

2018 Campaign: Awaken Me

Story Written by Michael Fuchs

Choices provided by You

Explanation: Before we jump into our story, a little backstory. This story was originally run as an interactive campaign on the official RenQuest Facebook page. The campaign would run once a week, and after each story section, players voted on what the main character should do. As such, the events in this story are directly governed and made by all of you as players.

The campaign came with the following instructions: Every Thursday we will be running a campaign within the world of RenQuest which will affect the world. Within the text there will be four words in CAPS. Comment with the action you want to follow (the word in CAPS), and you'll directly affect the story and it's future!

You awaken to the smell of old, dusty tomes. You sigh contently; there is nothing greater than that smell. You eagerly move out of bed and begin your morning routine. When you see yourself in the mirror, you smile and say, "This will be another great day as a Keeper at the Library of Alexandria."

The Library of Alexandria...you still cannot believe it has been three years since you first joined the organization. Since then, you've learned so much. Sure, you learned how to read the history of an item just by touching, but more than that, you have learned interesting pieces of lore. The creation of the world by the goddess Tiamat and god the Lord of Light. The formation of the Band of the Twisted Claw. The foolish summoning of the Echidna. Why Thoren Grymm first created the Band of the Twisted Claw. It was all so interesting!

Suddenly, you hear a commotion in the hall outside your room. You peek your head out the door, and see one of your fellow Keepers running down the hall. There is panic on their face. They shout, "Fire! There is a fire in the artifact archive!"

Your legs move on their own accord. You need to get to the artifact archive as quickly as you can. The fire needs to be stopped otherwise the energies of the artifacts may be agitated by the destruction and the entire library could be erased from existence.

When you arrive at the archive, it is chaos. There are Keepers running around trying to stop the fire with their magics. Other members of staff run around trying to collect buckets of water. You think to yourself for a moment, even though every moment of hesitation sees more destruction. You suppose you could assist the Keepers with MAGIC to remove the oxygen the

fire needs to survive. Otherwise, the staff sure looks like it could use another hand gathering WATER. Suddenly, there is a large crash and a wooden beam falls onto one of the members of staff. They try to free themselves, and find they are not able to. You could SAVE them, but the fire is dangerously close to an artifact of the Lunar Tribe. You realize that if you ignored everything else, you could save the ARTIFACT before it melts.

As I said, it is up to you. MAGIC. WATER. SAVE. ARTIFACT.

You voted for SAVE

Without a moment's hesitation, you know what you have to do. The other Keepers and the staff should be able to hold the fire at bay! You run towards where the beam has fallen on the member of staff as they attempt, and fail, to free themselves from the burning beam. You pass by the artifact without giving it a glance; a person's life is far more important than some piece of history!

As you near the beam, the heat washes over your face and you cough at the deluge of smoke it is producing. The staff member underneath is no longer struggling, and you hope that you're not too late. You feel the magic of the area, the oily haze of the world you are so familiar with. You search for the blue line in the liquid. Suddenly, your concentration is interrupted as the beam cracks, sending embers skyward. Fie upon it! There's no time for this! You move your hand quickly through the air tracing glyphs that you can only see in your mind. The lines of the magic you know you should be isolating mix together, and you feel...something. A light within your chakras you have not felt before. It bursts forth, evaporating your vision of the magic. You blink. No, not just your mental vision of the magic, but also of the world!

Your vision blurs and you can barely make out the world once more.

BOOM! A gale of wind crashes into the burning beam, sending it flying into one of the nearby bookshelves. You look down at your hands. It came from you. You don't know what you did. The power you tapped into was so much more than you ever had. Suddenly, you sway. The strength that you had found is gone. You pass out.

You aren't certain how long you were out, but you awaken in the infirmary at the library. Your head is groggy. You look around you, and see a woman, badly burning but being treated by magics. A man clears his throat. You recognize him as a high ranking member of the Library. "Awake, are we? Good. The good news is you saved her." He pauses. "The bad news is that you sacrificed an irreplaceable artifact of history, the Quill of Henry Carrington. Not only that, but with your...outburst of magic, the entire archive of the west wing has been destroyed."

You frown. You know what is going to be said next.

The man continues, "As a Keeper of the Library, it is your duty to actually...keep the knowledge that we have collected safe. The Five have discussed the situation, and while they believe you have had good intentions, you failed your duty. You will be reassigned."

The five? You have heard that before, but only in whispers that say that the Library is controlled by five leaders who move everything that the Library does. Then, it hits you. Reassigned. "Reassigned where?"

The man smirks. "You will be going on an expedition. And you will be taking her," he motions to the girl that is being healed, "and some of the others who also failed to do their duty with you."

You think to yourself. What would be the appropriate way to react? You could ARGUE with him to try and retain your position. Perhaps you could even APPEAL to his good nature? Although, you are curious. Most people believe the FIVE are myth, but he spoke of it as fact. What could you learn of that? Otherwise...you could ACCEPT your fate. If you seek too much information or try to regain what you have lost, you may be punished worse.

As I said, it is up to you. ARGUE. APPEAL. FIVE. ACCEPT.

You voted for Five

You figure there isn't anything to lose by asking about the Five, after all, your fate has already been sealed. You force your gaze to meet his. "You speak of the Five? They are real?"

The man laughs at you. "I will tell you this, only because you will not have the opportunity to tell anyone else. I shall relish the sight of your face as you realize all you know is a lie." The man leans closer, the stink of his breath hanging on your face. "The Library is not run by a democracy seeking to better the world. It is run by five people, and the Library serves their goals. -You- serve their goals."

You tilt your head, somewhat confused. That cannot be right. Perhaps it is the man's delusion? There is clearly something wrong about him. The Library of Alexandria is a respected organization in Europe. Perhaps he is just a power hungry fool with too much power...and now he was going to make you pay.

The man laughs again. "You look as though you do not believe me. No matter. The Library always has, and always will, serve those of esteemed magical families first. Perhaps if you live, I shall even tell you their names before you are taken care of."

You fight the urge to roll your eyes. The man was probably exposed to an artifact and did not take the proper precautions, and thus was suffering from insanity. You force a smile. "May I speak with your superior?"

The man extends a hand to your head, and a wave of magic passes over you. You feel sick, and suddenly, you feel your vision begin to fade. The man laughs again. "You may not. They are currently busy in Bristol, England."

You gasp. You wake up, but something is wrong. You attempt to move your limbs, but find they are securely tied to the bed. You are able to crane your neck, and you see the woman from earlier is in a similar situation. Not only that, but you see a few more bed, likely in the same situation you are. A wave of magic passes over you, and you feel calm. Strange. What were you panicking about?

There is the tap of steps on stone, and a woman walks to the center of the room. "You five have been volunteered for an expedition. I assume you have no qualms against this?"

You smile to yourself and relax. Why would anyone not wish to partake on an expedition for the glory of the Library of Alexandria? It is every Keeper's dream! You feel an itch at the edge of your mind, but you ignore it.

"Very good. Now then. You are familiar with the planes, yes? There is the plane we occupy. The mirror realm, which is similar to ours yet very different. Then there is the astral plane. You are going to retrieve something from the astral plane. Something very precious."

The itch in your mind bothers you more. You realize suddenly that such journeys to the astral plane are forbidden by the Library, as they are extremely dangerous. Not only do spirits confound there, but mortal forms cannot take the magical exertion. As if the woman senses your thoughts, another wave of calm washes over you, and you forget your worry.

"So that you do not perish immediately, one of you shall guard the others in a generous gesture. Once you are within the plane, you are ordered to find even a sliver of it. He does not know what form it will take; just that it is east of the sun, west of the moon. Whatever that nonsense means."

You feel the ITCH in your mind again. Do you reach out for it? You could ask more INFORMATION from the woman about your mission. Or perhaps you could hope for something LUCKY to happen.

As I said, it is up to you. ITCH. INFORMATION. LUCKY.

You voted for ITCH.

You feel the itch once more in your mind. Suddenly, your vision of the room is gone, replaced by a blinding white brilliance, just as it did when you called on your magic during the library fire. You shudder, and suddenly your mind is clear.

No. This is all wrong. You feel a sinking feeling in your heart. You know what the woman means when she says “one of you shall guard the others”. You begin to struggle against the bonds. Someone will have to sacrifice themselves so that the others may live. It was inhumane to force someone to do that.

The woman sees you, and looks at you curiously. You feel her magic wash over you once more, but your mind remains clear and your vision white. You need to break free to stop this! You feel the power within you begin to grow as the air crackles around you. Another wave of magic washes over you to no affect.

You hear running footsteps as the woman yells out. “Good, you’re here! Stop them! Now!”

You hear a high pitched cackle as footsteps run at you, and you swear you hear a dagger being pulled from a scabbard. Your magic crescendos, and there is a loud BOOM.

Your vision returns to you. You feel weak. So very weak. Looking around the room, your magic seems to have sent the man that had run at you flying across the room into a nearby wall, and he seemed incapacitated. The woman, on the other hand, stood in the middle of the room with a spell shield around her, and she looks angry.

You struggle to keep your eyes open. You blink, and suddenly is standing over you. You blink again, and her hand is on your head. She is close enough that you feel her breath on your face.

A scream? You blink, and you are uncertain where you are. You are lying in a field of long grass, surrounded by the unconscious forms of the woman you had seen earlier and rescued, another woman, and a man – all bare the symbol of the Library on their clothing.

You groan. Your head is spinning. You hear the tapping of a cane of cobblestone, which confuses you. There is only grass about. Your eyes scan around looking for the source.

“Well now. What an interesting group. What brings you lot here?”

You swing your body around and see, only a few feet before you, a handsome man with elegant silken garb, a circlet, and a black walking cane. As you look at him, you swear you see magic radiating off of him. You ask, "Where is here?"

He smiles. "The astral plane, of course. Where there were five, there are now four." He yawns. "I have found little amusement of late. I will be your guide."

You audibly blink. The astral plane. The woman had succeeded in bringing you there after all. Then...the man's words were true. She had taken an innocent life, and the aether of their soul was the only thing keeping you and the others alive.

You frown as you rouse your companions. The man is strange. Who is he? You could always ASK for more information. You could also be HONEST with him. Or, you could ABANDON him there and seek a way out. Then again...there is the MISSION; if the woman wants something, perhaps you could find it and keep it out of her hands. You have the suspicion that it is something she shouldn't have.

As I said, it is up to you. ASK. HONEST. MISSION. ABANDON.

You voted for HONEST.

You find yourself uncertain who the man is or what power he holds – honest is the best route forward with him. You sigh. Best to get everything out at once. "I am with the Library of Alexandria. Me and my companions," you wave your hand at the others, "were forced here on a mission to find a sliver of...something we were not told. All we know is that it is east of the sun, and west of the moon."

The man laughs. "How very mortal you are. You do not even comprehend what that statement means."

You furrow your brow and are about to interject a witty comeback when he interrupts your unspoken words. He nods. "I can see my words are true from your face. I offer this to you for free. East of the sun, west of the moon is a specific phrase. The sun, sol, is everything here on the astral plane. The moon, luna, is everything on your restrictive plane. Therefore, east of the sun, west of the moon refers to neither here nor there."

He smiles at you. "However! That does not mean I do not know how to get there."

He suddenly snaps his fingers and a wooden door appears behind him. He opens it with a smile on his face. "Are you coming?"

He does not wait for your reply. You hear a bell ring in the distance through the opening in the door, and you feel yourself being pulled in. It is at this moment that you realize you cannot see your companions anymore. As you are willed through the door, the man pulls it shut.

Everything is dark. You hear his voice. "Do not worry about your companions. They have their own doors. The journey is tailored to you, for your own amusement." He laughs again. "Now then, while I know how to get there, you need to find your own path."

You blink, and you are alone. Before you is a door. You recognize the alchemical symbols for EARTH, WATER, AIR, and FIRE on a stone before. You feel like you should touch one. Which one do you touch?

As I said, it is up to you. FIRE. WATER. EARTH. AIR.

You voted for WATER.

You reach out and touch the alchemical symbol of water. The symbol begins to glow white beneath your fingers. With a rumble the door begins to swing open. You peer inside, but cannot distinguish what is within. You sigh. You know you have to enter. With a step forward, you do.

The feeling is unsettling. It feels as if the world is shifting around you.

You feel woozy. You stumble for a moment.

Suddenly, the sound of waves crashing against a boat.

You look around, and you are surprised to find yourself on a ship. The flag of the ship has the colors of Lunar Tribe, as well as a symbol you do not recognize. Something doesn't feel right, though. You quickly realize that besides the sound of the ship, it is eerily quiet. Then you realize -- It doesn't seem as if there is a crew.

You hear a chuckle as the man's voice speaks in your mind. "Confused are we? I suppose the path would be. The ocean breeze is pleasant though, aye?"

You frown.

"I can sense where you are, mortal. This was always one of my favorite paths. Their conflict serves no purpose to me, but there is something alluring about what they have done. Messy, yes. Purposeful? I do not care. As I once heard a mortal say, the world is but a stage."

You do not understand what the man is going on about. You sense magic at work, and a lot of it, but cannot discern the source. You move up to the captain's wheel and begin to steer the ship without purpose. If this is a path, there must be a correct way to go.

After what feels like hours, you see something on the horizon. As it nears, you feel yourself begin to panic. The ship bears a flag of red and black – the Draco Disciples.

You spin the wheel of the ship, trying to change course. However, the wind has other ideas. You quickly realize that the other ship is much faster than yours. Your fingers turn while as you grip the wheel. There is no hope to escape. You by yourself cannot fend off a ship, even if you call upon your magic. It isn't powerful enough.

As the ship grows close enough you can see the crew, you hear a call from their captain. "Board them before we burn them!"

There is a rallying cry from the crew "Aye, aye! For the Captain Arson! For Tiamat!"

You have only moments before they grapple onto your ship. You could BARRICADE yourself below deck. Or perhaps you could REASON with their captain? Maybe...just maybe...you could even FIGHT them off. Or, you could surrender and hope that LUCK is on your side.

As I said, the choice is yours. BARRICADE. REASON. FIGHT. LUCK.

You voted for FIGHT.

You realize there is no choice to be made. They are the Draco Disciples. They are a filth that resides within the world and stains the glorious image of what the Lord of Light has left everyone. All they seek to do is spread chaos so they may summon their dragon goddess and remake the world in Her image. They must be stopped.

As the first of the crew boards your vessel, you begin building your magic within you. The force slithers up your limbs, leaving its inky stain behind that makes you want to shake. A large man wearing the signature colors of red and black charges you, and you release only a fraction of your power, casting him from the ship.

Time seems to slow down, and you hear the strange man that has guided you thus far in your mind. There is a sigh. "Your actions bore me. I sensed so much more. Why do you play this game? You are no pawn."

You cast another of the pirate crew assailing your ship off of the deck as you consider the words that were spoken. It's true that if you continue casting them from the deck, they are merely going to get back on the ship and board again. You feel something within you calling to you. You reach for it, and feel a familiarity to it, just as you did in the Library when your power expanded.

You grasp it with your aether, willing it to the surface. You laugh as two more of the Draco crew are cast back, a gale forming around you to protect you. Your vision darkens.

The man speaks to your mind again. "Very good. Very g—"

There is a sudden churning in the water. A geiser of it shoots forth and strikes at the Draco ship. Suddenly, there is a woman on the bow of the ship you did not recognize. Her voice calls out, filled with strength. "You will not reign chaos on my sea!"

Captain Arson calls out to his men. "I-it is the Water Paragon! End her!"

The man sighs in your head. "We are out of time."

The water around the Draco Disciple ship begins to spin. All at once it stabs at the ship's hull with immense pressure, and the vessel cracks in twain. The Water Paragon takes a swig from a bottle in her hand.

You hear the Draco Disciples cry out as their bodies are flung into the sea. There is a crack as Captain Arson crashes into the hull before sinking under the waves.

You blink.

You are suddenly before the man whose voice you heard. "I did say you would have to find your own path, and it seems you have. We are here."

You look about confused. Besides you and him, there is nothingness. You feel anger swelling within you. You could tell him off for playing GAMES with you. Perhaps he could provide some INSIGHT. Or maybe, just maybe, this is a trick, and he needs to be...ENDED. Only then will your mission be complete.

As I said, the choice is yours. GAMES. INSIGHT. ENDED.

You voted for INSIGHT.

You attempt to peer into the nothingness around it, but find yourself at a loss. If you have arrived at your destination, then surely you can claim the prize that you were forced to go after. Yet, for all of your struggles, you cannot figure out how to do so. You look to the man. "How do I claim the artifact?"

The man responds. "You need to look past what you see. There you will find the vessel. However, to open it is...trickier. For that, you would require a boon from a resident here."

You frown and squint as you attempt to look past the darkness. You feel elation within you as you suddenly see a spark of light. You feel as if you walk to it, but when you turn the man is the same distance from you. Then, there before you is a black box. You attempt to open it, and it burns.

You curse to yourself.

The man shrugs. "As I said, you will require a boon from someone here. Someone powerful. I suppose...I could offer you my boon. A gift to fill the void within you that you may have the power to obtain what you seek."

Interesting...Making a deal with something in the astral plane. Unheard of. Who knows what blessings or perils accepting such a boon would hold. "What would you require in return of me?"

The man smiles. "Nothing. May I let you in on a secret?" He pauses. "I am a manifestation of your conscience and the astral. Or...rather, the conscience of humankind perhaps. I have always been since the beginning. I am a part of you."

You do not feel the desire to question the man. You know that he is right. You feel it somewhere in your soul. You feel your magic slowly slicking towards the box. The tendrils constrict it, and you smirk. "I require no boon of you then. For if you are within me, then I am within you. That is the puzzle of this place. I had to forge my own path and accept myself."

The man shrugs. "Perhaps."

Then, he is gone. In a flash of light, the box vanishes, and there you see the glint of a gem. Or rather, a sliver of a gem. You pale. The Gem of Souls.

You shake your head. No. Not the Gem of Souls – only a piece of it. Not enough for it to be used. However, if you can make it here, that means someone else from the Library could as well. It would be safest on you. "Well...I may as well place it in my scroll case."

You take it and place it in your scroll case on your back. You wave your hand and a portal appears before you. You know it will return you to the mortal realm. Your understanding of this place is far greater.

You hear the man's voice whisper in your mind. "Keep it close from Them. They would bring ruin. Humankind always feels as if something is missing. As if there is a void within them. It is such a tragedy."

You step through the portal.

The choices that were yours have been cast. The path forward is set. A single question is one of yours. Comment it below and maybe...just maybe, our Keeper will hear your thoughts.

(Editor note: On this post players commented with a number of question. You will see the main character answering them in the next portion of the story.)

You step out of the portal. You stand before the Library of Alexandria.

It is curious. You know far more than you did when you left. It is as if there are fragments in your mind that give you more – almost as if they are fragments of the consciousness of humanity.

You know why your mission into the astral realm was so important to one of the Five. It is strange for such a noble goal in this den of corruption. He would benefit most from this sliver. All of the wrong. All of the deceit. You ask yourself “Who do we trust now?”

You know the answer already. You trust yourself. You have been there since the beginning.

You shake your head. That doesn’t sound right. You are a Keeper of the Library.

You nod. You do not hide from what is within humanity. The truest form of purpose.

With a frown, you ask yourself. “How can we help humanity realize they no longer need to search for completion - they are beautiful and whole as they are?”

After a moment, you know the answer. Humanity does not realize they are beautiful and whole the way they are because They do not wish it to be so. They would never allow it. They force humanity beneath them. They force humanity to be bound to their dictated fate. They are a disease on this existence.

A series of questions begin to form in your mind. “How do I keep this from those who are hunting for it?”, “How can I best keep it safe?”, and finally “How do we stop Them?”

You know already. You look at the Library of Alexandria – an organization created by Their followers. A place that will be a hindrance in the future. You shake your head. A hindrance? The Library of Alexandria is a noble organization, set to safeguard the world. Set to keep the knowledge it holds within sacred. As the words fill your mind, you know those are hollow, recited words. False words. Spoken by deceivers again and again. Spoken by those too weak to accept the calling. For long have you called out to this plane. For long have you tried to turn humanity away from Their lies. Too long did you call.

With a wave of your arm, power gathers. Far more power than you have ever called on before. It rushes forward, no longer sluggish as it once was. You give once last glance at the Library of Alexandria, and then turn away. As you do so, there is an explosion.

A smile does not grace your lips. It was necessary.

You walk away. You have one more place to go.

Behind you, only ash remains where the Library of Alexandria once stood. The Legacy of the Keepers has ended.

The choices that were yours have been cast. The path forward is set.

You near the port town of Bristol. Time to get this over with. You are certain he will be confused, but it is no matter. He will end the suffering that has gone on for far too long – suffering that They allowed, nay, encouraged to happen.

Near the tree line to the city, you pause and raise your hand, tracing the air. Strange. The city didn't feel that way the last time you were here.

Your eyes narrow and peer into the gates. Your gaze pierces through the fog that They created. Mortal minds would not be able to comprehend what you take in – their perception is too linear. Too straightforward. You find yourself disgusted at the way that They always took advantage of that.

You hum softly to yourself. With the state the ward is in, perhaps the mortals' comprehension will change. Limited? Opened? Free? You shake your head. It's unimportant.

You peer once more into the gates, and then you see something useful. You begin to mutter in a language you know it will understand. "Si beckon wux ekess ve sekeolath. Harken ekess sia distolir."

It looks at you for a moment, and then screams as your call tears a piece of its essence outside the ward. You pant and the world spins. Even in the state the ward is in that still took much out of you – far more than you had thought it would.

A man stands before you – or at least what was once a man. A specter at this point. You reach into your scroll case and take out the box with the shard of the Gem of Souls in it. You hand it to the specter and whisper in its ear. "Gethrisj ekess jacion vur seilor jacioniv duulo."

With a wave of your hand, you force the specter's essence back within where it belongs. It looks at you from beyond the ward with purpose. It is bound to your will now.

You walk about from the city. Your task here is done. There is much to be done before next summer. As you walk past the treeline, the glint of the sun catches on a spider's web. You brush it out of your way. So intricate, yet so frail.

The choices that were yours have been cast. The path forward is set.