

The figure at the head of the Readceran army seems at odds with his surroundings, more like he is delivering a sermon than leading a bloodthirsty vanguard. His body overflows with soul essence - more than any mortal could hope to contain.

Though he has the protection of an army rallying around him, his features are creased with apprehension.

Player: [Reach out to his soul.]

The response is immediate. A dim echo of soul essence clinging to Waidwen lurches toward you like a drowning man taking his first lungful of air.

Waidwen: "Wh-where am I? And who are you?" Conflicting emotions radiate from his soul, like a mind waking from a deep and restless sleep.

Player: "You're on Evon Dewr Bridge, right before the Godhammer Bomb went off."

Waidwen: "The what hammer?" Beneath his confusion you detect a spark of recognition. He knows this word, but he may not remember that he knows it. "Oh, no. I feel something... it's coming on like a sneeze, but bigger. This is all happening again, isn't it?"

Player: "What do you mean 'again?'"

Waidwen: "Keep your distance - it's coming! The cycle's turning back on itself!" Waidwen's soul strains to avoid it, but you feel the pull of an unseen force tearing at him - shredding this moment of clarity.

And then he's gone.

Waidwen: "DID THEY EXPECT A DOZEN TO STAND AGAINST THE DAWN?"
Waidwen stares down what remains of the Dyrwoodan defenders - the last men and women holding the line against him.

Player: "Eothas?"

He offers no reply. What speaks is neither Waidwen nor Eothas, but the result of their violent collision.

Waidwen: "RESIST AND THE LIGHT WILL EXTINGUISH YOU. SURRENDER AND BE REDEEMED BY THE COMING OF THE DAY!" You feel Waidwen summoning his will. He knows how this will end - not because he has reenacted it countless times before, but because it could end no other way.

Before he can launch his attack, a tremor runs through the bridge. Heat rises from the stones and bellows into an inferno.

The bridge transforms into the moment of the explosion. Waidwen is blasted apart, suspended in space.

Torn apart by the force of the bomb, Waidwen is a tableau of agony. Any divine aspect has fled, leaving him nothing more than a mortal in great pain. Something catches the light - an engraved, circular trinket hanging around his neck by a thin cord.

Player: [Take the trinket.]

The cord won't disentangle from Waidwen's neck, but you manage to slip the trinket free. It's a personal sundial. Properly adjusted, it can beam a small ray of light on the time of day. As your hand closes around it, the spirits of the realm stir in agitation.

The player fights spirits who object to mortal interference.

Something warm shines from the distant obscurity of the Beyond. It isn't a fire or a star, but light itself, seemingly disconnected from any source. You know this isn't your first time seeing it. No sooner does it roll its attention toward you than you feel the heat of a familiar, piercing gaze. Eothas.

Player: "What are you doing here?"

Eothas: "Grieving. That man. Waidwen. He had a life that I invaded, delivered to death, and consigned to this culvert. I left him to stand and accept punishment in my stead. I am the piece of the Dawnstars that lingered, delayed by grief."

Player: "You're feeling ambivalent about the Saint's War?"

Eothas: "About aspects of it. Waidwen's fractured mind is holding this bridge suspended in time. He's no good to anyone until he understands what he forgot."

Player: [Show him Waidwen's Sundial.] "The energies around the bridge seem drawn to this."

Eothas: "A fitting token for Waidwen. As a holy man, he was a keeper of the light. As a farmer, he was indebted to cycles." Eothas' light falls on the timepiece, bathing it in a warm glow. "Watcher, I implore you, for Waidwen's sake, to stand in my light and read the sundial. You can follow the timeline of the bomb and find Waidwen in the explosion."

Player: "I can use this to manipulate time? How far can I go?"

Eothas: "There are limitations. You can perceive nothing beyond what the souls of this place experienced themselves. That is the burden of memory. Waidwen is scattered across the bridge in three parts, but I sense a fourth nearby as well. A piece that detonated with the bomb. Find him in the Godhammer. Make him whole again."

The player explores this nether realm, manipulating time to shift the traversable space and gather Waidwen's scattered memories.

First Memory

You dangled your legs over the edge of a dock. In the gloom of pre-dawn, the lake resembled a mirror of polished obsidian. Your father approached with a pair of fishing rods. Back then, he stood as tall as a mountain.

He expected you to be ready in the boat by now. What had you so distracted?

[Echo Waidwen.] "Father, would the morning still come if Eothas wasn't there to draw it over the horizon?"

He sighed. A foolish question. Eothas *is* the dawn. His absence would be the *death* of all light. You are old enough for this to be obvious.

What is truly on your mind? Your father knows you well enough to see through this obvious deflection.

[Echo Waidwen.] "*We* till the soil and *we* plant the seeds, but give thanks only to Eothas for the harvest."

Before you could finish the thought, the fishing rods clattered to the ground and your father struck you hard enough that you pitched forward into the lake. Your mouth opened with a cry that was quickly stifled by the cold water.

He bellowed that the gods deserved *gratitude*, not an ignorant child's faithless doubt. You should *thank* Eothas for the harvest and the dawn. Pride will only make you complacent.

You were never a strong swimmer. By the time you desperately clawed your way back to the surface, your father had rowed out to the middle of the lake to be alone. You knew better than to call out to him and interrupt his fishing.

You sat on the shore and awaited his return. When the dawn crested the horizon, you didn't give thanks for the warmth it brought. You wanted to remember the cold.

Second Memory

Your father reached up from the sickbed and clutched at your wrist, his fingers gnarled and skeletal. You'd seen enough of this condition spreading through the colony to know he wouldn't last. It was a miracle he'd hung on this long.

His breathing was labored, his voice ragged, but his gaze was alert and full of questions that only you could answer.

[Echo Waidwen.] "I'll see after the farm when you're gone, and make sure it stays in the family."

He shook his head and maintained his grip. His lips and nose were stained by the Vorlas Cough, a plague that colored the phlegm purple. To you it resembled an actor's smeared face paint.

He asked, in a ragged whisper, if you kept to your faith.

[Echo Waidwen.] "I still thank Eothas for the harvest and the dawn. Just as you taught me."

Satisfied, he nodded - but then his grip tightened as another fit of coughing crumpled him into a ball.

[Echo Waidwen.] "And I'll thank him for the dusk as it settles over you, father."

The coughing fit rattled to a halt as your father regarded you in wide-eyed shock.

[Pry away his hand.] "You left me to face a cold dawn. Now you can give thanks to the fading of your light. And you can do it alone."

You moved away from the sickbed that was soon to be a deathbed, closing the door quietly behind you. Then you stepped out on the porch to savor the last rays of the day.

Third Memory

You drew your sickle across a thin patch of vorlas. The harvest would be a poor one, but at least that was a shared burden that no one in Readceras suffered alone.

[Echo Waidwen.] "Praise be to Gaun for what little we have."

As usual, there was no reply.

You drew the sundial out from under your shirt, but the light had waned too much to judge the hour.

[Echo Eothas.] "*Waidwen.*"

You flinched as the chiming of a bell echoed from some distant source. A sensation of warmth spread across your back.

[Echo Waidwen.] "Who's... who's there?"

The daylight blossomed to life, exploding into many colors that filled the sky. You turned to face it - shielding your eyes until you realized that it didn't hurt to look into this brilliance. A glowing figure stood before you.

[Echo Eothas.] *"Do you still thank me for the dawn and the harvest, Waidwen?"*

You dropped to your knees. You felt laid bare before the light of Eothas. Every word spoken in hate, every punch you threw first, every time you turned your back to the dawn. They were all *his* to judge.

[Echo Waidwen.] "Forgive me, my lord."

The luminescent figure flickered in a way that reminded you at once of a guttering candle and a chuckle.

[Echo Eothas.] *"Do you think I'm here to admonish and cast you into the lake? No. I would draw you back to the warmth for a higher calling."*

He *knew*. Suddenly you felt like that child again - vulnerable and alone before an all-powerful presence.

[Echo Eothas.] *"Fear not, for you are chosen above all others. You will be the light to bring about the rebirth of an empire."*

An empire? It was gibberish to you, but Eothas probably knew something you didn't. Of course he did. His words filled you with a warmth and confidence that you had never felt before.

[Echo Waidwen.] "Where do we start?"

He told you that it starts where stories usually do - at a beginning.

The sickle fell from your grip with a clatter as his hand reached out from across a great distance to touch your brow. A light stole over your vision. Much later, you awakened a changed man.

Fourth Memory

Dawn rose over the mountain pass where you camped your forces. The first rays warmed the tents and roused your armed congregation from slumber. Evon Dewr Bridge is - was - a speck on the horizon.

[Echo Waidwen.] "Scouts say that a dozen soldiers hold the crossing. What do they think they can accomplish?"

You spat in the wind and considered your options. No one said this would be easy, but you started to wonder if the world even wanted a saint. The Dyrwood certainly didn't.

[Echo Waidwen.] "They must have something to believe in. Something that could turn the tides against us."

You were only thinking aloud, but without warning it became one of the rare moments when a familiar voice interceded on your thoughts.

[Echo Eothas.] *"It's possible. Our adversaries do not lack for motivation."*

You flinched as the presence asserted itself. Eothas had been preoccupied lately, spending days in contemplative silence. Distancing himself from you.

[Echo Waidwen.] "What do you think, old friend? Could this be the end of our long march?"

You - Eothas - considered your answer with care. The inevitability of things always came easier to Rymrgand, and in this moment you envied him.

[Echo Eothas.] *"You and I may stumble, but our legacy will live on - if not on this frontier, then another."*

Waidwen nodded, absorbing your words.

[Echo Waidwen.] "Why try and stop us, though? Don't they want to see the light as we do?"

For some reason, it was always so hard telling Waidwen the truth. Maybe all the gods were out of practice. You already knew about the bomb. And you decided not to act on that knowledge. But Waidwen deserved an answer, even if it wasn't the entire truth.

[Echo Eothas.] *"Change is agonizing. Mortals will fight to avoid it, but it always catches up to them in time."*

Waidwen looked out on Evon Dewr Bridge and wondered if he was ready to face the dusk. His thoughts were a placid lake.

Then he spoke his mind again, this time taking you by surprise.

[Echo Waidwen.] "Those defenders are looking past their faith to stand against a god. They're here to fight for everything they built and planted together."

Waidwen was beginning to see the point. It was your sorrow to know that he wouldn't live long enough to fully appreciate it.

[Echo Waidwen.] "Kith are supposed to face the dawn together, not to depend on it. Our first duty is to each other."

You wanted to tell Waidwen how proud you felt, but he no longer needed a father's approval to know when he was right. That saddened you even more than knowing that Waidwen had seen his last sunrise.

Once the player has gathered the last of Waidwen's memories.

Player: [Restore the last missing fragments of Waidwen's soul.]

As all the essence you gathered on Evon Dewr bridge converges on Waidwen, his soul brightens with a flash. Then his eyes snap open as a tide of revelation washes over him.

Waidwen: "I... thank you, friend. I'm struggling to understand it all, but my thoughts are clearer now." Waidwen wobbles on his feet. His expression of bewilderment shapes into a broad grin as he recovers his bearings. "I think I accept why this needed to happen, but it is only human to feel conflicted."

Player: "I'm guessing the cycle is broken now?"

Waidwen: "Unless you feel like taking it for another go around? I can wait." He smiles lopsidedly.

"There is a lesson, a purpose to the Godhammer that I failed to grasp." Waidwen looks out on the bridge, paying particular attention to the men and women rallying against each other. "Eothas wanted the people of the world to stand tall without gods propping them up. The Godhammer didn't just tear Eothas from my body. It drove a wedge between gods and kith across Eora. And isn't that just a version of what he always wanted?"

Player: "Maybe you're right. Because of Eothas, mortals saw a god annihilated."

Waidwen: "Taking on that burden of suffering wasn't in Eothas' original plan, but it served him well enough that he was content to keep his distance for a few quiet years." Waidwen shrugs. The matter weighs on him less than before.

"Now that I'm free, I can feel oblivion tugging at me harder than before. We won't have time to savor the victory, friend." Waidwen looks down at his hands, which even now seem less substantial as the White Void draws him away. He doesn't seem to mind.

Player: "Seeing as I helped you, maybe you could lend a hand against a dragon."

Waidwen: "I might have guessed you didn't come this far just to pull me out of a bad situation. At the risk of sounding ungrateful, it's been ages since I took up a pitchfork against anything larger than a bale of hay. You'd do better without me. Really."

Player: "If you have no faith in yourself, then you missed the point of the Saint's War."

Waidwen: "I... what are you saying?"

Player: "Eothas wanted kith to stand together. If you leave, then you're betraying his lesson."

Waidwen: "I'm not sure this is what he had in mind, but you could be right. Point me toward the fiend that means you harm, and I'll drag it down to oblivion with me. Onward." Waidwen gestures for you to take the lead.

