorry we eat a lot!” Atten smiled and patted his sloshing belly.

“I’m sure that Theo fella is going to enjoy this. You should go get him!” Atten was about to grab one last piece of roast when he stopped in his tracks.

“He’s... not with you?” Saia’s eyes widened.

“I thought he was with you!” The two looked around, much to Augusto’s confusion.

“Is something the matter?” Augusto looked concerned as his guests rose up from the table.

“We were with another traveller. An otter. He’s kinda small, not fat, kinda cowardly.” Nobody in the camp seemed to know what they were talking about. Atten didn’t hesitate to grab his bag and sword and begin trekking out of the camp.

“Wait! Where are you going?” Augusto questioned.

“My friend is in trouble. That group, your sister I mean, you said they were going to some temple? Where is it?” Atten had a determined look in his eyes.

“Well yes, the Ruins of Cocoa lie to the south of camp, but the doors are sealed! Besides, taking on my sister’s militia would be incredibly dangerous! She is not making rational decisions anymore! She even stole our precious family heirloom!” Augusto pleaded to the wolf to stay.

Saia rose up from the table and grabbed her equipment. “There’s no use trying to tell that wolf not to do something. He’s a real go getter, you know? We’re going to head out, and if we need to stop your sister, we will.”

Augusto thought to himself for a moment, then said, “Alright, but if you’re going to go, you should change into these clothes designed for jungle travel. You may find it easier to travel in these.” Augusto tore open a box and pulled out the largest clothes he could find.

Minutes later, the two furs emerged from a tent looking quite tropical. The largest vest and long sleeve shirt they had didn’t even cover half of Atten’s stomach. The baggy pants and bands were an actual battle to get on. His new feathered headband was stylish, though. Saia was not faring much better. Her pants fit even worse on her large waist. She was used to wearing clothing that exposed her belly, but these layered wrappings felt uncomfortable and hard to move in.

“Is this really better to wear?” Saia asked as she blushed with embarrassment.

“Yes, the bugs around here hate the material you’re wearing, and the branches and heat won’t get to you in that clothing. We’re giving you this so that you don’t perish alone in the jungle, and maybe you just might be the ones to bring Bruna back. Be careful out there, the temple is unexplored and said to be trapped.”

Atten clumsily shook his paw. “We’ll do our best. Your sister and Theo will be back safe and sound.”

Augusto wished them luck as they headed down the small trail to the expedition site. Vandrea emerged from Atten’s blade and sat on his head. “Feeling better, sleepyhead?” Atten facepalmed. “Oh don’t you go saying that, too!”

“It’s all for good reason. You failed to detect your attackers and now the weak one is gone. What a shame! But I actually have a question for Saia.” The tiger perked up upon hearing her name.

Vandrea fluttered over to the tiger and poked her. “I have a good eye for liars, and I see something in you. You’ve been awfully distant from these two pests. As annoying as they are it is pretty clear to see that they are friends who trust each other. You’ve been keeping your distance as we travel. Is there a reason, mortal?”

“The nerve! Are you accusing me of lying to you all? Why in blazes would I lie? I’ve got nothing to lie about. Let’s just save the idle chatter and get to stepping. Theo isn’t going to save himself, that’s for sure.” Saia picked up her pace with an annoyed look on her face. The fat tiger clearly didn’t trust the group fully, but Atten couldn’t blame her for it. She was just a bartender who was now stuck with magical fat strangers who wanted to stop a cult. It’s hard to trust furs you’ve just met.

Eventually the three of them came upon a large clearing that housed a wondrous site. In a gigantic hole lie the once buried ruins of a great pyramid-like jungle temple. It was a great stone pyramid with a large staircase that led up to a grand altar.

“This must be it! There’s no time to waste!” Atten hopped down the hole and slid down the perimeter.

“Wait up, you moron! There might be guards or traps!” Saia quickly followed suit.

At the base of the temple, nobody seemed to make a move. It was suspiciously quiet. Saia and Atten made their ascent up the large staircase and reached the top of the altar. At the top, there was nothing except for a large hole in the center that led to a dark staircase.

“They must have entered before you.” Vandrea commented. “Then let’s catch up!” Atten began his descent down the stone staircase.

The moment they began walking down the stairs, a chill ran down everyone’s spine. It was eerie and as cold as ice down there.

“Vandrea, help us out.” Vandrea set a claw on Atten’s back and Atten held up his sword like a torch. The tip of his blade produced a flame that warmed the two furs and lit their way.

“Watch out!” Atten yelled at Saia and pulled her back. The torchlight came in handy as there was an obvious trap at the bottom of the stairwell.

A thin wire sat ready to trip up any paw that hit the bottom of the stairwell. Atten took two steps back and sliced the tripwire. **FWOOSH** **FWOOSH** **FWOOSH** A flurry of darts flew in front of Atten’s snout. His round belly sloshed back and forth, as it almost got clipped as well.

“Phew, that was a close one! Let’s keep an eye out for now on, eh?” Saia suggested as they made their way down the dark hallway. As they continued their journey into the depths, the shadows began to move from behind them.

Out from the shadows came Theo, who was being restrained and gagged by a large figure. She wore a jungle outfit that was similar to Augusto’s, but her feather headdress was a special adornment. She seemed to be a fatter female version of Augusto, as they had eerily similar facial features, yet her large stomach and wide stature left the two twins noticeably different.

“Your little friends are quite sharp, but not sharp enough to notice that we are following them. Letting foreigners solve the traps for us is almost too

good of a plan! We must thank you for all of this, otter boy!” She had her scimitar drawn and held the blade in front of Theo’s neck.

“Hmph!” He was gagged and couldn’t get a word out, but he desperately hoped Atten and Saia would catch on.

Atten and Saia continued down the dark hallway until they came upon a large room. Once it was filled with torchlight, they could see a strange pattern on the floor. It was a hallway-like room with stange tiles on the floor. The layout was three floor tiles wide and six floor tiles long with a door at the other end. It looked like a mismatched chessboard, as each tile was made out of either dark or white stone. A large skull was mounted at the end of the room.

“This couldn’t be a more obvious trap. But how do we know which tile to step on? Any one of these could activate the trap!” Saia examined the room for any obvious signs. “Wait over there!” On the forehead of the skull was a line of text in a foreign language.

“I can’t read it... this must be an ancient language. We might just be plain out of luck.” Atten was prepared to brave the trap without any hope, but the small dragon hanging onto his back gave him a small scratch on the face. “Ow! What was that for?”

“For being an imbecile! I am an ancient being of immeasurable power! I can read any language known and unknown to your kind.” Vandrea had a smug look on her face with her hands on her chubby hips.

“Immeasurable, huh? Not too sure about that one.” Saia giggled.

“Do you want me to solve the riddle or not, fool?” Vandrea was seething and hissed at Saia.

“Calm down you two. Vandrea, please help us solve the puzzle. We have to work together, you know? We can’t stop Permafrost or get your old size back if we don’t get the treasure in this temple. So just lend us a claw, please?” Atten begged.

With a dramatic sigh Vandrea began to read, “Those who seek the treasure of the Oliveira family, hear my tale: The one who is left must brave the darkness, for only they have the right to touch the light. The light that twice graces those caught between two worlds. The souls of those left in darkness were always truly remnants of the light.”

“That’s a great poem and all, but what does that have to do with the trap? Atten what do you think?” Saia looked over at Atten who made a mighty leap onto the first tile to the far left. “Atten are you mad? You could activate the trap!”

“No, I think I’ve figured it out. That poem isn’t just a story, it’s the key to this puzzle. Look at the tiles. The first row has one black tile to the left, and the rest are white. Think about the riddle. The one who is ‘left’ must brave the ‘darkness’. The lines of the poem are clues to the correct tile. So if I’m not wrong, the white tile to the far right should be correct!” Atten leapt to the far right tile. After a second of silence, nothing.

“Well, you might not be as stupid as I thought, young Atten!” Vandrea gave Atten a pat on the back.

“Uhh, thanks! So next up is the light that twice graces those caught between two worlds. Hmm... Oh! I get it!” Atten hopped onto the middle tile and was halfway there. In front of him was another white tile in the middle which he hopped onto right after.

“Let me guess, next is far left black? That’s dandy and all but I don’t get the last one. It says some nonsense about seeing the light but doesn’t mention a direction.” Saia commented from afar.

Atten thought to himself for a moment as he hopped towards the final set of squares. *One black square in the middle and two white squares to the left and right. Which one is it?* “I’m gonna take a guess. It’s right!” Atten hopped to the tile on the right and... nothing. “Well I guess we...”

RUMBLE The sound of shifting stone emanated through the room. “That wasn’t your stomach, was it Atten?” Saia asked with a nervous look on her face.

Before Atten had a chance to respond the skull began pouring out a mysterious liquid. The room began to shake as the tile Atten stood on gave way! “Atten look out!” Saia was too late to do anything as Atten couldn’t move a paw before he began to fall. *Is this it? Is this the end?* Atten thought to himself before...

THUNK Atten opened his eyes back up as his fall was cut short. He wondered why he stopped falling and looked down. When he saw the sight below him he blushed with embarrassment. “Well, I guess being big has its perks!” Atten said as Saia breathed a sigh of relief. Atten’s round belly was caught in the trap! He couldn’t fit through the hole!

“You idiot! I take back everything I said! If it weren’t for my glorious girth you would be falling to your doom right now! You must be the worst servant I’ve ever had!” Vandrea began a long tirade as Saia made her way over.

“You might have botched this one, but at least everything’s peachy.” Saia gave Atten a paw and began tugging. Small pebbles began falling as the tiger began heaving with all she had. “You know, you’re quite heavy, big guy! I didn’t think being fat would help out this much, but lifting you is a real trail!”

PLOP Atten tumbled out from the hole after a great effort. “Phew, well that’s that! Except we still have the last puzzle to contend to. If we fail again there might be more dire consequences. So we need to think this through very carefully. I recommend we take a moment to analyze the situation and come up with a plan of act...” Atten watched as Saia simply jumped over the last row of tiles.

“What? It’s right next to the bloody door. We don’t have to solve the puzzle, you know? Also in hindsight, remnant is another word for something that’s left. So you can think about that while we move on. Saia said as she made her way through the ancient doorway. Atten was more embarrassed in this thirty second sequence of events than he had ever been in his life.

As the furs left, the shadows began to shift once again. Bruna Oliviera emerged with her prisoner. “This is it, they are approaching the final room.

Let's hope our 'friends' attempt to open the door without our family heirloom." The fat jaguar laughed as she pulled out a medallion with a jaguar head carved into it.

"Those fools should know nothing of this, correct? I want them disposed of as quickly as possible! I want nothing to get in the way of my victory. You remember our deal, correct? The City of Cocoa is all yours, but the crown is mine." A fat, gray-cloaked polar bear emerged from the shadows next to Bruna. He was accompanied by a troupe of Frost Demons.

"Oh yes, I had not forgotten. Nothing will matter to me once I discover the lost chocolate city of legend. Now come, let us watch them fall to my ancestor's trap." Bruna slunk back into the shadows with Theo in her paws.

Atten, Saia, and Vandrea made their way into the largest room yet. It was a grand room with beautiful carvings decorated along the wall. The item of interest in the room was a large lever looking device in the center of the room next to a large dias. In the center of the dias was a small circular hole that looked like it needed to be filled.

"It's been getting colder as we've gone deeper, but this room takes the cake. We must be close now! Look at this contraption! Do we just need to push the lever?" Saia said as she approached the device.

"I think something's missing. This dias... I think this is it Saia." Atten said as he gave her a serious nod. Saia nodded back in understanding and the two turned around towards the entrance of the room. They looked at the shadows and smirked.

"You think we wouldn't notice that the entrance to the temple was open, yet the traps were still armed and no paw prints were in sight? You wanted us to fall prey to the traps in the temple so you could take all the loot, huh? Well we aren't as dumb as you think!" Atten yelled as he unleashed a plume of flame as the back wall.

The shadows jumped and scurried away from the fire. “Heh, not bad. I ask that you forgive me for underestimating you simply because you are foreign to this jungle.” Bruna emerged from the darkness with Theo in hand.

“I had hoped you would go down easily, but I suppose it is fate that we settle this paw to paw! I resent you for what you did to my order, and now you will pay with your lives!” Rould emerged next with a band of frost demons behind him.

Atten drew his blade and said, “You think we’re just going to sit here and take that from you? We’ll free Theo and stop you, Rould!” All of a sudden a blade emerged from the darkness behind Atten. He could see the poisoned blade an inch from his chubby neck. A legion of six jaguar soldiers had Atten and Saia and the end of a blade.

“Cute, but I do not play such games. Surrender or else.” Bruna raised her paw to give the execution order. Atten could see she was serious. He sheathed his blade and put his paws up. “Good child. Now, Theo was it? Be a dear and put this medallion in that dias and pull that lever for me. It still might have a deadly trap attached so I’d rather someone more... expendable do the job, no?” She removed his restraints and pushed him forward.

Theo hesitantly walked towards the dias and placed the medallion in the slot. *CLICK* It set into place perfectly. Theo gulped and began pulling the lever. It was ancient and heavy, but after a mighty shove, rocks began tumbling and a hidden doorway revealed itself. A large stone wall seemed to slide into the floor.

“This is it! My ancestor’s treasure, finally uncovered! Guards, watch the prisoners. We will deal with them on the way out. Rould, let us continue.” The two rotund figures made their way through the dark hall and down a staircase. They soon disappeared and left Atten, Saia, Theo, and Vandrea with the jaguar mercenaries. Saia nodded to Atten and he nodded back.

“Now!” Saia shouted as she quickly grabbed her captor’s arm and flung him over her shoulder. He was slammed to the ground by Saia and received a powerful kick to the face! Atten’s guard turned to Saia only to see a fat tiger

paw flying at his face. *WHAM* He received a knockout blow in an instant. The other two guards rushed at Saia, but not before Atten could draw his blade and go for a mighty chop right on top of their swords.

CLANG In one chop Atten slammed both of their swords to the ground. “Yah!” He shoulder charged the both of them into the remaining guard, knocking them to the floor. “Fire!” A line of flame came from the blade and ignited a large wall between the group and the mercenaries. The conscious guards were trapped outside of the room now.

“Come on! We have to hurry before Rould escapes!” Theo shouted as he took Atten’s paw and ran down the staircase.

“You’re welcome too, buddy. But you’re right! Let’s move out. Who knows what awaits at the bottom of these ruins!” The group dashed down the large staircase. The stairs eventually turned into a straight hallway with a dead end. At the end of the hall was nothing but a large hole.

“Small enough to fit in this one, Atten?” Saia gave Atten a smack in the gut as he once again blushed with embarrassment. Theo looked confused.

“D... don’t worry about it, Theo. It looks like there’s only one way down. They must have come this way! It’s all or nothing!” Atten hopped down the hole. Theo covered his eyes as he dove down into the darkness. *They’re willing to do all of this for people they’ve just met. I wish I could be like you, Atten. I’m only travelling for myself, and I haven’t even told you the whole truth yet. I just hope we can come to fight like friends instead of like comrades. But for now, I’ll trust you and your instincts, like a friend would!* Saia thought to herself as she jumped down the hole.

SPLOOSH *SPLOSH* *SPLOOSH* One by one the furs landed in a mysterious liquid that stopped their fall. Atten landed first and created a big splash. Theo landed with all of the grace expected from an otter. Unfortunately that grace was cancelled out by the cannonball from Saia. The big splash spilled liquid everywhere, and coated the other two’s fur.

After a shake, Atten licked a paw and got a taste of the liquid. “It’s... chocolate? What’s chocolate doing down here?” Atten asked as he looked up at

Theo, who was looking at something with awe. Atten looked up as well and saw a marvelous sight! An entire city made out of chocolate! Ancient untouched structures, a fountain, and a grand tower were all made from ice cold chocolate.

“How is it all staying solid? Shouldn’t all of this be melting?” Saia said as she secretly got some licks of chocolate in.

“It must be because of the piece of the crown... because of that up there!” Atten pointed at the top of the tower and saw a blue glowing light. It seemed to be the source of the cold that was permeating the underground city. It had to be the lost city’s power source. The group didn’t hesitate to step out of the fountain and make their way towards the tower.

At the top of the tower was a large room that sort of looked like a lighthouse. The center of the room had a pedestal that had a glowing chocolate ball in it’s center. The room felt like a freezer, but the room’s occupant couldn’t be happier with that. Rould took fat, thundering steps towards his prize. “Is it not beautiful? My prized possession, finally mine! Hmph, are you not pleased, Bruna?”

“My life’s work is all but complete, yet I feel a certain... sadness. My brother should have been here to see this.” She said as she wistfully gazed at the view from the tower.

“Such pathetic sappiness has no place for an occasion such as this. But it matters little. I now have all I desire. Enjoy your ancient treasure while it lasts.” Rould said as he made his way up to the pedestal. Bruna was about to question what he meant by that, but she was interrupted by three familiar furs bursting through the doors of the tower.

“Stop right there, Rould! We won’t forgive you for kidnapping Theo, and we won’t let you destroy this city! We have to leave the crown here, or else the whole city will melt!” Atten yelled with his blade drawn.

Bruna looked over at Rould with rage, but the polar but simply chuckled, “My dear, did you really think this crown was a mere accessory? Your city will

fall apart without the crown, but fear not! You can spend all eternity with your family's treasure! I'm sick of fools like you all meddling with my affairs! It's time you learn what it means to stand against Permafrost!" Rould took the orb from atop the pedestal, and the light began to dim.

RUUUUUMMMBLE The world began to shake around them as the cold air in the room disappeared. The heaviest among them began to sink into the chocolate floor as the tower began to lean. "Everyone, BRACE YOURSELVES!" Theo yelled as he took cover! **CRACK** The middle of the tower split apart and went into a freefall!

CRAAAAASSH It landed in a gigantic crash, throwing the furs onto the liquid pool of the floor. "Is everyone alright?" Atten asked as he got a headcount. Everyone was awake and present, except for Rould. He was about to help his friends up when he felt the liquid below him begin to flow... and rise... and rise!

"Find higher ground! We need to get out of here! It's going to come down on our heads!" Bruna announced as she bolted towards the entrance. It didn't take long for everyone else to follow suit. The liquid chocolate began on the floor, but it now rose up to their paws, and it began climbing up to the group's legs.

As they fought the current, they saw that their exit was useless, they fell in through a hole. **CRACK** **THUD** A building fell apart right in front of them! All around them, buildings were falling apart and melting into liquid chocolate. They didn't have long before they would drown! **SMAAASH** A large circular building fell apart next to them and almost squished them! But out from the building came a few wooden structures, and even a large wooden raft. It seemed to keep the chocolate out, and it even floated in the liquid!

"Everyone get on! There's no time for anything else!" Even though the chocolate now rose up past her large belly, she still had enough strength to grab the boat and keep it from floating away. One by one the furs mounted the large raft that was big enough for ten furs. Once everyone was up, Atten gave Saia a hand and pulled the fat tiger onboard.

“I think we’re safe, for now. I hope this flows towards an exit and not something dangerous... WOAH!” *CRASH* Atten was interrupted by the raft colliding with an iceberg. From the ice came Rould, with a cocky grin on his snout.

“Leaving so soon? I will ensure your total annihilation!” Rould said as he snapped and three frost demons climbed aboard the boat, all shaped like jaguars. He then took his own paw and held it straight out. Ice began to form around it until it reached a fine, sharp point. He turned his own paw into an ice sword! “Yah!” He charged at Atten and sliced!

CLANG Atten barely parried the blow! All around him the Frost Demons began to descend on his friends! Saia was struggling to get any blows in on the Demons, Theo was huddled in the corner behind his shield, and Bruna was barely scratching the icy foes with her scimitar. Bruna got frustrated and attempted to punch the demon, but she was counterattacked and knocked out by a quick claw swipe. Atten had his own troubles to deal with though, as Rould began slashing wildly at him with his ice blade. *CLANG* *CLANG* *WOOSH* Atten could only block and dodge so many attacks, and he was completely on the defensive.

“Is this the best you can do? How disappointing, I had hoped your demise would bring me some more entertainment. Well how about this, I’ll just start with your precious friends first! Just to see you suffer, Atten! Now begone!” Rould raised an icy spear and pointed it at Theo! Before Atten could stop it he launched it at the otter!

FWOOSH Theo barely blocked it with his shield, but it didn’t prevent the blow! Worse than that was the fact that the ice was spreading and was going to freeze him solid! His paws were already frozen and stuck to his shield. He wouldn’t last much longer! Vandrea looked at him with concern, but then felt her power running through Atten.

“No! I won’t let you... hurt any of my friends!” Atten swung his blade and unleashed a strange looking flame. It seemed to fly through the air, right past his opponents and into Theo. His paws and shield began to glow and radiate heat! *CRASH* The ice shattered into pieces, and Theo’s shield was radiating

flames just like the Gluttonbrand! Somehow Atten shared Gluttonbrand's power with Theo to enchant his shield!

"Eat this, why don't ya!" Theo let out a battlecry with newfound confidence as his shield bashed the Frost Demon. It was unprepared for the fiery assault, and began to melt. It hissed at Theo until he came down and slammed it over the head. It fell to the floor and melted completely, revealing a jaguar mercenary.

"Atten, you're amazing! How did you do that? My shield's magic now!" Theo yelled as he tossed his shield straight into the abdomen of a Frost Demon.

"I don't know, but it came from the bottom of my heart. I just wanted to protect you, Theo!" Theo blushed at Atten's claim, but the moment was interrupted by Rould jabbing at Atten.

"Do you think this is over, boy? I will destroy you myself!" He swung down upon Atten, who rolled out of the way! He stood back up and kicked Rould in the back while his blade was stuck in the wood. He rolled back and almost fell into the chocolate depths. The ball came rolling out from his pocket and almost fell into the liquid, but Theo managed to catch it at the last second.

"Give me that orb, fool!" Rould rushed at Theo, who barely managed to block his ice stab. Atten ran up to help him, but his path was blocked by two Frost Demons. They surrounded him, and pushed him back towards the edge. "Woah!" He was about to slip, but he was caught by a strong, orange paw! Saia lifted him back up, and the two stood back to back to face the demons.

"Atten, I'm sorry. You really are a good person. You care about others even when you don't need to. The truth is I've been lying to you all to save my own fur. I can't tell you the truth, so I understand if you don't want to trust me... but I just wanted to explain the distance between all of us. I'm sorry we can't be friends..." Saia was interrupted by Atten laughing.

"Of course we're friends, Saia! It's okay to have secrets, but we have to trust each other. I know we haven't started on the best foot as friends, but maybe we can change that right here. So what do you say, friend? Are you up for some change?" Atten felt the distance between him and Saia decrease.

She smiled and raised her fists. “Yeah! Let’s give ‘em hell!” As soon as she accepted Atten, Theo, and Vandrea into her heart, her hands lit on fire. She felt a new power within her, as Atten’s enchantment touched her soul.

“Now you’re in for it, you icicles!” Saia and Atten confronted the Frost Demons back to back! They both dodged their claw swipes in perfect synchronization! They went for a frost breath attack, but both furs ducked. They blasted each other with ice and stunned each other! By the time they could see again, fiery fists and a flame powered blade were inches away!

BOOM Both Frost Demons fell in a fiery impact! As they melted, Saia and Atten turned to Rould. He was having trouble getting through Theo’s fiery defence. **FWOOSH** Rould barely dodged a fireball that whizzed past his snout. Atten raised his blade to Rould’s neck. “It’s over! Stand down, now!” Atten threatened.

“You think I would give up on my life’s work? On everything? I am a thinker, therefore I plan out every situation. You all are no match!” Rould knew his speech would distract his attackers long enough to knock the orb out of Theo’s paws. Fortunately for him, the stupid otter seemed to be fiddling with it while he was talking.

CLANK* *CLANK* *CLANK The orb rolled towards the edge of the ship. Both Atten and Rould dove for the ball! **THUD** When the two fat furs landed the whole ship rocked, and rolled the ball further away. They both reached out and got a paw on it. They drew their blades and collided steel and ice with a loud **SHING**! Rould’s ice began to cover the Gluttonbrand in their clash, but Atten’s will was stronger! “RAAAUGH!” He yelled as flame overtook the ice and shot onto Rould. He flew back towards the back of the boat, leaving Atten with the orb.

“Everyone, look!” Theo pointed towards the ceiling. Not far ahead was a bright light coming from atop a chocolatey cliff. The face was steep, but climbable. The ship crashed straight into the wall of the cliff, and was being torn apart! The current turned and flowed further down into the unknown, so the remaining furs decided to start climbing.

Theo began to scale the wall and head towards the light. Saia grabbed Bruna and began her descent after Theo. Atten grabbed Vandread by her soft belly and began to climb up. “That is not how you handle a queen! Ack!” Vandrea complained the whole way up. *CRACK* *CRASH* Chocolate fell from the ceiling and almost came down on top of them, they didn’t have much time! Fortunately, Atten saw that everyone was present at the top.

Bruna woke up at the cliff face and looked around her. “What... happened?” She asked the furs surrounding her.

“This place is collapsing but I think we found a way out. Can you walk?” Saia asked as she helped her up.

“Yes I can... thank you. I’m sorry for putting all of you in danger. I have seen the error of my ways. I must see my brother now...” Bruna said weakly.

“Hrrng!” A grunt came from behind the group. The cliff was collapsing and cracks began to form next to its face, yet Atten ran towards the edge. He saw Rould hanging onto a broken part of the cliff by a thread. “Take my hand! Quickly!” He offered his enemy a paw.

“Give me the orb first!” Rould was determined to be a problem for the group.

“Just leave him Atten! If he wants to stay here, let him! Don’t give him that orb!” Theo shouted as the cliff began to crumble even more.

“I’ll perish here if you don’t! You wouldn’t let me fall, would you, Atten?” Rould shouted.

Atten couldn’t stand leaving even his worst enemy here to perish alone. He took the orb and handed it to Rould. He reached out his paw to save him, but the polar bear let go himself! He fell below onto a small iceberg. “You fool! With this power, I have no need for your help or this city! Behold, a piece of the Crown of... what? Where is it? Where... you slimy piece of trash! How dare you! Curse you Atten! You will rue this day!” He yelled as he threw the orb into the chocolate and drifted off into the darkness.

“What happened? Oh whatever, there’s no time! Let’s get out of here!” The exit was melting, but the group just barely had enough time to run out! They followed the sunlight until their vision was completely white.

BOOOOOOOM From the outside, Augusto had gathered a group of volunteers to assist Atten. But they could only watch in horror as the temple began to collapse upon itself! All at once the temple came down and left nothing but rubble and dust in a hole. Once the dust had cleared, only rocks and debris remained. “No! Bruna! This cannot be!” Augusto said to himself.

“Boss, look!” A jaguar helper pointed towards the rubble. Out from a pile of rocks came a group of furs led by Atten! He made it! Behind him was... “Bruna! It is you!” Augusto ran down into the hole to see his sister. Bruna was weak, but looked up and saw her brother. She let go of Saia and embraced Augusto.

“I thought we had lost you forever.” Augusto breathed a sigh of relief.

“But I have been lost for a long time, no? I went against our family’s wishes for my own greed. In the end, I destroyed our ancient treasure. It is all dust now. It is my fault that everything is gone, I can never atone for all of the beauty lost...” Bruna was cut off by Augusto who put a paw over her mouth.

“What is the point of beauty if not to be seen? A lost city like that... maybe it is meant to stay lost. Besides, that only familial treasure we need is each other. We need our bond as brother and sister to keep our ancestor’s traditions going.” Augusto told his sister with a smile.

Bruna wiped a tear from her eye and said, “Yes, you’re right. Let us return to camp. We have much catching up to do!”

Augusto nodded and turned to Atten, Saia, Theo, and Vandea. “I cannot thank you all enough. Our family is forever in your debt. How can we even begin to repay you for this?”

GUUUUUUUURRRGLE Both Atten and Saia's stomachs growled. "How about a meal? An even bigger one than last time!" Atten said with a shameless smile.

"Then a feast there shall be! It will be a feast to be remembered! One to honor these heroes and to celebrate Bruna's return!" The helpers cheered and began making their way to camp!

"Hold it right there!" A familiar masculine voice came from the cliff face. The entire group turned around, afraid of seeing Rould again, only to see...

"It is I, Rose! I've come back for my revenge! First you steal all of my candy, and now I hear about an entire city made of chocolate! And nobody even thought of telling me!?! Ridiculous! I would have been in paradise!" The fat hyena rubbed his fat pink belly.

"Oh look, it's Peach-for-Brains. Look, we aren't in the mood for games, so run along before you fall off of another tree." Saia said mockingly.

"This time, there are no branches in sight! Once the Now prepare to taste my signature Sweet Swiper's Shining Slice! No fur has ever seen this technique and survived, so say your goodbyes! Once I'm done with you, I think I'll track down that next Crown of Cablablabla or whatever it's called. I believe Rould mentioned it being somewhere in the Marin Province? No matter, prepare... for your doom!" He unsheathed his blade and stomped the ground with a fat paw to prepare for action!

CRACK A crack formed in the unstable cliff face... and another... and another... "Oh snap..." **CRASH** The section of the cliff he was standing on gave way! The fat hyena tumbled down the cliff with all of the grace of a bird that was struck with an arrow. **POOF** The crowd of spectators could see a giant cloud of dust and rubble where he landed. He was knocked out instantly.

"Will he be... alright?" Augusto asked.

“Yeah, I’m sure he’ll be fine. This seems to happen a lot with him. Anyways, let’s eat! I claim that delicious fish stew from earlier!” Atten said as he began his march back to camp.

“Oh no way! I want some! Friend or not, you’re not getting all of it, tubby!” Saia argued with a giggle. The group laughed all the way back to camp for their grand feast.