

Entry 0

I felt like starting a journal today might be a good idea. It's the big day..my Harrowing. Sounds a bit odd just writing it like that, doesn't it? Some random bloke comes along, reads that and thinks 'Ooh, some kind of religious service?' Hah, if only it was. I never liked anything related to demons; too close to home. How can you - want- to mess with something that could slip into your mind and turn you into a monster if you make one mistake? That's why if I want to have summoned defenders, it's always gonna be animated corpses. You control them, they're everywhere, no demons or any other finicky problems. Easy!

Plus, it doesn't help that my ah, 'extracurricular learnings' make me a ~~little~~ more attractive to them. Funny how just using a little blood instead of lyrium makes ~~everyone~~ go bonkers, whether it's demons losing their marbles over getting to you first or the templars wanting to run you through. I don't even ~~do~~ anything with it! I just use it to save on lyrium. Never liked overdoing it with that stuff; one wrong move and boom! Blood everywhere and ~~not~~ in the good way. Or maybe it's due to me messing around with spirit magic? That links directly to the Fade; I guess if I think about it, that might appeal to them the most. Even if a lot of the time it's just me making Franklin dance his little bones off when I've got some quiet to myself.

Seems like I went a bit tangential there Mr. Journal,
sorry..anyway. It's been several years since I've been in the Circle,
but now's the time for me to show I can handle myself with a demon.
Boy am I not looking forward to this..but it's either this or
'Tranquility'. I'm not really cut out for the whole 'emotionless,
monotone husk' life—and I doubt a lot of them were too!

Anyway, time for me to get ready. I've lain in bed enough, and
odds are Jowan's going to come looking for me if I'm not up soon.
You'd think it was his Harrowing with how nervous he is! I guess
I understand though; I got here after him and he still hasn't been
called up for it yet. Poor guy.

Entry 1

Well that was just about the most terrifying thing I've ever done. Not a very fun test, being thrust in to confront a demon with next to no training! What if I failed? Were they really going to just kill me? Isn't the point of the Circle to train us so we can use magic in a safe way?

At least it's over now. Talk about unnerving though; I was so close to demons—actual demons! The Fade may be a fascinating place, but I'll have to be careful to watch myself in the future. I feel like I got off easy, if I'm being totally honest.

Entry 2

It never gets old messing with the templars. Granted I only do simple things, and -never- with magic..my first week here, a fellow apprentice froze icicles to one of the templar's helmets when he was distracted. The poor boy nearly was run through! It was only because Greagoir was there to grab his arm that he wasn't killed..learned my lesson right quick I did. Still, things like feigning ignorance and bugging them with silly questions? Walking back and forth staring at them, working with pungent reagents next to them? Never gets old..my favorite's definitely 'dumb' questions. Just walk up to the main entrance.

'That's a big door.' 'Yes, yes it is.' 'Is it heavy?' 'Very heavy.
Do you want something, or are you here to state the obvious?' 'Can
you open the door?' 'No.' 'Why?' 'Because mages are not
allowed outside unless on official Circle business.' 'Why?'
'Because that's the way it is, mage.' 'Why?'

He told me off after that. They never -really- get upset when I
do that..maybe it keeps them entertained. It certainly does it for me!

<Below is a sketch of two armored templars guarding a door. Their
helmets are oversized, and instead of wielding swords they have signs
that say 'Enter' and 'Exit' in their hands.>

Entry 3

Just about soiled my linens when I overheard one of my fellows gossiping. Apparently they suspect someone in the tower of using blood magic..it can't be me, can it? They wouldn't have let me do my Harrowing if they knew! Though, maybe they just didn't care since I just sort of experiment with it? No, they'd hate that even more..really though, what's the harm? It's less dangerous than misusing lyrium!

Though, maybe that's why I had so many demons around me in the Harrowing...

Entry 4

More dirty looks for skipping Chantry hour again. Can't they just accept that it's a bit odd for mages to want to worship a god that doesn't like them? Or participate in a religion that talks about us like we're 'the good ones' at best and dangerous fiends-to-be at worst.

Besides, if the Maker was real, why haven't we seen him in the Fade? That's where he and all the good ones in life go to, right? I bet when we die, we just go to the Fade and become spirits. Maybe we forget who we were, then go back in a new infant when they're born, living again? At least that could make some sense.

<Sketches of circles and whimsical drawings of ghosts and Fade spirits are sketched around the journal entry.>

Entry 5

I got approached by someone from the Isolationists today. I guess when you become a proper mage, every fraternity wants a piece of you, huh? Least it wasn't those dull Loyalists. 'Ooh look at me, I love the Chantry and hate my mage self, praise me Mr. Templar!' Bollocks!

I might join the Isolationists though; but only if it doesn't entail a lot of work. I like the idea of spirited debate about the Circle and mages in general, but I've heard a lot of time is spent with inter-fraternity squabbling outside of the actual topics at hand. Things like representation at gatherings, funding..bleh. I do like what I've heard about the Isolationists though; a big island with just mages doing

mage things? It's a win/win in my book. No one's there who doesn't want to be there!

<A sketch in the bottom-center of the page is a stereotypical tropical island with a bonfire at the center, along with several hooded magi waving their arms around it. The sketched sun has many light lines coming off of it.>

Entry 6

People keep telling me that Cullen favors me. I don't see it; I think it's just because he's one of the few templars who prefers to keep his helmet off so people see where he looks. And because he's one of the few who doesn't mind me talking to him at length. Everything recent I know about the outside world I know from him—I wouldn't have even known that King Cailan married Loghain's daughter if not for him bringing it up! Just because we talk doesn't mean he has a ~~thing~~ for me or something. He's just being nice.

Anyway, I'd go and talk with him a bit now, but I -actually- wanted to give you an update Mr. Journal—First Enchanter Irving wants to speak to me! I guess it's about my Harrowing now that I've managed to put some distance between myself and it. Maybe he'll give me a staff? That'd be nice, I suppose... I'd prefer something more useful though. Why not a sword? Ooh, or a dagger? You know, magical focus -and- self-defense tool.

Ah, I miss Enchanter Bergin's martial training classes... I had so much fun learning to parry there. Stupid other templars shutting it down.

<A drawing is in the margins of a templar who looks rather fat for his armor, bulging out in parts who's holding up a sign that says 'No Fun Allowed' >

Entry 7

Poor Jowan...and what an ~~ass~~ that Greagoir is! To put it lightly; where does he get off on just deciding for Jowan that he's to be made Tranquil!? Fat chance I'm letting that happen, even if Jowan's taste in women is remarkably pig-faced (sorry!).

Maybe I should scale back a bit. So, I went to Irving, he and Greagoir were arguing like an old married couple, blah blah blah. A Grey Warden was with them though, and he was rather fun to talk to. Real interesting, especially his attitudes on mages. Walked him back to his room, talked more, Jowan showed up. Jowan reveals secret love affair with Chantry woman, reveals that Irving - and - Greagoir signed off on document to make him Tranquil

because of him rumored to be a blood mage. Agreed to help because Jowan's a friend and that's unfair to decide for him!

Anyway, that about sums it up. It feels like this morning all I was worrying about was getting a new set of underclothes... Jowan, a blood mage? I just don't see it. Even if it was something like what I do, he's... I don't know, a bit shy with magic? If he's a blood mage, I'll eat my own hair. Even if he is I'm still going to help him though. No one deserves to have everything that makes them a person stripped out.

Entry 8

We've got our plan sorted; in the evening we'll set out and go into the basement. From there, we'll find Jowan's phylactery and shatter it, then he and Lily will make their escape. With luck, I can sneak back into the tower proper with none the wiser..although I'll have to come up with a good ruse if I'm suspected. Maybe I can say that Jowan blackmailed me? It's not like they'll find him without his phylactery.

I suppose I have a few hours to kill in the meantime..hours I can spend in my new chambers at least! Actual -privacy-..at least, sort of. Better than just a bunk laying out in the open! I even have my own washbasin, chamberpot -and- vanity! Maybe now I can actually put makeup on without having to worry about Bip knocking

my mirror down every time he pulled his big feet down from the top bunk!

<Below is a rather detailed sketch of a full-fledged mage's chambers, with several arrows pointing to items within the sketch with praises written down.>

Entry 9

So, uh... I didn't think getting a rod of fire would be so difficult. We need it to melt through the basement lock, but every senior enchanter I've talked to hasn't gone for it! The closest I got was with Enchanter Torrin; he told me he'd be happy to sign the form if I showed him my proposal. I ~~guess~~ I could whip up some shlock... 'Investigations into the nature of Smoldering Cheesecloth' ... 'Tiered Experiments of Metal Ignition' or something of the sort. Wait, no... he's actually smart, he'd sniff me out immediately.

I've only got a few hours before we're to meet up. Maybe Owain has a secret fondness for dice games?

Entry 10

Well..well. Well well well.

I uh, I'm not a mage anymore. Well, I mean. Circle mage.
I'm a Grey Warden! Well, recruit.

So, it turns out that ~~Jowan~~ was actually a blood mage—and a lot more of one than me. I just dabbled in manipulating my own blood to fuel spells; him? He used it as a weapon, throwing people around like ragdolls—people like Greagoir no less!

It makes me feel rather foolish for trusting him though.

Jowan... I thought he just wanted to be free with Lily. But if he was hiding that level of blood magic, what else was he hiding? Poor Lily too; she's been sent off to the Aeonar of all places. Why such a horrible fate for her? She didn't know either!

Not that there's much I can do... Duncan, the Grey Warden who was visiting the Circle intervened on my behalf, but all he could do was recruit me to spare me from my own punishment. Knowing what happened, it was likely either death or worse, Tranquility. I'm still not sure why he stuck his neck out for me of all people, but I shouldn't question a turn of good luck, should I?

I guess in the end, I got what I wanted. Sort of. Ever since arriving at the Circle, I wanted to explore the world beyond it—to see it freely, as normal people do. Just, with magic as well. I'm seeing a lot of it now; the only problem is I no longer have a home. It's strange... I can see the tower on the horizon still. It felt stuffy there, but I had friends, companions there. We were all mages, we understood each other. Out here? It's all a big unknown.

Well, things could've gone far worse. No one was hurt by Jowan—well, badly—and aside from poor Lily, no one is really worse for wear. Jowan escaped, and Duncan seems like a good enough sort—one who appreciates mages no less. I don't think I'm in any danger with him. Well, unreasonable danger. We're going south to Ostagar to fight darkspawn... I had enough 'fun' with the sentinels in the tower basement, but there's not much choice now is there? I

can't pull a Jowan; even if I did, is that a better way to live? I'd still be in danger, just instead of scary darkspawn, it'd be templars trained to fight mages. I think I'll be taking my chances with the darkspawn—at least this way, I've got allies.

Entry 11

I never saw a castle in person before! Duncan says this one is Redcliffe; we won't be stopping unfortunately, but I can only imagine how huge the grounds are! And it's on a waterfall too; it looks so peaceful there. I'd love to spend some time exploring there! Perhaps after Ostagar? Assuming we win. I haven't really thought about the fact we could lose...

Well. We don't need to worry overmuch on the way if nothing else. An armed man and a woman wearing robes and wielding a staff screams 'capable', and any potential brigands or highwaymen don't need to know that I've never fought anything above a big bug before!

Oh, right. I'll have to actually fight darkspawn. As in, facing off against them. Making them mad, drawing their attention. That's not sounding so fun.

Entry 12

I went ahead and told Duncan of my own dabbling in 'certain' areas of magic tonight. He didn't seem too surprised, although he cautioned me on using it freely near prying eyes, naturally. Even Grey Wardens have to worry about appearances and all that.

He personally didn't seem too bothered by my magic though—not even when I brought Franklin out! I suppose he really is the ultimate pragmatist; he's always 'darkspawn this, darkspawn that' so I guess any reservations he may have about risen skeletons is overpowered by the benefits. As for what those benefits are..well. Franklin's agile; give him a couple of knives or even some sharp bones and he could probably take a darkspawn or two on!

It felt good though, talking to someone about my magic. Well, someone other than you Mr. Journal. Someone who can talk back, that's what I mean. A little validating, you know? I feel useful knowing that someone ~~wants~~ me to use magic for a change.

Entry 13

Normally I wait until the evening to write, but I feel like things are going to go by me so quick I'll have to jot them down as they happen! Hopefully I don't drop you Mr. Journal! It's a long way down this bridge.

I met King Cailan just now; he even greeted me! I had no idea he held the Grey Wardens in such high esteem; perhaps this really will be a good move in the long run, being recruited by them. I'm not the only recruit either: two others are in the camp somewhere, along with another full Warden by the name of Alistair. I'm to find them all and meet with Duncan once more, so we can start on the Joining ritual. Something magic perhaps? It feels like it's not simply some uttered words and hand signs, but Duncan was rather cagey about

any details. Ah well, in the meantime I have free reign of the camp. I hear that some of our—I mean, Circle mages are around here somewhere...

Addendum: Ostagar really is a beautiful fortress when you stop to look at it. Falling apart these days, but it makes even the Circle tower look drab. The great stones supporting the towers crumble, leaving patterns like stained glass, while the parapets atop allow for utterly breathtaking vistas of the wilds below. The central tower, Ishal is a man-made mountain in and of itself, reaching just as high as the peaks around us. Oh, I'd kill to be up there, looking out at everything...but it's off-limits due to preparations for the battle. Ah well.

Addendum: Almost fell off the bridge because I leaned too far out over a crumbling part. One of the soldiers pulled me back. Maybe I should enjoy the view from somewhere more stable.

Addendum: Just ran into one of the other Warden recruits, a rather sly man named Daveth. Definitely a sneaky type—and a flirt too. Though, he didn't get weird about it and knew when to back off, so I really can't complain. Plus, even though I might not swing that way, I can appreciate attractive features—and he does have that in spades. If I had to guess...con man. Duncan explained that Wardens can come from all walks of life; I suppose I should consider myself fortunate that the skulker recruit's personable.

Addendum: I met the other two—well, Warden and recruit.

Alistair is the type of guy who would've been smacked six ways to Sunday by your average enchanter in the Circle..sarcasm -galore-.

But, he's amicable and isn't bothered by my mage-y status, so I call that a win. Jory on the other hand..well, he made an effort to not let his nervousness come through. Hopefully he won't flinch every time I cast a sp-ooch. Mm..maybe I shouldn't go straight to bringing Franklin out. Just in case.

Addendum: During our little escapade in the Circle basement, I absconded with a few relics that I sort of just grabbed in the moment. Bit of a panic theft, you know? In my defense, I'll put them to good use out here! Well, some of them. I found some Tevinter robes purported to have been crafted and enchanted for a magister there, but uhm..she must have been a very confident woman.

Very secure in her body image, let's say. I wasn't aware stockings and chest windows were considered part of mage fashion over there.

Don't get me wrong, it looks very good! It's just, do I really want to be walking around like a cross between a mage and a prostitute? Maybe I'm overthinking this. Mages wear strange things all the time! Plus, the cold doesn't bother me so that isn't a concern.

Maybe I'll just give it a try somewhere private and see how it feels. I'd ask for a second opinion, but between these three it'd likely either be a joke, staring or more stammering than even I can get when embarrassed!

Addendum: It's not so bad now that I'm wearing it. A little tight around the chest, but there isn't much leg showing. Still, it definitely feels like I'm not wearing much..glad for the loincloth though. -That- definitely doesn't need to become a little factoid about me!

Also, I should just make a new entry. I'm running out of space on the back of the page for this one.

Entry 14

I wasn't prepared for, just as Alistair said, how monstrous darkspawn are. You hear what people say, but it wasn't their appearance—I'm not a squeamish person. The way they acted though...it's inhuman, yet eerily close to us. I'm glad they can be beaten easily, if not cleanly. I pity the other three, having to fight them up close all the time.

But not everything in the wilds was unnerving like that. Here I am complaining that these robes of mine show a little too much skin, and while we were out in the wilds out comes a woman wearing little more than a rag skirt and a scarf. I swear, I saw a ~~lot~~ more than she likely intended. At least, I think it was accidental. I didn't really

expect someone crawling out of the swamp like that to sound so enchanting...

A strange woman indeed, though upfront at the very least. We got the treaties we were looking for, along with the darkspawn blood. Just a little while longer and we'll finally find out what this Joining is all about. Would've found out sooner if Alistair just stopped being so tight-lipped, but I'm just being impatient.

While we were out there, we did manage to do one good deed—well, along with the rest. One of the mabari, those big smart dogs used in combat so often was sick with darkspawn blood. The kennel master asked us to find herbs for healing the dog; they were easy enough to find, so the poor thing should make it now. I always liked dogs, and mabari are pretty cute looking. And buff, but mostly cute. Good

dogs, I hope he finds a new master once he's recovered. Maybe I'll go back and play with him a bit after the battle!

<Below, a sketch of the aforementioned mabari, with particular attention paid to his snout and with an exaggerated smile on his face.>

Entry 15

I'm scared. Not terrified out of my wits or anything, just...I'm afraid. Poor Daveth—and poor Jory! I know he drew his blade, but still..he was killed like any other darkspawn. That really was the worst part; watching Jory die like that. He was just panicking; nothing worth being killed over!

Not that I had long to dwell on it; I had to drink next. It was like gulping down congealed chicken fat..and then it was as if I was set fire from the inside. I never felt that kind of pain before—I thought I was dying! Then I woke up, after having the strangest dreams. What was that dragon? I saw? Was it the archdemon?

This is really a lot to handle in just one afternoon. It's not over yet either; I've got to hurry to the strategy meeting for the battle now. I'm supposed to fight after all that? I'll see if I can even focus enough to cast a spell...

Entry 16

Is it strange to say that with all that's happened, my first thought when I woke up was modesty? I was laying there with nothing on for some time... I guess I should be grateful Morrigan didn't 'bring up the obvious'. Though that's hardly the most important concern now...

Where to start? We lost the battle. Apparently Loghain decided to just up and leave! After all that work getting to the beacon, he just pulled out and ran. Bastard! Because of that everyone died. Duncan, King Cailan, Wynne; all those people I met there!

The last thing I remember is us waiting at the beacon, then suddenly darkspawn flooded in the door. I saw arrows hit me, then I fell... I thought I died. I didn't even have time to be scared, and then it was just blackness. Morrigan says that her mother saved us, but I can't envision how she did that.

Oh, and did I mention her mother is Flemeth? As in, 'abomination of legend, the grand witch of the wilds' Flemeth? She hasn't cast a single spell in our presence—where I could've witnessed it at least—but it all lines up now that I think about it. Where she lives, what she did for us.. does that make Morrigan a witch of the wilds as well?

Oh, she's traveling with us now too. Bloody hell there's a lot I have to jot down here, let me just start a new entry for all of that...

Entry 17

So, to sum up the more 'official' business:

Duncan died at Ostagar thanks to the asshole, Loghain.

Alistair and I are apparently the last surviving Grey Wardens.

Flemeth is very insistent that we're to stop the Blight, and that it's the most pressing threat in Ferelden right now. She sent Morrigan with us since we'll need all the help we can get. Oh, and we're to use those old treaties we found to get dwarves, elves and the Circle to help us.

Easy, right?

I mean, I see the logic. Darkspawn are running amok now, and Loghain is running away. There's no other army to stop them really...and we ~~do~~ have these treaties. I never saw a dwarf before, but I've read they fight darkspawn all their lives and that they're really good at it. Mages are great to have of course, and I guess the Dalish elves are good too?

Funny to think just a few weeks ago I was drooling over my new chambers in the tower, looking forward for my first lessons in the Creation school from a bona fide enchanter. Now I'm a Grey Warden, traveling with strange people trying to get some army together so the whole country doesn't collapse. How? I'm reading my entries and it still doesn't make sense how this all happened. I mean what are the odds? What are the chances?

I guess there's really not any other options though. I'm a mage; if I just ran away I'd be an apostate like Morrigan—except I'm not as good as she is at staying incognito, apparently. Plus Alistair would hate running, and he's been nice. Plus plus, he's -really- good to have in a fight. Guy can keep a dozen darkspawn occupied while I do all the big magic work. It's almost child's play! Though he did have -very- unkind words about my 'Walking Bomb' spell..should've thought about warning him beforehand, huh?

Anyway, we're off to a village to the north. Lothing it's called; just a place to get our bearings and get some supplies. Maybe I'll find a staff there; mine got broken I guess at the tower when we were ambushed. Those robes I had also got torn up I'm guessing; all I've got now are some spare clothes Flemeth had at her hut. They are..well, covering if nothing else. As for where we're going after? Alistair

seems to think Redcliffe, he knows Arl Eamon somehow. Me?
I'd say whichever one of these people in the treaties is closest. The
Circle maybe? I'm not sure where to find Dalish elves...

Entry 18

I found a dog! Or well, he found me. I swear, I think it's the same mabari from Ostagar that I helped heal from drinking darkspawn blood. He just ran up to us on the road—the poor guy was fleeing some stupid darkspawn trying to kill him! We made right quick work of those bastards, that's for sure. Then after, he kept following us—following me, really. The kennel master talked about 'imprinting', but I didn't think mabari would do it themselves!

He's a big guy too, I mean the sheer ~~size~~ of his chest is almost ridiculous! I bet if he charged a man in full armor he could knock him down flat. He's more than just a war dog though; he's so adorable when he starts digging! I think I'll call him...hm. Mr. Kibbles! That's a good name, right? Yeah!

Entry 19

Well, we're at Lothering—and in the span of a single hour we've been attacked by bandits, hounded by irate refugees, and attacked by drunken soldiers from Loghain's army. Oh, and found out that Arl Eamon's ill and quite possibly dead. We're off to a wonderful start on our quest to not have all the land fall to the darkspawn!

The strangest part so far was the lady we met in the tavern Loghain's men attacked us at. Wearing Chantry robes and with an accent so thickly Orlesian that I thought she was going to throw snails at the soldiers—oh but that spoils the best part! Somehow, a religious lady like that was dodging, ducking and dueling with just a dagger as good as anyone I've ever seen!

I've got ~~no~~ idea what Lothering teaches their Chantry people, but it was something else to see. Unfortunately she started talking about stuff like 'the Maker told me to follow you friend, let's go!' or some sort. Honestly, I checked out mid-way. I was glad for the help, but I don't think I can handle a nutty Maker-praising lunatic traveling with us!

Though, she was gorgeous. Ridiculously attractive. Definitely the accent, that was a big part.. Why do the crazy ones have to be so pretty? Someone said that before, but I'm only now getting what they meant.

If nothing else, the people here could desperately use our help, and we can get some coin together for lending a hand. Coin we desperately need; I already had to hock my favorite dagger so we could afford some bottles for Morrigan to make her poultices..at least dinner's covered. Mr. Kibbles managed to get a rabbit while he was running around. Such a good boy!

Entry 20

I think of our time in Lothing, just about half of it was spent trying to figure out how to get to Sten. Ooh, context: big Qunari (no horns though!) who seemed like he'd be useful to have on our side considering we're an army of two mages, an ex-templar and a big dog right about now. Enter that crazy Chantry lady to save the day—as it turns out, she was on good terms with the keyholder!

Of course, that means that she's traveling with us too now. She actually was waiting for us at the edge of Lothing, talking like we were fast friends already! Don't get me wrong, I like weird—but she's like she's from another planet! Though, it's kind of cute if I'm being honest.

So we're on the road now, heading towards..well I'm not sure to be honest. I'll think on it overnight; we haven't picked a direction yet and it's not like an extra day will make much difference.

Oh, and the best reason to have a mabari I've found so far? Bedroll trench digging. All I had to do was give him a rabbit leg and a pat on the head and did all the work! It's like laying down in a comfy, earthy nest.

Entry 21

I had another vision like after my Joining; this time it was like I could really ~~see~~ the archdemon though. What a horrible looking creature! Mottled skin, pustules growing out of its neck and oozing dark ichor when it reared its head back to breathe dark fire..do we really have to face it directly? Can we just shoot it with ballistae or something?

The vision did help me finally decide on where we should go first, if nothing else: the Breilian Forest. We need to visit Orzammar, the Circle, and the elves eventually; this way we can do the elves first, then make a big circle. By the time we get to Denerim, we should be all set! Assuming that it's as easy as showing up, holding the treaty up and saying 'Please'. Maybe it will be!

The only reason why I didn't decide on Redcliffe is because of news heard in Lothering: Arl Eamon is deathly ill, and that news is at least a week old. Alistair knew him, but if he's dead then Redcliffe might be wasted time—and Alistair was rather cagey about any details about how he knew Eamon. Mostly jokes about 'royal cheese contests' ...

Entry 22

Morrigan's a very interesting woman. Absolutely -merciless- when it comes to teasing Alistair (I'm not exaggerating, it hurts - me- to hear it sometimes!) but I could hear her talk about magic all day. She has this skill where she can outright turn into an animal; in all the books I've read in the Circle I never heard of anything quite like that! She's very talented at it too; her literal bird's eye view coupled with our Warden darkspawn-sense means that we're almost able to never be surprised out on the open road! Though she doesn't like to do the bird-scouting that much. Says it tires her out; I guess that makes sense. Waving your bird-arms around and all that.

Definitely not a fan of the Circle though, not one bit. I can get the reasoning; I never was a big Circle Cheerleader myself, but she practically beams whenever she gets the opportunity to insult every part of it. You'd think that she'd hate the Circle and not the mages within, but she outright called us 'housebroken thralls'! Well, not me, that was rather clear. Remind me to consider leaving her out of the treaty talk once we get there..it'll be bad enough with me, Ms. 'Maleficar Helper' trying to convince them to help us!

Entry 23

I've been watching Sten sit away from the rest of camp, staring out into the distance for about an hour now. I want to go over and talk to him, but he's so...earlier today I asked him what Qunari were like, and he just flat out refused! I just wanted the quick version; I didn't want him to go into a whole lesson. What ~~is~~ he thinking about right now?

...It's got to be something philosophical. That's what prisoners do when they're locked up, right? Think about life, the universe, all that stuff? I'll bet he's really smart. Or at least smart enough to seem like he's really smart. Definitely strong; he cut a darkspawn clean in half one fight, armor and all! Hmm, maybe if I talk to him about combat...

Entry 24

I wish Duncan were still alive. It just feels like we're in the dark, trying to figure all of this out. Alistair may be a senior Warden compared to me, but even he deferred to Duncan every time I saw them speak—and with good reason! The man was as wise as Irving and probably a better fighter than any templar in the Circle.

I just wonder if we're doing the right thing. Would it be better to say, travel to Orlais and talk to the Wardens there? Alistair said they have an outpost in Jader; I guess that's pretty far though otherwise he may have recommended we go. It just feels like if these treaties don't work, then it's just us two while everyone else is screaming and running around while the darkspawn gnaw at our ankles.

What if the archdemon just fell? Or hit a big rock when flying? Maybe he'll take care of himself?

...We should probably just get a move on. I've never been in a forest before—well, a typical one. The Kocari Wilds were cold, wet and full of wolves. That doesn't seem like 'typical forest' to me.

<A drawing of wolves all running around a rock fallen atop a tree is below, with a large mabari standing proudly atop the rock, looking down with anthropomorphic smugness at the wolves.>

Entry 25

And I thought the elves in the Circle could get stuffy..being around the Dalish? It's like an ice bath! At least they were easy to find..or they were wanting to see who was looking for them.

Seriously though, stuffy stuffy stuffy! And their leader, keeper or whatever is the worst! Frankly, I'd even go so far as to call him a bit of a dick. In private, of course—can't be jeopardizing the whole reason we came here!

On that note, it turns out it won't be as easy as 'sign here please, join the Warden Army today!'. Did you know werewolves were still around? A lot of them too by what Zathrian is saying! They've been attacking his people, and a lot of them are on the verge of turning. At least it gives us an easy 'in' for getting on their good side so they'll honor the treaties; all we have to do is find the big white wolf, kill it and bring its heart back to Zathrian so he can break the curse. Seems simple enough! We've already survived Ostagar, darkspawn - have- to be worse than werewolves! Right?

Entry 26

'Shemlen' this, 'Outsider' that—I'm trying to help you lot! So what if my great-great-great-great-great-great aunt's cousin's brother's friend, twice removed soiled your drawers for you? It wasn't me, so why give me a look like I'm cracking a whip over your backs! I swear, if it were just me and not Warden Zirdalen? I'd live up to my Tevinter name, let's just put it that way!

...That made it sound like I would torture, enslave and sacrifice them in evil rituals. No I'd just zap them with lightning a bit and maybe knock over a cart or two then run off. They deserve it though!

Entry 27

A talking tree. Yes, like the words I'm writing here, just spoken. He also rhymes. A rhyming, talking tree. See, this is where being a mage can be dull. I know it's a spirit that somehow got stuck in a tree and ended up adapting to life...but a magic talking tree is so much more fun! Maybe it grew from an acorn, lovingly tended to and spoken of fondly, gradually gleaning knowledge from its gardener until it sprouted a mouth made of bark with leaves for teeth, saying its first words?

Still, the rhyming is clever. I've no idea why he decided to do it, but it was a good choice! Even Morrigan cracked a little smile, though she'd probably kill me if I mentioned it.

Oh, and werewolves are here alright—dangerous too! Though, just as vulnerable to ice spells and the odd internal detonation as most others. I think Alistair's getting used to the gore shower now. Or, he just doesn't say anything anymore. I remember the first time I used that spell and it went off he absolutely flipped! Full on screaming and wiping the gristle off! You'd think a Grey Warden would be more at ease around blood...

Anyway, I took like, way too long to write this. I keep getting distracted; the fire here is so warm. I think I'll take a nap. Mr. Kibbles' back looks soft...

Entry 28

The bloody campsite was a spirit! Or bait for one. I can't believe I didn't notice, I'm supposed to be good with spirit magic! Stupid conniving little bastard, trying to get one up over us. I'm more upset that such a nice campfire was a lie, honestly! And the bedroll... Oh, what I'd give for something that comfy to be real! I don't think I'd leave the tent if it were...

<A sketch is below, of an idyllic campsite with a large, spindly-armed ent standing over it, arms spread with several ravens perched along them. The tree appears to be either smiling or yelling.>

Entry 29

A revenant! An actual, in-the-dead-flesh revenant! I had never even dreamed of seeing one in the flesh, let alone fighting one! Remind me to get Alistair a gift next time we get back to a town—hell, all of them! That was an incredible fight..though it didn't help that I ah, underestimated how strong the revenant would be.

Lesson to the wise: don't cast the 'Walking Bomb' spell in close proximity to the man distracting the big bad undead horror when said horror won't be killed by the detonation! Maybe two gifts for Alistair..if looks could kill, the one he gave me after he woke back up...

The strangest thing about this revenant is that when we killed it, a pair of pristine, shining boots fell out of the folds of its cloak. They're enchanted with ancient magic for sure; and they're definitely Tevinter. The emblem of the Archon is even stamped into them! I wonder if there's more pieces of this armor around here?

Entry 30

Well, time for an update Mr. Journal: the Dalish are on our side now. It's hard to feel really happy though; not that it ended badly or anything! It's just that I had no idea how deep this curse ran. It turns out Zathrian had lost his children horrifically centuries ago, and he created the curse for revenge. I've never seen someone so consumed by withering hate like that before..in the end, he seemed like he was withering away himself.

The werewolves are gone at least; no one will be bothering them now and the same goes for them. Oh, and we figured out why a revenant was in the forest! Five, actually and they strained us to the very limits! Each of them were guarding a piece of armor like the one we found; armor that weighs a royal-ton- but is like wearing a

fortress! Alistair's finally happy he's got something that can take a few blows (and it seems magically enchanted too, so if ah, my spells get a little hectic it should help!).

Strangely, one revenant seemed different from the rest. Stronger, but without any other skeletons who came with him. I'm not sure what his deal was—oh, but that reminds me! Franklin did a **MARVELOUS** job down in those ruins! Each time I brought him up he took blows like a champion and saved our skins more than a few times! I think Leliana even acknowledged his usefulness—well once she stopped giving me dirty eyes for raising him. Sorry, but need trumps morals! It's not like the corpse I took him from was an innocent. Plus, even if they were, it was for a good cause! Now we have Dalish in our... I guess it's an army now?

As if that wasn't enough, something else happened while we were down there. I found this strange gem, sort of like a phylactery—the original meaning of the term, not the mage-leash they've become. It had something inside that used to be the soul of an elf; apparently they stuffed themselves inside to avoid death. There's about fifty questions raised from that alone I'd love an answer to, but the poor thing was so tortured by being trapped in that gem that it was just begging for death. It (they? Hard to say) gave me a parting gift for ending its sorry state; knowledge of some sort of magic the ancient elves used to practice. Just bits and pieces, but it feels invigorating when I try practicing it. I feel stronger, sturdier—and when I hold weapons, it just sort of feels natural for me. I don't know how else to say it, but I think it's magic I can use that would help me in a fight—like, directly. If I can't cast spells or anything.

Maybe I can get Leliana or Alistair to spar with me to test it? I'm not totally helpless thanks to Enchanter Bergin's lessons, but the one time I was forced to pull my dagger out back in the wilds, well. Alistair and Daveth both had some clever remarks for my panicked flailing, let's just say that!

Phew, that was a lot at once! I wanted to write while we were down there, but I can't rightly ask everyone to pause while I jot down my thoughts. Morrigan already said I was a 'model Circle mage with my nose shoved in a book at all times' and I've learned enough about her to know it's hardly praise! Still, she saved all our hides in there by being actually able to use Creation magic. I want to ask her for tips, but to tell the truth I'm a bit miffed that I can't cast any, yet some swamp lady can do it just fine. I've been Circle trained! Sure the Circle isn't the end-all-be-all but come on, that's just insulting!

Entry 31

I never really thought about it, but templars are a lot like mages. Growing up, at least. Alistair says a lot of templars are given to the Chantry at a young age; children that their families can't take care of and all that. They get shelter, food, a lot in life but they're leashed to the Chantry with them being addicted to lyrium. It's horrible that the Chantry does that (yet another reason to be glad I have nothing to do with them!) but in Alistair's case, he grew up in the Chantry pretty much. In fact, we both left our old lives at around the same age. I never met someone who could emphasize with what being a mage is like without, you know, being one. Granted, he isn't looked upon with scorn just for existing, but it's something to appreciate all the same, I think.

Also, I'll go ask Morrigan for tips on magic..ugh, I can practically feel her sense of superiority from here. Aren't I supposed to be the leader or something?

<A cartoonish depiction of Morrigan with a haughty expression is drawn below, with lightning bolts coming off of her shoulders as a mabari cowers behind a rock nearby.>

Entry 32

Morrigan was..surprisingly receptive when I asked her for some help. I was expecting more gloating, but she just called me cute and then said she'd teach me what she could.

Cute? I don't know what to make of that. Is it just her way of teasing me like she does with Alistair? If so, I'm grateful—she's absolutely merciless with the poor man! I don't think it's anything ah, 'else' however..probably not at least. I'm not very good at picking up signals.

Anyway! She said a lot of the problems that arise when trying to use Creation magic come from our tendency to use magic offensively. When you're casting a fireball, it doesn't really matter if it's too big, too small, or too fiery: it kills the foe just the same. That I already understood, but what I didn't realize was how similar that line of thinking was to a spell I already use: the Force Field spell. It's not really offensive or defensive; but it's something I have to have a lot of focus for, and the way I use the magic is relatively benign compared to say, a blast of frost magic. Coincidentally, Creation magic does touch on being able to connect with spirits in the Fade—the good ones mind you—so that's actually an area of magic I'm quite familiar with! Really, if I can just learn how to cast a simple healing spell, that'd be enough. I just feel bad when she gets conked on the head and Alistair's getting overwhelmed, and all I can do is make our foes die quicker. Or Force Fields. Those have helped!

Entry 33

I probably should have mentioned we're heading to Redcliffe now, right? Forgot that! We aren't there yet, but we've passed through what's left of Lothing today. It never had a chance of surviving, even if the Arl had left his troops here. There's nothing left but a few landmarks and the ruins of the Chantry; we only recognized it as being Lothing because of how the Imperial Highway is lain out here. I know Lothing likely got the bulk of the horde's attention when they moved north, but it's like the land itself died off. No, worse; it's like the land just got corrupted into some sort of foul mockery of what it was. At least if the land was dead, it wouldn't sicken anyone who passed through it! We've had to take extra caution thanks to only two of us being immune to the taint; traveling ~~west~~ east might be a problem from now on.

Entry 34

Leliana looked a bit sad today, probably because of Lothering although she didn't say anything about it. What she did talk about was our experience with the Dalish. She said it reminded her of a story she had heard about a mother and her lost sons, then start singing the most wonderful song I've heard in my life. Honestly, it was just like the ideal version of singing, as far as I'm concerned. I never really was big into song, at least singing due to the Chantry being so obnoxious in the Circle, but that? I could learn to like that. It's the kind of song that'd go well with...say, a harp! Or some other soft instrument. I wonder if I could find a small harp in our travels...

Entry 35

I'm almost hesitant to write this down, but..nah, what the hell. Alistair is a bastard! Hah, that never gets old. More importantly, he's a royal bastard--King Maric's no less! Apparently that's the real reason why Arl Eamon took him in as a child, before he got shipped off to the Chantry that is. Now that I think about it, Alistair did look remarkably similar to King Cailan, if a bit more tan. Chalk it up to being out a lot?

Still..a king's bastard. That's got to be a load. He said that he doesn't think about it, and that it's never been a part of his life but still, that's got to mess with your head. It's like if someone told me that I'm actually the long-lost daughter of some Nevarran dragon-lord. Suddenly I'm distant royalty? You'd better believe I'd think

different after that! Soiling my drawers to be specific. I don't blame him one bit for not bringing it up..well, I guess that's not entirely true. If he had told me sooner, at least we'd know in case something bad happened. Like say, him being kidnapped by Loghain. Loghain's got to know about Alistair, right? What if he's got assassins out right now? What do assassins look like?

Maybe Leliana would have some insight..she says she's a former minstrel, but no one's that good with a dagger if all they did was just strum a lute and sing a tune. Maybe ~~she's~~ a former assassin!

Entry 36

And I thought the feeling of unease I had walking through Lothering was bad. Redcliffe feels like it's going to implode! Not only is the Arl ill, but no one's even heard from the castle on account of a horde of undead that dwell up there, marching down every night to attack the villagers. They say more undead come each night, taking the corpses of the fallen to add to their ranks.

It's just about sundown right now, after we've done all we can to help prepare. Some of the Arl's knights are here, and there's a decent amount of villagers left who can fight. I'd say we stand a good chance, though I perhaps should've told Sten and Morrigan to stuff it beforehand. I can't believe they can both be so callous to these poor people's suffering! Sten in particular—well, it's not his callousness,

but his lack of logic. That Qunari is all about 'sensible' and 'reason' but for some reason he doesn't seem to understand the order of progression. Help villagers. Find Arl. Get help of Arl. Just because darkspawn aren't here doesn't mean we aren't still working against them! As for Morrigan, she's just being an ice queen as usual. She really could do to keep it quiet in front of the crying villagers at the very least..thankfully Leliana and Alistair have a heart.

As for the problem at hand, I'm not terribly worried. We've got a good defense put in place, and I know a great deal about undead. I've read plenty of books on the subject of demonic possession related to corpses, actual risen dead as well as the art of necromancy (those books were -not- easy to get in the Circle!) and have a little bit of 'hands-on' experience as it were. Franklin might get caught in the

crossfire tonight..but he'll still be invaluable. With undead like these from the sound of it, it's all about controlling the flow. In that regard, our magic is pretty much our biggest asset. That, and the giant Qunari with the massive axe. At least he still follows me after complaining, right?

Entry 37

Not only did we survive, everyone in the village did to! How's that for 'wasting time', Morrigan? It was tense, I won't lie. The first wave of the undead was easy enough thanks to the oil barrels we found; that plus Morrigan's electric magic made short work of most of them before the Arl's knights came into play. It didn't get dicey until more undead swam across the lake though..that's when it felt like what the soldiers at the front lines in Ostagar must've endured.

Enemies from every angle, coming for what felt like ages; I'm glad we got as many extra hands as we could—even if it cost me a solid sovereign. Greedy dwarf.

This felt good though. Saving people, making a difference; this is what being a Grey Warden is all about for me. I know I'm new, and really have had no formal training but it still just feels right, you know? I've got all this ability, and I can use it to help others in my own way. Though I won't lie, it makes it better when I get rewarded for helping! You know, beyond aid for the Blight. The robes and staff I got from Lanaya back at the Dalish camp have been ~~quite~~ nice to have compared to the old staff I pilfered from the Circle basement and the rags Flemeth had laying around her hut!

Ooh, maybe after this Blight business is over with I could become a mercenary? Do Wardens allow that? Working on the side or something? Though I suppose I shouldn't get ahead of myself. It's a long road between now and actually being done with this darkspawn business.

Entry 38

Just a quick jot before we're off storming the castle. It seems like there's a mage at the root of this whole disaster; at least, based off of what Arlessa Isolde said after she surprised all of us by just running out from the castle bridge like it wasn't flooded with undead mere hours ago.

A necromancer for sure...or maybe not. The undead felt strange; not at all like Franklin. Like they were malevolent, driven by a force within themselves. Could these be demons possessing corpses? If not, then this mage is a spiritualist for sure; perhaps even a full-fledged necromancer. But if it's demons..well, it could be anything from a bona fide blood mage to an actual demon, summoned in the flesh.

I'm not sure we could take on a physical demon like that, so fingers crossed that's not the case.

Whatever the source of these undead is however, they need to be the main target. Even if handling them doesn't stop the undead, no more will be made if nothing else. That is, unless the instigating mage or what-have-you opened a tear in the Veil. If that's the case? I thank my lucky stars I know a thing or two about spiritual magics and get Morrigan to work whatever skills she can muster to hopefully seal it up.

Can't take too much longer though; Bann Teagan went in there by himself because the Arlessa begged him. I'm not about to let a good man like that get killed or worse. Wish me luck!

Entry 39

Being a Grey Warden is definitely not meant for the faint of heart. Redcliffe being an indelible reminder of that. I thought the worst was over after we stopped the undead attack; what could one single mage, or one demon orchestrating all this do that could be worse than an army of monsters attacking an entire village?

As it turns out, a demon possessing the Arl's young son, himself a mage being trained by none other than Jowan. I had no idea what to even say when we came face-to-face again. How much has changed since he fled the tower? Me, no longer a freshly-christened mage but a Grey Warden? And him, dried blood covering his ragged robes, bruises and welts only mostly hidden by those thick layers. As bad as he was tortured however, his eyes..the man truly

regrets what he did, I believe that now. But he wasn't the source of the horrors in Redcliffe; his crimes ended at poisoning the Arl.

Redcliffe's ailments came from Connor, albeit indirectly. And for that, his mother had to die so he might live. Alistair had rather choice words for me once we were in private for making that choice, but what other option was there? Jowan's ritual to send me into the Fade, so I could defeat the demon was the only way to save Connor. We couldn't risk traveling all the way to the Circle, and that's not even guaranteed to have worked! Besides, Isolde was...

It's difficult to write about, honestly. She had such grace under threat of certain death, all because she wanted to save her son. I wonder if my own mother was like that? My father? I'd like to think so. She saved Connor in more than one way too; had I not had her blood in my mind's eye when the demon offered me secret power

in exchange for merely backing off, and not leaving Connor? I don't think I would've said no. The things she could've taught me... I can't say I wasn't tempted. So I'll write it here as I said privately: thank you Lady Isolde; you may have saved two people with your sacrifice.

I wish I could say it's all over though, but unfortunately the Arl isn't awake yet. He's not getting sicker, but nothing's able to cure him—not even Morrigan and I working in tandem. Bann Teagan is convinced the Urn of Sacred Ashes is the only way to save the Arl; it's a fable, but frankly it's the only choice we have. If magic can't work, mundane medicine certainly won't. And without Arl Eamon? We're disorganized we won't have a home base to gather the people we ~~do~~ recruit...we're basically lost.

Bann Teagan thinks that tracking the research of this Chantry scholar is a good place to start the search for the Urn, but I disagree. If it exists, somewhere it'll be written about in the Circle's library. Now that Redcliffe is safe at least, we can chance a journey there. Plus, we can also take care of recruiting the mages with our treaties...I'll just need to get Alistair to do that part most likely. It's only been a couple of months since I helped pull that little 'destroy a maleficar's phylactery' stunt, after all. I really hope that everything goes smoothly there; I felt good about saving the village, and helping the Dalish but what happened inside the castle..it wasn't what I hoped for. At least I might be able to make it up to Alistair; during our search I found an amulet that I swear is just like the one he described when we were talking about his childhood, the one that belonged to his mother. I'll just have to wait for the right time to give it to him; right now I think he needs some time alone.

Entry 40

Well my recent experiences can be rightly summed up as 'ups and downs' it looks like. I uh..this is where I wish I still had Janessa to talk to about things. You know, intimate things. Not sexual intimate! Just, you know. Affection, romance, love, like, that sort of thing. I'm pretty sure Morrigan's remarks were just her brand of teasing (especially because she's doing much the same every chance she gets with Sten. It's almost unnerving how she almost throws herself at him, only to pull away when he gets ornery!) But that's not what's got me off-kilter. No, that'd be the pretty redhead in our company who has those wonderful tales to share.

After she finished telling me of the story of Aveline, the first female knight in Orlais (who had a ~~terrible~~ hand dealt to her I might add!) she said I had pretty hair. Totally innocuous compliment, right? (And also appreciated, a lot of people I think are put off by the whole 'deathly pale, white hair' combo. I like it, but it may seem a bit corpse-like to some!) I said the same, since I really do like how she has that slightly tousled look. It's great with red hair! We keep chatting, then she says how she really enjoys my company. It's just the way she said it that made me wonder...so I asked. I wish I could say I asked elegantly, but it was more of a blurting out. I'm still cringing at how I blurted it out. 'Company of other women'? I made it sound like I was propositioning her right then and there!

But, she didn't take offense..no, she rather coyly affirmed that's indeed what she does enjoy. Non-sexually, of course. I think.

Probably in that instance, right? I smiled and nodded then scurried off here to try and get my thoughts down because it's a lot to take in and I'm not sure how to think about it. I should've asked Jowan about this sort of thing before everything went to pieces. Did he and Lily start like this? Assuming something's starting. Is it?

Tell you what Mr. Journal, I'll just find Leliana something nice. Just a gift, next time we're in a village somewhere. Depending on her reaction, I'll know if that..wait, what am I doing? She's clearly, I mean. Okay. Thinking back on what she said, she is at least confirmed to be open to other women, right? And she's complimenting me. That means...Oh, I don't know what it means. Am I second-guessing myself? I need some water.

Entry 41

We can't really turn down potential allies, can we? Even if the ally is a guy who tried to kill me, right? Am I mad for agreeing to take him along? Sure, he's a good fighter but he sleeps maybe, twenty feet tops away from me. He doesn't seem like he'll stab me in my sleep, and he swore loyalty and all, but...

Well, if I didn't want him along I could've just killed him I suppose. Leliana seemed open to the idea and she's fairly world-wise, and Sten probably serves as a good deterrent. Zevran (Mr. Assassin) definitely eyed him warily when we made camp. I guess there's enough eyes around here that I can sleep soundly, and the stuff Zevran said about his assassin people was backed up by Leliana, again.

Maybe I'll sleep with my dagger under the pillow just in case.

Entry 42

Why do things have to collapse into a bushfire when the country's already in such a state? What used to be my home, where I felt warm and safe and could at least practice my talents in peace is a nest of abominations now! So many familiar faces, dead in the hallways..what could have possibly done all of this? Redcliffe was caused by just one demon of desire..how many demons are in the tower now?

It's not a total loss at least. Wynne's alive, and a few others— even Kelli, that Maker-praising lout always muttering about her 'curse'. They seem like they're free of possession thankfully, and Wynne managed to make a barrier to keep the worst of the evil within contained.

I don't know how much of a chance we have to save the Circle, however. Greagoir already sent off for the Rite of Annulment; it won't matter if we personally save every mage if we don't have this handled before those extra templars arrive. But I'm not backing down. This was my home, and I was friends with a lot of the people here. Besides, we need allies—and even one mage can turn the tide of battle. That's what they all told me at Ostagar, and so far it's proven true.

I'd better wrap things up here. Wynne and I are both anxious to see what's happened to the rest of the tower. Hopefully Irving is still alive; Greagoir said he won't back down unless Irving tells him to his face things are alright. Please, please let him still be alive!

Entry 43

The Circle isn't all dead, at least. Irving lives, as well as Wynne and a few other magi. That's about it however; everyone else? Dead, turned into abominations or sacrificed in horrible acts. I almost didn't ask them to help with the Blight, but I couldn't stop thinking about what Duncan would do in a situation like this. The whole reason this started is sort of related to the Blight anyhow. I don't know what madness overtook Uldred after Ostagar, but I'm just glad it didn't result in the death of my home.

I'm not sure how it'll be rebuilt though. So few mages are left; who's going to train new arrivals? It's not like new mages won't be born all of a sudden. I guess that's something that'll be dealt with after they finish cleaning demon remnants out of the tower.

I made a lot of discoveries about, well a lot of things while we were in there however. Magic, the Fade, even myself. Maybe I should put them into a list? It's quite the doozy!

- Thanks to Morrigan's tips on shapeshifting magic, I was able to grasp it in the Fade a lot easier (sort of like what Mouse did back in my Harrowing!)

- Due to all that, I received quite the crash course in, shall we say 'dynamic martial combat', AKA 'Help, I'm in the form of an unarmed flaming corpse and a golem is punching me! What do?!'

- Formulated two theories I'll make sure to write further on once I have a few days to myself to think, on the nature of demons and how their and our emotions interact as well as the potential of the Fade as a training ground

There's probably a lot more I just can't keep up with r-OH!
Well, there was one other thing. Do you remember Cullen, that
templar I'd chat with from time to time? The one who people said
fancied me? They were right. The word 'infatuated' was thrown
around more than a few times. This wasn't some revelation borne of
sincere admission however; by the time we found him, the poor man
had been tormented by the abominations (both literal and figurative)
in the tower for so long, he thought us illusions at first.

But afterwards I could scarcely believe the things he said about
mages! It's hard to imagine that he was the same man who'd so
casually entertain my prodding about the world beyond the tower.
Who'd even let me practice with his sword on training dummies when
the old exercise room was empty! He's so full of hate now...I can't
imagine what he went through, all alone. I know it's strange for a

mage to have a templar friend, but he still is one. I just hope he can deal with his inner demons lest he become consumed by the memory of the ones that were running amok.

Entry 44

It's a bit strange having a Senior Enchanter traveling with us. It almost feels like I'm back in the tower, being taught how to properly focus my magic. In a sense I suppose that's true; Morrigan's advice has helped me get the gist of Creation magic, but Wynne is as much a natural at wielding it as I am channeling the energies of the Fade. Maybe even moreso; it's like it's as natural as breathing for her!

She's also nice to talk to in general; I never really got the chance back at the tower. She was always off on some task that took her outside of the tower, but with her experience I can see why. Plus, Alistair likes her, Leliana enjoys speaking with her it seems and Zevran seems like he doesn't have any issue with her presence.

Morrigan on the other hand...I had never heard her speak so crudely before! It was strange hearing that musical voice talk like a drunken dwarf when she found out Wynne was coming along.

You'd think she'd appreciate the chance to have someone else share the load of healing Alistair when he gets scuffed up? I understand not liking the Chantry, but Morrigan's practically made Andrastian hate her day job.

<Below is a sketch of Morrigan wearing a placard over her front and back denouncing Andraste with very crude language written in. Several unnecessary arrows point to objects, labeling what they are.>

Maybe less labeling. It feels a bit dull. Eh, it was worth a shot!

Entry 45

I do really appreciate the gifts the Dalish granted me for my aid. The staff is wonderful, and the robes are potent indeed! And quite snug! But that's a bit of the problem, actually..there's a lot of padding on these robes. It's part of why they're so soft and insulating, but, well. That and the groinplate that goes with them makes me look a little bit like I'm wearing a corset. I mean, it's very flattering; my hips aren't nearly as wide as this robe makes them look! But it just feels a little excessive, you know?

Mm, I could use a second opinion. Alistair? Uhm, no. No he would either get the wrong idea or make so many jokes. Leliana? She knows fashion, and..hm. Would she take it the wrong way?

'Hi woman who I definitely am not interested in, does this robe make my hips look swollen and grippable?'

I think I'd hope the Maker exists if I actually said that, so that He might smite me to spare me the agony of enduring the result of that remark. Thank you, Mr. Journal for letting me get these quirks of mine out in safety.

I'm definitely going to find something else to wear though. Maybe some armor? So far, my strategy of 'hide in a Force Field until Alistair manages to distract the angry darkspawn' works, but I really don't have a lot of margin for error if it doesn't.

Entry 46

We came across an abandoned farmstead today; from the look of it the cause for abandonment was the civil war. I wonder why the encroaching army didn't burn it down? More good fortune for us at least; it's a nice change of pace to sleeping on a bedroll with bugs trying to crawl between the blankets. I think while we're here, I'm going to take the opportunity to revisit those techniques that elf spirit taught me back in the Breilian Forest. It's all about channeling magic into yourself, then using it to empower your physical might. Seems a lot like Creation magic now that I think about it. Once I think I've got the concentration part down, I'll see if Leliana has any time to spar. Sten and Alistair are too strong and I'm not sure I trust Zevran that much yet, to let him swipe at me with real blades.

Entry 47

I figured I'd spend the day trying to get to know some of the newer members of this little ragtag group; mostly Zevran, in truth. The sooner I can learn to relax around him or send him away, the better was my line of thinking. The verdict? That poor man is so damaged that he's learned to laugh about it. Sold as a child to slavery in effect for assassins (which I confirmed with Leliana is true)? Having no life but the task of taking the lives of others when commanded? I can see why he was so willing to come along with us; as dangerous as our lot in life is right now, at least he'd have freedom.

It's still a bit odd, chatting with the man who was hired to kill me I'll admit. But Zevran's remarkably frank about the whole thing; he was simply a professional killer hired, and since the job failed that's that. Still, I'm not about to turn my bare back to him..but I think we don't need to worry about him attacking us anymore.

Oh, and when I wasn't trying to get to know Zevran I was sparring with Leliana. Or rather, she was entertaining my attempts to land a blow anywhere while I fell flat on my ass more than a few times. To be fair, I was wearing some armor I borrowed from that merchant who likes to tag along with us, Feddic. It's so strange wearing something I can't just bend however I like. What if I get an itch? Do I just endure? That sounds horrible!

Entry 48

We finally have an answer for how a Chantry sister is so good in a fight. She was a spy! Or, bard to be precise (apparently bards are like performers but also spies). She didn't outright admit it, but we got to talking, and she started talking about bard life like if I were to talk about Circle life. That level of depth, you only know it if you've lived it. I'm a little jealous, to tell the truth. Leliana, traipsing around Orlesian nobles in all kinds of outfits, snooping and skulking while working for some ritzy employer..that sounds like constant excitement! Well, assuming nothing goes wrong. I get the feeling something -did- go wrong for her, what with the way she talks about how she wound up in the Chantry. Would that be a taboo subject to ask about?

Entry 49

It feels odd, being the leader here and having to ask for help so often. Well, training; it's not like I can't even dress myself or anything! But aren't leaders supposed to be already capable? Accomplished, skilled and all that? Half the time in fights I just fly by the seat of my pants and hope everything dies before we do. There's no strategy or anything other than 'Alistair, knock that one over the head and keep your shield up, it's going to get bloody!'

It's just sort of getting to me, that's all. I'm barely past twenty in years, and yet I've bargained with the Dalish and spoken as peers to men who mere months ago were in charge of most of my life.

Everyone expects me to be, I suppose like Duncan was, so what choice do I have but to try and live up to his example? I can't just

say 'this is too much, I'm out'. But some days, I REALLY want to. To just go find some nice abandoned tower somewhere with a good balcony, surrounded by a garden for herbs and a graveyard for ample supplies. I practice my magic, write and draw as I please, without any concern for the troubles of the world. Maybe if I survive all of this, I can do just that. It's starting to become a reality to me though, that I may actually die soon. Seeing all of those people at the Circle, people I knew just blooded and battered corpses... I won't forget that soon. It's not ~~how~~ they looked, but that they're no longer around.

I think that's part of why I like, well. Why I appreciate necromancy in its purest form, that of raising the bodies of the fallen to fight once more. In a sense, they're not really gone anymore. And if they're bodies of innocent people, then those people can still do some

good, and maybe even get revenge on the people who killed them? If nothing else, it's useful. When someone dies, their body is just that, a body. Why not make use of it?

Boy, I'm really glad I have you Mr. Journal. Can you imagine if I had to just keep all this locked up in my head? I'd go as mad as that hermit back in the Breilian Forest! I did like his whole 'lives in a stump' style though. Maybe I could do that if I can't find a good tower?

Entry 50

I probably would've never had Wynne as a mentor in the Circle. Or if I did, she'd not appreciate my thoughts on magic very much. At least we can agree on the Circle, and in terms of personality she's actually quite nice. Sort of like a grandmother, at least from what I've heard. Kind, yet firm in her words while practically oozing wisdom. I'm glad she's chosen to travel with us. Now I just need to make sure Morrigan doesn't turn into a bear and rip down her tent before the week is out. Keeping those two separate will be fun...

Entry 51

We ran into a merchant on the road today who has had run after run of bad luck, it seems. Poor guy even lost his mule, so now he's stuck there with his cart! We traded for a few basic supplies, and he also had a thing he called a 'control rod' that he threw in for a pittance. Apparently it's how you control a golem it's linked to—you know, those dwarven rock-statues that are like walking boulders. He even knew where the golem is supposed to be; in a village down south! The way I see it, trading what amounted to an axe we found for a potential golem is well worth it. Besides, we're not hurting for supplies..though I wouldn't be opposed to using some of our coin for a new pair of socks. Nice knee-high woolen ones with extra padding on the bottom; I've been stuck with flimsy linen sacks in all but name and let me tell you, I've felt every-inch of the road!

Anyway, we likely won't get a chance to make it to the south for a little while. We're heading north towards Denerim; with the Circle in disarray we really didn't have any leads on the Urn there at all.

Somehow, my gut tells me if it does exist, it'll be somewhere deep in the south. After all, Andraste was said to have been an Alamarri or something right? Southron folk of some sort, and if they took her back to her resting place...

There's more sneaking around the darkspawn horde in our future, isn't there? I'm sure that'll be even more fun with our big group here.

Entry 52

I had my first real test of these elven magics, and my skill in an actual fight...I'm still sore all over. Remind me to get Wynne a very nice present for being such a good healer.

It went well at first. We encountered some darkspawn on the road attacking some poor sots, so naturally we stepped in to help. My mana was running low, though I had a few of the nasty buggers coming for me so I couldn't risk using my blood like I usually do. So, I grabbed my dagger and went for it! Keeping focus on the magic was taxing, but not overwhelmingly so; it felt almost like I was willing my arms to move where I desired, rather than just striking directly. Honestly, I'd say I held my own! At least, until another darkspawn came from behind and conked me on the head. The last

thing I remember is a white flash, then seeing Leliana kneeling next to me. Apparently they all had no problems..lovely. Nothing like the party leader just falling on their ass, right? Guess I need more training in how not to be hit, since I'm definitely ~~not~~ wearing armor like Alistair does. It works for him, but he's also massive! I'm just ~~starting~~ to get used to wearing this armor, and it's just regular scale-mail!

Entry 53

After much consideration and ~~considerable~~ prodding from Alistair along with a rather blunt remark by Sten, I've opted to try wearing heavy armor. We have a suit of ironically enough, templar armor we received as a reward from the Circle; my plan was just to keep it on hand for Alistair in case we knew we were going to fight a lot of darkspawn magi (Emissaries? Eh, same thing!) but so far that hasn't been a concern. As a matter of fact, I'm writing this entry wearing this armor right now. The verdict? I feel like I'm in a coffin! Wait, scratch that. A coffin is at least cozy and dark, and can be padded for extra comfort. This? Noisy, heavy (even with me channeling magic to make it lighter) and so ~~constrictive~~! Sure, I can take some blows in this, but is the trade-off worth it? I'd rather the giant-hipped looking robe if this is my alternative...

Entry 54

No one told me that Denerim was this huge! It took us almost an hour just to walk from the gates to the market! How do people navigate these streets? Don't they get confused? And the smell, don't get me started on the smell. I can stomach say, the stench of death. But this? It's like someone dumped a chamberpot over a smoldering fire! It's not enough to detract from the market though: I've seen so many things I'd love to buy..if only we had the coin to spare.

Hmm...I wonder if there's a way for us to make some spending money while we're here?

Entry 55

Leliana and I got to talking, and she's hatched a rather devious plan: I help her scout people out, people who look like they're loaded with coin and won't miss a little of it. Then she, Ms. Daintyfingers slips in, pilfers some loot and we split the profit! Sure, it's -technically- thievery, but they won't lose much they can't replace easily! And a lot of these nobles might be terrible people anyway. Besides, we're just going to take a little bit from a lot of them! There's also an ulterior motive, and something that I think I've actually forgotten to write here (sorry!).

Leliana told me the other day that she wasn't entirely forthright about why she came to Ferelden. She was framed by the woman she loved for grave crimes, and once she escaped prison she fled here.

What she described, what she said she endured was sheer cruelty. The worst part, and why I bring this up now? Leliana believes that same woman is here now, tracking her down. Mercenaries attacked us on the road, and Leliana's convinced that her mentor hired them. So, while we're filling our pockets she'll be hunting for information to fill in the gaps of what one of the mercenaries said.

Needless to say, I'm with her every step of the way. Leliana's been good and faithful to us all, and she's someone I think I've grown to care about a fair bit. Besides, if I was willing to risk the ire of the templars for Jowan, how could I stand idly by with this?

Entry 56

What an awful woman Marjolaine was! Talking about Leliana as if she was just as morally bankrupt as herself, like this was all some long con by her? Leliana was right, Marjolaine really was insane. Emphasis being on 'was', mercifully.

I hope Leliana will be alright. Her voice was cracking near the end of our confrontation, and after she said she needed some time alone, then vanished. Alistair and the others are off tracking down leads on the Urn, namely that Chantry scholar's address. I suppose I'll just browse the market and wait for everyone to show back up?

Entry 57

Well, good news and bad news. The good news? We have a lead on Brother Genitivi. The bad news? His assistant was killed by some mage who posed as him, trying to lead Alistair on a wild goose chase. More bad news? It sounds like there's a strange cult or something that captured Genitivi. Even more bad news? Morrigan believes that her mother wants to possess her body and continue her unnatural life. She knows this because she found Flemeth's grimoire in Irving's study during our foray into the tower, and now she wants us to kill her own mother.

I'm not going to blame her for poking around the Circle (even if it was Irving's things) since that'd make me a hypocrite, but killing Flemeth? I suppose, if it really is as dire as Morrigan says then I see why she'd want to (but still, that's her mom!) though there's still the problem of it being, you know. Flemeth. Legendary witch and very likely abomination? Oh, and the fact her hut is deep within the Kocari Wilds, also known as 'Darkspawnopolis' these days. Not that I'm saying I won't go check it out for her; Morrigan's been a fair companion and she's honestly invaluable to have around. I'm not sure I'm going to actually jump straight to trying to knife a living legend of sorcery, however...

Entry 58

As it happens, that village where the golem is said to be, Honnleath? It's along the way to this place where Genitivi may have been taken! Or at least, not far off the beaten path. Not that there is a beaten path for a village nestled deep in the Frostbacks. What I'm trying to say is, we can take care of both! And following up on Flemeth too. So that's...three things that may kill us for certain? Frankly, it's a miracle that Arl Eamon's not dead yet. At least I assume he isn't; I'd guess news would travel about that rather quick now that Redcliffe isn't under siege. Oh, I hope it isn't being attacked again...we'll check in just to be sure, since it's along our route as well. Oh, and Alistair bought a tiny golem figure! He was very shy about it for some reason. It has little quartz eyes, kind of cute actually!

Entry 59

Sorry if the last entry was a little stilted Mr. Journal, trying to not fill so many pages up this quickly. I'm not a fan of multiple books for one journal, so I'll try to keep things brief! Though I could just add more pages...or I suppose write a little less conversationally. Or not space paragraphs as much. Or not leave so much open space since I don't like muddling entries.

I'm not off to a very good start, am I? Do I seem nervous? I probably do. Oh, and I've given up on trying to make heavy armor and magery work. Way, WAY too heavy and restrictive. Instead, I think I'll work on my agility, and maybe practice my protective wards a little more.

Well, this wasn't a very informative entry.

Entry 60

Is a symptom of the darkspawn taint lunacy? I was foraging near a river we passed earlier today and came across a gaggle of people around a stump with an axe in it. One lady was rambling about how I'm the 'future Queen of Thedas' and praising me as the divine, while another was telling her things like 'axes embedded in trees are not the basis of governance' and 'at least one of us isn't covered in dung for a change.'. They got so into arguing about it none of them noticed me taking the axe!

What? It was shiny and clean. Might fetch a good price, and who knows? They might've gotten violent. I could've saved lives today!

Entry 61

I've been keeping my distance from Leliana, you know, giving her space after Marjolaine. But she just seems so much quieter than usual; like me when I first got to the Circle. Well, except without the wide eyes and clumsy hands knocking over stacks of books. I want to do something to show her she's not alone, but what? I don't think just talking to her will help..hm.

She likes nice things. Shoes, oh so many times she's talked about shoes. What are nice shoes though? Like, attractive ones. I know I love a good pair of warm, padded boots but she's a bit more frilly. Maybe a dress? Then again, those are a bit expensive for us right now, and she really can't wear them on the road. Weapons and gear are out of the question; that might give the wrong idea.

What did she mentioned..stuff we talked about. Orlais, stories,
Lady Cecille, her mother...Oh!

<A sketch is below of a wildflower with white petals that have a
reddish-purple coloring towards the center, inside a smooth white vase
with light blue floral patterns on it.>

Entry 62

I think today was the first time I gave a gift to someone without mucking it up somehow. Saying the wrong thing or just awkwardly handing it off then scurrying off and things like that. I don't know what it is, I just feel at ease around Leliana. Like I can just be natural around her, quirks and all. I guess she feels the same way, with all she's bared to me.

The other day, Alistair and I were talking, mostly about the Wardens. The topic of what comes after all this came up, and it gave me a lot to chew on. If we survive, if we beat back the darkspawn, what then? Presumably that'd mean Loghain is dealt with, so we won't be constantly looking over our shoulders for more assassins. What do mage Wardens do? Surely not go back to the Circle?

At this point I don't think I'd fit in there anymore; I'm too used to practicing my magic freely—all of it. I know I wrote about wanting to find a tower and just hole up there, but realistically speaking, I can't just vanish can I? All these people getting to know us by face, I mean even our faces are being passed around in sketches to the guard in Denerim! It'll be hard staying incognito...what if I have to be a public person after this? Making appearances, speeches and all that? I think I'd shrivel up on the spot. Or crawl underground and hide. Maybe that forest hermit was right all along...

Entry 63

For all the talent I have with magic, it feels like people like Morrigan and Wynne are on a whole different level. I'm not even sure if Wynne counts as human with the power she has..earlier today, we got ambushed by darkspawn. All I remember was searing pain, and blackness creeping over my senses. Then, there was a great light, and Wynne was glowing like she was a spirit herself. Restorative magic just cascaded out of her effortlessly, and we fought on so easily with her bolstering us. It was incredible!

The source of that power is even more astonishing. She's..well, I suppose something akin to an abomination—but that word's hardly accurate! As she said once we made camp, she died in the Circle fighting a demon. Like, full on cold skin and darkness dead. A

spirit, an actual spirit and not a demon intervened though, and kept her alive. -Is- keeping her alive, even now. I didn't think that was possible; has this happened before? Maybe this is what Flemeth is? I know one thing though, I've got to step it up. I just feel like I'm not pulling my weight, always having to get healed or protected because for some reason, our foes love to come -straight- for me! Maybe I should just suck it up and wear the armor...

Entry 64

<Instead of an entry, a large picture is sketched, taking up the whole page. It's a detailed landscape, a realistic depiction of a high dragon being fought by several people, recognized as Alistair, Leliana, Wynne and Zirdalen. The location is in the wilderness it looks like, and the dragon has bathed the group in flames as an ice storm rages around its form.>

Entry 65

'Thirty years, give or take'. That's what Alistair said, the truth of what our fate is as Wardens. That's how long we've got before -we- die from the taint like everyone else who got infected before us.

There's no turning back at this point; I already drank the blood. It's been almost a year; that's twenty-nine left. If that much. Irving is at least in his seventies; Wynne perhaps not too much younger and both of them are still going strong. Fifty is just so young compared to others..and that's all I've got. For certain.

I've basically lost half my life then, haven't I? Even if I live a blessed life, I'll still feel the taint creeping up. No matter what I do, that's the end. The Joining killing people, dying young no matter what, abandoning every part of your old life..the Wardens sacrifice too much. This shouldn't have to be. I wish the darkspawn never crawled out of their wretched little holes.

Entry 66

Normally Sten doesn't approach anyone. I guess I really looked to be in a daze for him to talk to me unprompted. I didn't outright say what Alistair told me, but it just sort of came out anyway. Knowing I didn't have as long of a life ahead of me as anyone else.

He was silent for just a moment, as if reading me on appearance alone. Then, he went into a story about how an 'Antaam' found a village that had all but died off, with the people living there complaining that the world changed. In response, the Antaam said 'change it back.'. At first I thought that was rude and pointless, but I think I understand the point.

I don't want to spend my life moping about how little I might have left in it. Maybe Duncan was wrong; maybe I'll get hit by an arrow that went a little too close to my neck tomorrow. Daveth died on his first day as a Warden; Jory didn't even get that far. All I know, is I can't think about what might come right now. Too many people are relying on me to keep going, and certain people's opinions I care a great deal about. I've written in here, complaining about seeming like dead weight; if I give in and start sobbing about not living as long as other people those complaints will only be truer.

Still, I sort of want to kick another Warden in the jimmies. I don't feel betrayed, just...I don't know. I think it's time for me to bring Franklin out for some contemplation.

Entry 67

Just outside of Honnleath, and what does Alistair do but go and get food poisoning? I told him he had to cook the shrimp until it was white! Now he's bedridden, and Wynne's staying at camp to make sure he doesn't get any worse. The problem is, I can sense darkspawn. A lot of them, in fact, all at Honnleath proper. We can't just stay camped while they're down there..the only problem is, our strategy in fights is 'Alistair draws their attention, I and Morrigan destroy them while the rest keep them contained.' The closest we have to an Alistair is Sten, and he's not really the 'keeping hordes of enemies on him' type of fighter.

Oh, but it gets better. Morrigan mentioned my magic and how it lets me wear armor much heavier than I should be able to, and how it enhances my martial skills. Thanks, Morrigan! I love the idea of having darkspawn trying to gut me while magic is flyin about all around me!

Here I am now, jotting this down as my last will and testament before we head down to the village. My wishes: -Haunt- that swamp lady! And, Mr. Kibbles? Do feel free to do what I said you should -never- do in her pack again. Do it a lot!

Entry 68

Darkspawn, mages, demons oh my..that's Honnleath in a nutshell! Well, just the one demon that actually matters—a demon of desire, possessing a cat and ensorcelling a little girl. That's where we've been for the past hour, trying to help the girl out by freeing the demon. The situation is..delicate, let's say, so I can't just kill the demon. Not with the girl so close; so now I'm here trying to figure out Enchanter Wilhelm's wards so I can let this demon go. Maybe if I just take a few minutes to sit here and clear my head, I can make sense of it. Unfortunately the ward tripped when I walked through first, so Morrigan and the others are waiting out in the hallway. I'm sure they could make sense of this in a few minutes tops, yeah?

We found the golem, at least. Problems: The rod doesn't work, and the golem brutally killed its old master. A mage we met here says they can help with that, but that mage also happens to be the father of this little girl. Leading me to this current predicament.

You know, I might be more inclined to work with desire demons if they had hair and did less possessing and life-draining, and more 'curious observations'. All demons have to do is just -not-! Just, don't do any of the stuff that harms us, and there's no problems! This would be so much easier...

Update: The desire demon reneged and we had to kill it. 'Big surprise.'

Entry 69

The golem has been acquired..and I think it may be the most animated member of this little gaggle of do-gooders we have here. Witheringly sarcastic, curiously feminine and quite frightening to face in combat I'm sure, all in all? A trip well worth taking! Shale (I'm not kidding, that's the name it gave as its own!) has a rather curious alignment with elemental crystals as well, so that should be interesting to fiddle with! Assuming it lets me. It's very touchy about certain things..and I'd like to stay on the good side of the walking stone terror. So far, I think I'm doing well? Or well enough at least. Its' previous master was a mage, and it crushed that mage to pieces, so perhaps I should err on the side of caution. Just for the time being.

I must say, with Shale I'm a lot more confident about what comes now. And I'm sure Alistair will appreciate having someone around who can take a few hits! Poor guy is still clutching his stomach like it's about to fall out. That shrimp must've been raw!

Entry 70

Leave it to Leliana to help with forgetting about the troubles of the world, even if for a time. Really, I have her to blame for not getting as much sleep as I should..ah, that came out wrong. What I mean is, she and I usually stay up together and watch over the camp, and pass the time talking about whatever comes to mind. But tonight, well. It all worked out. I don't know how we didn't both fumble over our words to a point where we're just stuttering messes! It was so tense and I swore I said the wrong thing like, seven different times. Leliana didn't mind though; in fact we, we...

Oh, forgive me Mr. Journal. I'm, it's embarrassing to write. And it shouldn't be! I'm just weird. Leliana and I, we see eye to eye.

Oh, that was awful. I like her. She likes me. We're fond of each other. Yeah, that works. But, you know. Seriously fond. Lovers fond. Well, not yet, I mean—

Would that I could transfer some of my self-consciousness to magical skill, I might be greater than Wynne and Morrigan combined! Come on me, it's a journal entry! No one else can even understand this, it's all in cipher!

Entry 71

We're at the foothills of the Frostbacks, looking up at quite the climb to Haven. There is a path, albeit a disused one that isn't marked at all. It took us hours to find it, actually. How does a village survive this far off from civilization?

I suppose I should be grateful for the Circle and its numerous flights of stairs letting me not be totally wiped out after we make it to the village. That, and the spells I know from the Dalish ruins letting me lug all this armor around without it weighing me down too badly. I don't know how Alistair and Sten do it! I'd crumple and just curl up if I had to walk half as far as they can wearing all that armor...

Entry 72

Just a quick update before we delve further into this ruin. Haven's ruled by crazy cultists who hate outsiders, captured Genitivi and worship Andraste. Genitivi is alive but hurt, he's leading us to the Urn. The Urn actually ~~does~~ exist, and it's guarded by the fanatics infesting this ruin. Oh, and they like dragons.

Oh, and Sten decided to try and fight me for the right to lead because he can't comprehend 'working to win over allies'. He's lucky he's proven himself already; if he tried that before I got to know him he'd be out on his ass with nothing but a loincloth after a stunt like that! Not that I wasn't absolutely terrified when I was fighting him. I'm uh, keeping the armor I think. Heavy sure, but it saved my arm from coming off. Seriously, if he tries that again? I might not be

able to let him live. I don't know, I'll think on it more when we
aren't about to dive into a culty mountain temple.

Entry 73

Never did I think I'd see what I saw. Madmen worshipping dragons as gods; an actual high dragon, a -dead- high dragon by our hands..but all of that pales to the reality of the Urn. It..you hear about the Chantry and the history of Andraste, and it's retold so often that you just tune it out. Or in my case, outright not believing in it.

It is a lot harder to deny what you see with your own eyes, no matter how long you thought otherwise. We spoke with a man who saw our souls, who lived since the ancient age of Tevinter and knew Andraste herself. We communed with the spirits of those in Andraste's life, my past manifested and..it's a lot to take in.

Frankly, I may need a whole journal just to write down the full extent of what happened in that temple. And at the heart of it all, the Urn itself. Fairly unassuming, filled with ashes powdery soft and warm to the touch. I'm not normally the praying sort, but if there ever was a time to ask for higher aid to make sure Arl Eamon doesn't die, it'd be now. If these ashes don't cure him? It may end up that Redcliffe is the last bastion of defense against the darkspawn.

Entry 74

We've done so much already, but it feels like we have so much more to go. All our efforts have been on getting allies, making sure we have an army to fight the darkspawn. But Loghain is still out there, and from the sound of it he's all but sacking the country under the pretense of securing Ferelden's independence. The man's insane! How can he not see the damage that the Blight is doing to our country? We've walked by more burnt-out farmholds than I can count, seen so many mutilated or rotting corpses that even someone as sensitive as Leliana has had to harden herself to their sight.

I just wish we could take him, take all of those fools who think this is some mundane threat and put them in the ruins of Lothering. Bring them to Ostagar and let them see what a mess it surely must be now. If I were ever a noble, I'd hope I never ended up as mad as they are.

Anyway, we're marching as fast as we can to make it to Redcliffe as quickly as possible. I think after that we'll follow up on the last treaty we have, with the dwarves; ultimately, I'll defer to Arl Eamon's wisdom on that matter. He's the central figure for all this; we might have the allies coming to us, but the Arl has a castle, he has troops of his own, and he knows Loghain. We're just a big crowd without someone like that tying us together.

I want to write so much more, I probably have so much more,
it's just that I can barely think straight. So much happened in such a
short time... I'm still reeling about the Urn. All that really did happen;
it's not just stories passed down. Is the Maker more than a myth as
well?

Entry 75

Sometimes I resent my looks. My cheeks don't redden, they just darken. The pale skin can be off-putting, and stuff like that. Am I a bit hard to talk? Sorry, that didn't make any sense. I'm just glad it's not easy to tell I'm 'beet red' right now!

When Leliana said those words to me, it was like my heart just filled with air and floated up. Everything just went all fuzzy and I just stood there staring for what felt like an eternity. Finally, she mentioned others looking over at us, so I snapped out of it, but..well, it's not every day a woman you're both attracted to and admire greatly so earnestly says 'I love you.'

That's it, just three little words, but they just... I swear, I almost just burst out laughing I was so anxious! SO glad I didn't do that. I just; I never really thought I'd have a relationship like this, you know? Soft and tender, casual but sincere at the same time—and with someone so beautiful no less! I'm truly lucky. I can't believe I almost didn't invite her along when she approached us back in Lothering!

I'd better finish up. I've been hunched over a stump here scribbling for so long the others might think I've fallen ill or something. I'll add something later, I think!

<Below is a painstakingly detailed, carefully sketched portrait of Leliana from the shoulders up. Particular attention has been paid to her hair, as well as the Chantry amulet around her neck.>

Entry 76

I really lucked out with this group of people. Leliana being so charming, and fun, and good at storytelling, and ~~attractive~~; Alistair having the strength of an ox in a fight but the gossipy attitude to rival any of my old fellows back at the tower, Wynne's sage guidance... I guess I'm just trying to say I feel rather fortunate. Things are so bad across the land, but here, we're almost alright.

Well, granted we are fugitives and cast-outs traipsing across Ferelden to gather a scrappy army together to desperately fend off a tainted evil while trying to not be killed by the mad despot in charge of the country. I haven't slept in a proper bed in a year, the stench of unwashed bodies doesn't even register anymore and Alistair's 'Pot Scrape Surprise' is a ~~good~~ turn of events for dinner, but

honestly? It's not the end of the world. The excitement of the open road, seeing so many different places and witnessing events I could scarcely dream of...never in my life did I think I'd solve one of the great mysteries of Thedas. Or become a storybook hero defending villagers from an encroaching evil. So many things, and in such a short time!

I guess I'm just really glad things turned out like they did. Imperfect, unplanned, pure happenstance our circumstances may be, but I'm hopeful things will all work out in the end. Not without us doing our part, of course...blame it on seeing a real holy relic, but I'm praying the Arl is going to recover. He has to.

Entry 77

Why am I so conflicted about Jowan? I thought when that spirit took his form back at the temple, it was closure. Maybe it was just preparing me for the real confrontation I didn't know was coming.

Arl Eamon is restored, thankfully he doesn't seem any worse for wear. And what Alistair said is true; he seems like a truly good man. A wounded man, but good. It was..difficult meeting his gaze when he spoke of Isolde. I could see the pain in his eyes, but still he thanked us, thanked ~~me~~ for our efforts. That's how I know I could never rule; he does rule, and that's how he must act.

Then, Jowan came up. When I was last here, I told Bann Teagan that turning him over to the Circle would be best. Execution is too far, I believe; Jowan made mistakes, but he tried to atone in the end. But seeing Jowan, hearing him speak to me and again, thank me for suggesting the Circle! It hurt. I had to excuse myself just so I wouldn't start sobbing in the open like that.

I know what's going to happen to Jowan. He's going to become like Owain, one of the Tranquil. Cut off from emotion, from the Fade; safe, but so, so different. I hope I don't have to see him like that. I hope Lily never sees him like that. I've read that some of the Tranquil prefer their state, but Jowan definitely isn't one of them. He's just so remorseful, that...

There's a Qunari phrase, saying or whatever. "Life is wisdom, and your past is the cup to hold it." To me, it feels like the past can be like a turtle's shell. It's part of who you are, but it's a weight you're going to carry. Something you can't forget.

Entry 78

Today, I was asked to confer on strategy against Loghain by Arl Eamon. He and I spoke as equals. He, the Arl, probably one of the most powerful men in the country. Talking to me. A mage who's barely into the open world. A mage who had to wear her bedrobe to the meeting because she spilled old wine on her tunic while swinging her arms around trying to practice swordplay.

I, when you're there you have to say something, right? You're practically quaking from fear of giving the wrong advice, or saying the wrong thing so you just sweat until you almost lose it finding the best answer. Just, non-stop stress until it's finally over and you can step into an empty room and just sit, sit quietly and stare at the wall. Why ask me about the Landsmeet? I barely even knew what it was

before today! I appreciate that they value my efforts, but I'm no leader of people! I'm barely able to keep a gaggle of misfits on the right track!

Oh no. Oh NO. What if they ask me to participate in the Landsmeet? To speak? Oh no, oh no no no I can't do that. I'll just keep some raw shrimp on hand if that happens and pull an Alistair. I'd rather you-know-what my guts out than do that!

<Additional ink-marks are below, as if more words were going to be written before the quill was thrown across the page.>

Entry 79

I think I'm feeling better today. Normally I write at the end of the day, but I sort of panicked yesterday and went into the woods for an afternoon. Leliana found me first, and we spent a while just talking. She's so keen on sensing what people are feeling; we went straight to stories about Orlais. Noble intrigue, silly hairstyles..perfect to help take my mind off of the fact I'm being seen as Ms. Important Political Advisor or what-have-you these days.

On the way back to Redcliffe Castle however, we were stopped by a traveling merchant who hailed me as a Warden from the get-go. Levi Dryden was his name, an old friend of Duncan's as he tells it. Apparently, his family had a bit of an 'image crisis' shall we say, and they're black sheep nowadays. His grandmother was a Warden

though; Warden-Commander actually. She even had command of a whole castle, quite a defensible one as he tells it to the far north.

I'm no general, but in my eyes if we have Redcliffe to the south, and that castle to the north? That means we're harder to pin down. We can have more reach (and another place to send our allies. There's a lot of Dalish clans coming, and Redcliffe is looking a little crowded!!)

The one problem is the fact the castle, Soldier's Peak has been abandoned for decades. No one knows what state it's in, or even how to find it. Well, not easily; Levi has a map, and he's asked for my help in tracking the castle proper down. It's not really gathering allies, buuuut I'd say a whole new fortress is worth the trek! Besides, it's on the way to the northern Frostbacks. We've got to get there next to

see if the dwarves have any soldiers to spare for the Blight.

Somehow...I'm feeling like there's going to be a catch. Just a hunch.

If not, then I think I just might start dancing in joy! Please, just one part of this whole adventure where it's cut-and-dry. Please?

Entry 80

We passed by a group of mages from the Circle on their way to Redcliffe, and they gave me the ~~worst~~ look! Especially the apprentices; it took me all afternoon to figure out why.

So, the armor I wear, right? I bought it after trading some supplies we got back, way back in our travels. Enchanted to ward off spells, sturdy enough to take some blows, padded to account for extended wear and fairly slim for heavy armor! If it wasn't so damn heavy it'd be quite the steal!

The ah, problem is it just so happens to be armor from Kirkwall's templar order. Kirkwall, famously known for their hardline stance on mages. Kirkwall, where the Circle of Magi is within an old Tevinter slave prison. Those magi probably thought I was some kind of mage-traitor! Look, say what you will about templars (because a lot of it is true!) but their armor is really world-class!

Entry 81

I wish we had known about Soldier's Peak earlier; this place is the definition of secure! Tucked away past winding cave tunnels, atop a snowy mountainside and built sturdier than Ostagar by the looks of it; it might even be more defensible than Redcliffe!

There's just a ~~slight~~ problem of the fact that the Veil is rather thin here. Really, almost sundered entirely. We haven't even entered the castle proper yet and already had several encounters with angry demons; poor Levi is beside himself with fear. I tend to forget that our daily lives are the average person's worst nightmares, whoops. At least no one's hurt! Though the whole 'demon' business might make this castle a no-go for taking our forces that consist partially of mages into. I asked Wynne for any advice on how we might try to

fix the problem, but even she can't really see where to begin for this Veil tear. It's like it's just weakened overall.

Oh and Mr. Journal, help me try to not bounce pebbles off of Shale's head. Just because I take a few minutes when we have some downtime to OCCASIONALLY write here doesn't mean I'm 'book-nosed'! And I know it chose that specific phrase on purpose. Not everyone can just take a chisel to their face when they want to reshape it, Pebble!

Entry 82

Demons galore in this place..but more than that, another Warden was here, alive after all this time. Or at least, a former Warden. He..frankly, he's a monster. Not without cause; but the things he's done are damning.

However, it'd be pointless to punish him now. All his victims are dead and gone, and the knowledge he has could still do some good. I'd say benefiting the world outweighs punishment, wouldn't you agree Mr. Journal? And while I'm being honest here, the fact that he's a Warden that's lived for over a century -with- the taint is more than a little interesting. If he's found a way to stave off the effects of it, then I want to know. I hope it isn't something atrocious like blood sacrifices...

So I let him keep doing his research—just without any more people to experiment on. It's an unused part of the tower and I told him under no circumstances is he to take anyone who may come here for his own ends. I think the fact that we carved through the demons and the former Warden-Commander's possessed corpse seemed to impress upon him that we're not just pushovers, but ultimately I have to trust that he'll listen to a fellow Warden—even if only in blood, not allegiance.

I could write for ages about what we discovered here, but I don't want to dally. While we've been doing this, Arl Eamon has been calling people to Denerim for the Landsmeet; I don't know how long that will take to get sorted, but I'd rather not have everyone waiting on us to return. I'll tell Levi to send a message down to Redcliffe and let them know Soldier's Peak is open to use; in the

meantime, it's off to Orzammar for us. We've had good fortune as of late, so maybe it'll continue? If the Maker is real, he's got to be rooting for us over the darkspawn, right?

Entry 83

For a long time, I've been skittish about sex. With my 'situation' I always was afraid of people's reactions. Some people might've thought me a man, or just not understood. Or even blamed magic, you know the whole mage thing. But last night? It never even crossed my mind. Leliana just was so disarming, so coy... I didn't even realize what she was saying until she spelled it out. Even then, she never lost that charm. I don't know how she found my dopey self saying 'Oh, well I'll just be writing in my journal!' attractive, but things kept moving. When I finally understood, and she 'suggested' we retire to her tent? She could've told me anything, and I would've done it in that moment. I was enraptured. And the things that happened inside there, oh Mr. Journal, I don't think I could write them here.

It was just, so much more than what I had heard, too!
Leliana's skin was practically glowing in the candlelight, and I don't think I'll ever forget just how soft and warm her legs felt around my-

Uhm. Sorry! Not writing any of that where anyone could even see it in cipher -anytime- soon. Suffice it to say, it was magical. More magical than magic. It was like being drunk, but perfectly lucid at the same time. Like you wanted nothing more in the world but what was happening right there. Sex, but...so much more.

All the personal trauma I've endured; the Joining, leaving my home behind—both times—and every cut, scrape and wound endured as a Warden was a fair price to pay if it meant being able to meet Leliana. I always like to be a little flowery when I write, but to just

put my thoughts in the purest form: I'd never known love before, until I met Leliana. Now, I love her. Completely.

<An ornate, swirling pattern of flowered vines is drawn below, interlaced with hypnotic patterns drawing one's eyes inward, where a near-total accurate depiction of the 'Andrasté's Grace' flower is in full bloom at the center.>

Entry 84

You know, I honestly forgot that I had promised to help Sten recover his sword. He hasn't really mentioned it, and we did follow up on a lead at Lake Calenhad that pointed to Orzammar, but sort of got sidetracked. How fortunate for us that when we arrived at the gates here, a man practically screamed and fell over when he saw Sten! That jogged my memory. Now he's got his sword, and it's like he was a whole different person when he spoke to me. He actually said that it was 'completion' that he felt; in as few words as possible naturally. Still, I had no idea how much he cared about the sword. I know he spoke highly of it, how much it meant in Qunari culture, but to see it..well, I can understand that feeling in a sense.

Actually, I think I see what he means very much now that I think about it. Mr. Kibbles really just sort of showed up in my life, but I can't even say how many times he's saved my skin when I got in over my head. He's a big goofball when you scratch him behind the neck, and loves to dig holes in camp and mess with Alistair, but in a fight? He really lives up to the legend of mabari hound fighters. He's so loyal and dutiful, I honestly never really think about it simply because he's always there at my back. I need to change that. Maybe I could get him a new collar? Or a nice big juicy cut of meat. Something for sure; he's a loyal friend that I need to acknowledge more than I do. He and Sten, honestly. With his sword back, he really has no other reason to stay with us. In fact, he has a very good reason to leave; his question has been answered. He's still here though, and even though we've had some rather tense moments before, I think I'm glad he's around.

Anyway, it looks like the crowd around Orzammar's gates is about to clear out. I wonder how big the city is on the inside? The gates are massive; rather strange, too. Why do dwarves need big gates? You know..size of them, size of doors, that sort of thing. Best not ask that directly.

Entry 85

Orzammar is like..a place in the Fade, only present in the waking world. A massive cavern, easily as big as Redcliffe itself containing an entire city with a lake of molten lava, walls of smooth polished stone reaching up to vaulted arches and rivulets of glittering ores twinkling like the night sky. It's magnificent, to put it plainly!

And, bloody. The very first thing we witnessed upon entering the main thoroughfare was a confrontation between two groups ending in a murder. Oh, and these groups each support a claimant to the throne. Oh, right. Their king passed away not three weeks ago. I'm putting the blame for all of this squarely at the feet of Loghain. If he hadn't poisoned the Arl, we wouldn't have needed to go find the Urn. This whole debacle would've been avoided!

As it stands, it looks like I'll have to align with one of the two vying for the throne. Their Assembly (like a Landsmeet, I think?) can't decide, and the treaty we have only compels the king. How convenient...

My first impressions of either two are that Bhelen is a bit of an opportunist, and Harrowmont is 'typical dwarf' for lack of a better word. Not that I know what a typical dwarf is, but it feels that way. So far, my impression of them in general has been that they're stubborn, obsessed with appearances, and violent. How did they manage to make such a magnificent city if this is how they can be?

Not all of them I've met so far have been bad, granted. I actually ran into a dwarven girl named Dagna who's positively giddy to go study magic at the Circle. What an odd choice for a dwarf—

something I told her, but she seems to understand that she won't be casting spells. It's just the history and application of magic that appeals to her; so much so that even when I told her the Circle was badly damaged she wasn't dissuaded at all. If nothing else, when she arrives she'll be able to help the cleanup; they won't turn someone away who's that eager, not as long as Irving has any say.

Now, time to stop enjoying the view and go speak to this 'Shaper' fellow I was told to visit. Apparently they're like the 'dwarven elder' or lorekeeper. It should be interesting if nothing else!

Entry 86

It hit me while I was talking to the Shaper; I'm in the exact same shoes Duncan was at the tower. A visiting guest of honor, seeking aid for a Blight. When I entered the Assembly chambers I didn't realize it at the time, but it could've easily been Duncan walking and talking, just as I did. I think I was even channeling a bit of his memory in my responses!

I wonder what he'd think of us now? Of our progress, our choices, our chances. I didn't know him as long as Alistair, it's true; still, he had much confidence in my abilities and indeed, risked much in recruiting me. Would he have had as much trouble as he did in calling upon these forces?

I suppose it doesn't matter. Now we make do with what we've got, and hope that it'll be enough. My biggest fear is the archdemon itself. We've faced darkspawn; they're mortal and we know they can be killed. With good enough strategists and defenses, we should be able to beat their army. But the archdemon..in my dreams, I've seen it. It doesn't feel like a mere beast, or even a leader of monsters. It's..it's like a malevolent force given form, wanting nothing more than to swallow the world in its own misery. I worry that it alone may be enough to tip the scales of any battle we have.

I should probably stop dawdling so much and get a move on. I think I've decided who to help; I just hope it's not the wrong choice. If Bhelen does take power in the end, we may have lost the dwarves entirely. I can't just wait for them to solve this crisis though, not with Arl Eamon depending on us to support him in the Landsmeet.

Plus, we have Ferelden's future king with us! I can't believe I forgot to jot down that little detail, but you know how I wrote that Alistair told me the truth about his heritage? Being King Maric's bastard and all? The Arl thinks Alistair is the best claimant to the throne. He's probably putting the word out in Denerim right now.

King Alistair... I've seen the man trip over his own socks. I've also seen him take on an ogre, three hurlocks and a blight wolf all at once, and know he's a genuine, kind soul. I just wonder if that means he's 'king' material... He's like me in some ways. If it were me? Queen Zirdalen? Oh I just about fainted reading that written out. Please, please no. It doesn't even -sound- good!

...Fine, it does actually sound good. Purely phonetically however. Don't let it happen. Please don't let it happen.

Entry 87

I'd love to get my hands on a full copy of 'In Pursuit of Knowledge' by Brother Genitivi. He should be back in Denerim by now; maybe when we go there next I can look him up and ask for a signed copy? I find references to that work all over it seems; even as far down as in Orzammar's Shaper Hall (basically a magic library)!

I'm hoping to learn all I can about dwarven politics, and thus far? Leliana's Orlais sounds as complex as darkspawn poetry by comparison. I'm surprised Sten hasn't imploded from how convoluted everything 'noble' is here; his face when we entered the Assembly hall! You'd think he ate bad mushrooms!

I think I understand the gist, though. Dwarf nobles are stuffy and invest in lower castes. Castes are very rigid, and...

Nope, don't understand a lick. The Shaper libraries are rather fascinating at least! I didn't realize that golems were so rare, even in Orzammar. So far, Shale is the only one I've seen, and based on how many stares it gets that must hold true for a lot of people!

Entry 88

I really like dwarven fashion. Simple, symmetrical, with wonderful geometric designs that are so unlike anything I've seen on the surface. I wonder how much it'd cost to get one of their tailors to make a dress for me? I'm afraid custom tailor jobs are all I could get. At least, unless I wanted to wear it like an evening dress. That'd show a ~~little~~ too much skin for my tastes! In public, at least. If Leliana asked in private...

Even their armor looks interesting too. And very protective, if only it didn't seem like it weighs even more than this templar armor of mine. Oh, there's so many things I'd go for if we had the coin, but we've been running dry lately thanks to all the poultices we've gone through. Healing magic can only take us so far, and it's really just

Wynne and Morrigan doing all of that. I don't know what it is;
Creation magic continues to escape me. I thought I finally grasped it
one time and tried to mend flesh..ah, ~~I grew a tree out of Alistair's~~
~~gash.~~ Please don't read that.

Entry 89

I'm to fight in a gladiator ring now. Is this truly how dwarves settle their differences? Spectacle combat? Harrowmont's man won't even let me be face-to-face with him unless I 'prove my loyalty'. I just got into Orzammar this morning! What are the chances I show up, see Bhelen's people murder someone in the street and say 'Wow, that's my kinda guy!'

I don't know, maybe this is the fastest solution. I don't have the time to learn how to be Ms. Social Schmoozer, Dwarf Edition nor do I have the capacity for that. I'm reminded of Alistair making a joke about dancing the Remigold back at Ostagar; that's about as good a picture as any of me trying to play politics. I just hope these Proving's aren't as cutthroat as the rest of dwarf nobility seems.

Just a quick update Mr. Journal: the first man I spoke to in the Proving chambers said the reigning champion had 'Eleven decapitations'. Yep. 'Aren't as cutthroat' my pale ass.

Entry 90

I actually did it! I had no idea what I was walking into, these Proving; But even then I managed to hold my own against actual veteran fighters! Even two-on-one! The hardest fight was absolutely against Piotin (or however it's spelled), Bhelen's champion. He went straight for me the whole fight; I parried my little heart out trying to make sure his axe didn't lop my head off! I don't think he got the 'first blood' message, to tell the truth.

I feel so much better about myself after that. Proof that I can actually stand on my own! All those nights practicing with Leliana and Alistair have finally paid off. Not even that reeking drunk ranting about some 'Branka' character could dampen my spirits on the way to the tavern! Although the smell ~~here~~ might just do it..do

dwarves just not have a sense of smell when drunk? I deal in corpses
from time to time and even I'm having trouble taking deep breaths!
Hopefully Dulin gets here soon so we can see about Harrowmont
and aid for the surface, otherwise I might get contact drunk.

Entry 91

Lord Harrowmont is an agreeable sort; a bit cagey, but not nearly as openly rude as most dwarf nobles I've met thus far.

Unfortunately that whole Proving business was just to meet him, so I still have another hoop to jump through before we can secure dwarven aid. This time, it's doing some guardwork.

There's an organization down here called the Carta; apparently they're like a dwarven crime gang that's gotten bolder after their previous king died. Harrowmont wants me to go, find her base, and take care of her. Normally I'd not accept something so vague, but I've overheard more than a few thugs that've mentioned her name, so...win/win really? Helping clean up Orzammarr, getting Harrowmont the crown so he can commit troops to the Blight?

Assuming he'll actually hold up his end of the bargain. He doesn't SEEM like he'd betray us, but dwarves are hard to place I'm finding. Well, if he does stiff us, then perhaps I can tell future King Alistair (that's ~~so~~ strange to write!) to take that into consideration before trading with the dwarves. I'm not going to say hang them out to dry, but I'd rather know sooner than later if we're going to get soldiers here. If not, we can just be on our way and not let the darkspawn get any worse on the surface. But, in the meantime it's a bit of skullduggery and some information gathering. And, if I can manage, finding a way to get one of those little pink naked rabbit-things. Nugs, I believe they're called? Leliana gushed about how cute they were while we were browsing the market, so I think it'd be a nice surprise. The hardest part will be teaching Mr. Kibbles that he can't eat the poor thing. He tends to be a bit impulsive when food's at play.

Entry 92

I like dwarven style, I love their architecture, and there have been...a few dwarves I like. Overall? Annoyingly obtuse, greedy little gremlins! Harrowmont got me to do his dirty work and clear out the ~~entire~~ Carta hideout (which was an incredible endeavor that I really could go on about if I didn't want to rant about dwarves instead!). Now he wants us to go into the Deep Roads and find their lost Paragon, who vanished years ago. Into darkspawn-riddled tunnels.

What do we really have as an army? The Circle, but not as many mages as we'd like thanks to Uldred's treachery. Arl Eamon's soldiers, but they're just not enough to combat the entire darkspawn army. The Dalish are skilled, but few in number.

The dwarves could be a united kingdom that sends a significant portion of their soldiers. It might double the amount of soldiers we have. I don't think I can afford to just leave..but this venture seems like suicide. Or at the very least a fool's errand. I think it best if I take just a few of us into the Deep Roads. Shale for certain; Wynne as well. We'll need someone with true skill in Creation magic. Mr. Kibbles, naturally; and I think...

I don't want to take Leliana. What if we die? I don't want her dying as well. But would she even accept me asking her to stay? Would she be hurt? I don't want to upset her, but I also don't want to risk her life.

I can't do it. I don't think we'll die, but I don't have to worry about the darkspawn taint. She does. Wynne and probably Sten do as well, but...I guess I'm biased. Alistair can't come either; he's the lynchpin of Arl Eamon's strategy in the Landsmeet. Now I just have to stock up on supplies, and...just go into the birthplace of darkspawn. Easy! Oh, if only.

Entry 93

I don't know how the dwarves do it, their forays into this dark place routinely. Magic from Wynne and I lets us see comfortably..comfortably being a rather poor word to be honest. It's hardly comforting seeing how high the ceiling is, or how decrepit some of these pillars have become. Or the growths of twisted taint-flesh left by the darkspawn.

At least we've got Shale; no threat of darkspawn taint and strong as the stone around us. Somehow, I think we'll need that strength. Oh, and we have a dwarf! That drunken one who ranted at us from across the tavern. It's a long story, but he's actually Branka's husband and wanted to come. Huh, I guess it isn't that long.

He's a shockingly good fighter, or at least an effective one. He uh..has a tendency to 'lose control' in a fight however. Not from fear, just ah..well, I won't. Mm. As long as he stays downwind. On the bright side, he's more entertaining than Sten! Though I can't help but feel Sten was a bit miffed being replaced by an alcoholic axe-swinging lunatic. Sorry!

Entry 94

We've encountered more than a few golems down here. For some reason they've all attacked us; none even tried speaking. Just grunting and growling...are they like Shale? Or is Shale special? I'm not sure. Maybe they think we're darkspawn? I wonder if they can sense the taint, and mistake me for one? It wouldn't be the first time; I don't know how that Chasind fellow back in Lothing was convinced that I was one of the darkspawn. He shouted and screamed at me the whole time I was trying to calm him down! Poor guy though; he was clearly mad from losing his friends. I wonder how he could sense the taint?

Ooh, I apologize if I'm a bit scatterbrained Mr. Journal. Probably should've opened with this, but I'm a ~~bit~~ woozy thanks to a rather nasty headwound I took on account of a collapsing pillar. My magic helped soften the blow, but I'm not able to sleep for the next twelve hours or so; Doctor Wynne's orders. She says I could have problems waking up... I say it's hard to not sleep when we've found a nice cozy spot in the dark to rest for a little bit. Then again, I'm usually the one on guard first since I can sense darkspawn nearing.

I'm going to stop writing now. I feel like I'm rambling. I think I'll watch the lava flow nearby. Dwarves do like their lava.

Entry 95

We found the strangest thing passing through an old outpost from the looks of it. A sack, freshly bloody yet cold as ice, filled with severed limbs. A note was attached to it too, written in dwarvish.

Oghren said the note said it was part of an elven ritual, something that a dwarf Shaper was trying to figure out. Part of me wants to just leave it be, but if it's something of significance that even one of those dwarf librarian-types wanted to figure it out, then I think we should try to see if we can find the rest of the body parts. Apparently, the creature itself (based on what the note says) is a fickle, but not unreasonable being. At least, that's what the Shaper was led to believe. Worst case scenario, we simply kill it if it proves to be something we'd rather not let loose. With all the foes we've faced thus far, I doubt this one will be any different.

Entry 96

We found a dwarf in the old ruins of Ortan Thaig. He claims to have been down here for over five years, scavenging and eating dead darkspawn. He can't stop shaking, and all I sense of him is madness, despair and the overpowering presence of the taint. I don't know how he's survived; darkspawn blood is pure poison. The poor man is barely even there mentally; though he's alert enough to know how far he's fallen. I wish there was something we could do for him, but he refuses to even entertain the idea of leaving his cave.

I'm just surprised someone, anyone could live down here, cut off from everything else. How did he not die from the taint? I always heard if you get it, then you're a dead man walking. Some quicker than others...

If that's what you become when the taint starts to overtake you, then I see why Wardens come here to die in battle. That's no life; that's becoming a creature. Mindless, senseless, just... It scared me to look at him. To know that's what will eventually happen to me, to Alistair. At least, if we don't do anything about it.

I deigned to mention this earlier, but there was a mage in Soldier's Peak. A Warden named Avernus, alive back during King Arland's days—and still alive. Somehow, he's lived longer than most men even with the taint, and while he was hardly in good health, the taint hadn't overtaken him yet. He was a blood mage, and did terrible acts to prolong his life, but as he claims it was not that, but his experiments on the nature of the darkspawn taint that allowed him to keep living. I chose to let him live in exchange for helping us mend

the Veil..and so he could continue his research. No more sacrifices, but anything short of that I told him I'd allow.

I know why I did that: I don't want to die. If there's a way to live, to not fall victim to the taint then we should know it. How many great Wardens, otherwise in their prime had no choice but to face their Calling and die in the dark? How much more good could they have done had they not had their lives cut short? And how many had found new purpose in their life, but didn't get to live long enough to truly appreciate it? Call me selfish, but I see no reason to die fruitlessly if there's another way. Besides, while I abhor what Avernus did in his research, killing him won't bring those he sacrificed back. He can atone by finishing his experiments, so at least their inhumane deaths aren't in vain.

Well, I suppose that dwarf really got to me for me to dredge up those thoughts. He is exactly why I didn't want to let Leliana come with me; just the thought of her, pallid and greying in eyes while her blood turns to poison is too vile a thought to bear. I honestly don't know what I'd do if she were faced with a fate like that. Probably something she wouldn't approve of.

Boy, I've really gotten a dour side to me haven't I? Maybe it's also the caves; I love a good overcast sky in a leafless forest, but I never liked total darkness like this. It brings me to a dark place of my own.

Entry 97

We found the true nature of these bloody body parts we've come across. They were parts of a demon, one who's been physically brought to our world. They felt drawn to an altar as we passed it, so I investigated.

I don't know what it was about this demon that gave me pause. It was a demon of pride, one of the most powerful types I know of. The same type of demon that possessed Uldred and brought havoc to the Circle. But..it seemed as if it was content to observe. Perhaps because it was physically here, it felt no need to torment us mortals? Maybe it knows that if it were to attack people openly, it'd be hunted down?

I don't know, but I chose to bargain with it. Wealth for freedom. We need the coin, and...I suppose I considered that worth it. I want to say that I don't think it will cause much harm, but I refuse to lie to myself, or be a hypocrite. I..chose to be rewarded in exchange for letting a demon go free. I'm just thankful that the others were busy searching for a way across a chasm cutting us off from the rest of the thaig; I don't think any explanation I could give would suffice for them.

Am I becoming jaded? More open to dark deals for my own ends? Part of me can't imagine the old me, from my Circle days ever making such a deal. Perhaps I had more sense back then, or perhaps I believed the templars a little too much. Maybe I'm right however, and this demon is content to watch the world. What could be wrong with that? Isn't that what spirits do through our dreams?

Entry 98

When you think of a place called 'The Dead Trenches', what do you see? Deep chasms with nothing, not even light showing how far down they go? The dumping ground of an entire city's dead, filling great pits with the bones of the fallen? The reality is even worse, if what Oghren says is to be believed (and when he's talking about dwarf stuff he's actually fairly articulate).

Darkspawn have made the place their home of homes; an entire city filled with their ilk. How many are there? Hundreds? Thousands? Branka had her entire house with her, we have, well. Us. Perhaps if she survived that place, she cleared out enough darkspawn for us to have a chance. Or if not, maybe we'll find evidence of her demise before we have to risk charging in ourselves.

I don't like thinking about my death, but I can't help but think of all the things we've done, this might be the closest I come to it. Maybe it'll be what does me in. If it does, if..if all that's left of me is you Mr. Journal, then I'd just like to say that I don't have any regrets. I got the chance of a lifetime; something few mages get: the ability to see the world and do as I want, as mundane people can. There's so much more I want to see, but if desire could make it so, then I'd be in my tower, with my skeletons working spells as much as I like. Except now, I'd want to have part of that tower dedicated to someone very special, so they'd feel right at home. A certain someone, who's really helped me feel like I'm worthy of the task I've been given—or at least capable of living up to it. Oh, forgive me if this is too sappy (I don't think I'll ever be able to read this entry in retrospect if I do live) but I just want to say thank you, Leliana. Thank you, and I love you.

Entry 99

I guess I'm not as much of an atheist as I thought. We saw it when we got to the Dead Trenches. The archdemon, from my nightmares standing before us, leading on a sea of darkspawn. Their torches against the blackness below was like looking at a hellish version of the night sky, and the archdemon itself..imagine a dragon, but rotting and screaming in both hatred and agony. No longer breathing fire, but pure mageflame, and as big as a castle keep. I don't think even if I had four mages with me, that we could conjure a spell suitable enough to even bring it down, let alone slay it. If that army makes it to the surface...

We'd better keep moving. We found unexpected allies here in the form of the Legion of the Dead, but even us working together, there's many darkspawn in the way. Plus, these Legion soldiers are..well, very insular. It's an alliance of convenience from their end, it feels like.

Entry 100

Scouring our way through this city, it's clear to me that the dwarves deserve far more credit than they're given. They fight tirelessly to defend their home from the darkspawn—and by extension, all the world. They do it without the boons granted by being a Warden, and they do it despite having lost nearly their entire empire to the fiends. As far as I'm concerned, they should be granted the same privileges as Wardens, along with some support via soliders, supplies or something to make this fight easier. It is a true Blight right now, but how worse would this have been had they not been keeping the darkspawn at bay until now?

We're finding ruins long abandoned, tablets detailing the last of these defenders who've not even lamented their solitary status as the first bulwark against the darkspawn, but merely accepting it. Certain death, so casually embraced... I wish I could understand what they do, to not fear their own end.

Entry 101

<The edges of this page are crumpled, as if gripped tightly, and the handwriting is rough, as if written by a shaking hand.>

I never really thought about how the darkspawn keep replenishing their numbers, or how they look almost human. Or almost dwarven. I never really wanted to know; now I can't ever forget. To think, that thing— we fought used to be a dwarf, a woman; reduced to a massive, ravenous... I can't write about it. Not yet, not here. I'd rather become an abomination than one of those. I'd give myself to a demon rather than let the darkspawn capture me and..make me that.

I doubt Alistair knows about these things. Maybe I can muster the strength to talk about it once we return to Orzammar. Now, it's onward, to find Branka and see just what she's done. The further we've come, the more it seems like she's committed atrocities that may make even Uldred's crimes pale in comparison, for at least he was possessed by a fiend twisting him into what he became.

Entry 102

Branka is dead, by our hand as the vector, but by her own obsession as the cause. As it turns out, the great secret of golems, of the Anvil of the Void is equivalent exchange. A life for a life; a man of stone or steel requires a man of flesh to exist. So it was that Caradin sacrificed countless dwarves, at first volunteers but later any who were sent his way to create the dwarves' ultimate weapon against the darkspawn until he too was forced into an eternal body, living until this day. We met Caradin, who by now simply begged for an end to his work. Branka couldn't accept that, so she left us no choice. Now she's dead, the Anvil is destroyed by my hand, and Caradin has received the end he so desired.

Perhaps it's hypocritical of me, to destroy something like the Anvil simply because it could be abused. Blood magic is forbidden by the Chantry because it can be used to control others, and yet I use it freely, and even helped a blood mage friend in the past.

I suppose the difference is... I don't think there is one. I considered keeping the Anvil; golems are fierce fighters against the darkspawn, and the more we have of them the better our odds are by far. I just, I couldn't do it. Caradin had lived for ages, a figure from the time of ancient Tevinter and the first Blight! But all he wanted was an end to what he had wrought. He practically fell to his knees, begging for us to stop Branka from using the Anvil once more. I couldn't refuse such an earnest, desperate display of knowing despair of someone who knows the Anvil all too well.

Oghren took things rather well, at least. I suppose he already made his peace with Branka's loss, but I still can't imagine what that must have been like. The entire way here when he wasn't making crude jokes, it was always Branka this, Branka that. He truly loved her, like I love Leliana. I couldn't kill her, no matter the circumstance. Oghren is a stronger person than I am...or someone who's been broken. I can't tell.

I think we did a good thing here. Perhaps not the wisest course of action with respect to the Blight...but I suppose I'm not as much of a pragmatist as my magic suggests me to be. Maybe Leliana's influence is rubbing off on me? Even if there was no Caradin however, I don't know if I could've supported Branka. Not after she admitted she -let- the darkspawn take her people and turn them into those...things. If I ever start to become like that, to think such

sacrifices are worth it then I hope someone stops me. As much as I fear becoming Tranquil, it'd be a mercy compared to living life as what Branka became. Her crimes were unforgivable, her high goals for the dwarves unable to wash away her indelible actions.

It definitely feels like things are getting heavier. Larger stakes, and the confrontation with the darkspawn growing nearer by the day. We've seen the marching army now, led by their general; soon, we'll have to face them head-on. How many people will we lose? How many faces that I've come to know, to care for will be burned on a funeral pyre?

It's not good for me to dwell on matters like this. Right now, I want nothing more than to leave the Deep Roads, go back to Orzammar, get this chapter of our journey done with and hug Leliana until my arms fall off. Maybe then I'll feel a little peace. I hope the dwarves take this crown Caradin made as proof of his favor, otherwise I just might cast a Blizzard spell in the Assembly chambers. Let's see how dwarf magic resistance works against ice storms.

Entry 103

To serve a woman chosen as an icon among her forerunners

One's life trusted to her, one's very soul.

Greatness is demanded, it tears her mind asunder

Until naught is left but blind obsession, her heart grown cold.

She serves her people, but sacrifices her kin

Chasing suits of iron, only seeing their strength over men.

Love and family, bonds forged eternal are worse than forgotten

They are spurned, thrown to darkness' embrace as a child misbegotten.

Woman's flesh warped by unholy taint, a monster in face she became

A reflection of her Paragon's soul, now one in the same.

Entry 104

So, about what I said...you know, the whole 'Blizzard in the Assembly chambers' thing? Turns out Prince Bhelen is that much of a sore loser to make me actually have to do it! He had a whole crowd of supporters draw weapons in the chambers after we delivered Caradin's crown to Harrowmont. I admit, I may have gone a little overboard with throwing a Death Cloud spell in there too, but I had a -lot- of frustration towards backhanded dwarf politics that sort of just came out there! Good riddance to that duplicitous bastard, though I do wish he had survived the chaos so he could've stood trial—if only to further rub in how much of a failure his coup attempt was.

It's not normally in my nature to be vindictive like that, but I think I'm near my wits' end with this whole army-gathering business.

Thankfully Harrowmont is keeping his word; we'll be getting dwarven allies for the Blight. And Legion of the Dead soldiers thanks to a productive meeting with the commander, Kardol I met in the Deep Roads. That was unexpected, but hardly unwelcome—some of their soldiers fought as hard as Shale back in Bownammar!

The best part of all though, was getting back to our allies. Leliana, Alistair, Sten, Zevran, even Morrigan were welcome sights indeed! I think Alistair actually had to pry me off of Leliana, heh. Or rather, pry us off of each other; I felt her squeezing even through my armor. I can't wait until we're back under the sky together, feeling that wonderfully biting cold of the Frostbacks on our way to Redcliffe, where hopefully we can put this Loghain business to rest quickly. Just, not too quickly.

Before we confront the darkspawn, I want to spend some quality time

with Leliana—even if it's just for a day or two. A chance for us to simply enjoy the moment, and perhaps talk seriously about what comes after. I want it to be with her, but we should have an idea of what we're actually going to do once we're not running from darkspawn and 'Regent's Men' all the time.

I feel like drawing something, and there's plenty of room but honestly? I'm just so exhausted after the Deep Roads and this whole dwarf king business that I think I'm too beat to be that creative just yet. I'll add something nice next time Mr. Journal, I promise.

Entry 105

Our camp's become rather crowded these days. In addition to our motley crew, we've got several representatives of the dwarves tagging along to Redcliffe, as well as that traveling merchant Feddic who opts to follow us more often than not. I'm sure he's pleased about the items we'd had to trade after the Deep Roads; I know I am! Coin galore; so much to spare even after restocking on supplies and paying for a little T.L.C. for our equipment! Plus, I always like getting the chance to talk to Sandal. For a guy who can only say one word, he's rather eager to have a chat!

This is what I wish things were still like for us; just us on the road, figuring out what the hell to do while meeting new and interesting people. This shift to dealing with heads of state, being a representative..it's really not who I am. Alistair should be doing this, honestly! He's the one who's going to be put forward for king after all, it'd be good practice!

Entry 106

I'm glad Oghren wanted to come with us. He's an absolutely disgusting man, but at the same time he's just... I don't know, it's like he helps ground us all on this grand quest to stop the darkspawn from overwhelming all the land. He's blunt, shameless and surprisingly easy to talk to; it's a good breath of fresh air. Well, figuratively. Some of the smells coming from his tent at night are worse than the rotting dead. I think he's actually pickling fish in his pack!

I think part of it is also the fact we're a bit similar, in one part at least. Oghren coming to the surface is a lot like me leaving the Circle; we were both introduced to a world far beyond what we knew, able to experience it without the baggage of our old life following us around for the most part. I know it's made me a better mage, a better person; I hope it'll do the same for Oghren too. Or, if nothing else get him to drink less.

Or drink better quality ale. I should buy him some mead or lager the next time we're at a tavern, this lichen swill he drinks is like fermented dirt.

Eugh!

Entry 107

Oh, I think I'm going to cry writing this I'll try not to! It's just that I never expected to have such a sincere conversation with Morrigan before. All this time I tried to be friendly to her of course; she taught me much about magic not of the Circle, and she has been a valuable and persistent ally. But it always seemed like when I spoke with her about personal matters, she didn't seem too interested unless it was just retelling what her mother had told her. Yet today, after I gave her a mirror I thought would go well with her penchant for gold she approached me just a little while ago. Awkward just like me yet far from shy, she called me a true friend, even comparing me to her sister.

It looks like I'm failing the 'no crying' bit Mr. Journal...I'll keep this brief. I'm just really touched Morrigan thinks that about me. The feeling's definitely mutual after that! I hope we get to spend many more days together, traveling the world to see all we've heard about. Funny enough, like me she's been shut off from the world beyond until recently; no Circle, but even more distance from society at large. I suppose that's one reason why we may align so well.

I should turn in early though. Redcliffe is just on the horizon, and from the sight of all those campfires he's gathered most of his men. Time to put on the hat of Ms. Warden Representative once again..hopefully - now there won't be any major hurdles Maybe we can intimidate Loghain to stepping down? I know it won't work, but I can dream, can't I?

Entry 108

After just a quick conversation, mostly about our plans and where the incoming dwarf soldiers can go in Redcliffe we're off to Denerim. Last time we went there, it was an ordeal to stay hidden lest we draw the attention of guards or worse. Now, we're walking right through the front gates with Arl Eamon's personal guard accompanying us the whole way. I wonder if we'll get stopped at the gates? The Arl's a respected man, so I don't think Loghain could just do that. Right? What if he has us attacked on the way? Alistair and I can warn against darkspawn, but we can't really predict an attack by men.

Though, Zevran doesn't believe that we'll have any issue with stealth attacks. He says that there's no way he would stage an attack on someone like the Arl with their guard around them like this; he'd wait until the Arl got to his destination, then watch the place for a week or so before moving in. I suppose that's good; we'll have a solid week after arriving before assassins come in!

Maybe we'll be fortunate and the Landsmeet can just begin right away. We can bring up the allies we've gathered as proof we're just focused on the Blight; besides, we have the letter that elf Berwick had back at Redcliffe as proof he was hired by someone working for Loghain. Plus, there was Jowan's...well, it's probably best to not bring him up by name. That could look bad if they dig into it.

Entry 109

I just had a thought: if Alistair becomes king, does he still remain a Grey Warden? Wardens are supposed to forfeit all lands and titles, but that's something he'd get after. Does it still count? It's not like he wants to, the man hates the very notion of being in charge! But it's for the greater good, so would that be allowed? Then again, even if it wasn't, there's no one to stop us is there?

I just hope that once he takes the throne he doesn't want any help from me with it. Don't get me wrong, I'd help with whatever he asked! It's just, if he asks, then that means -I- have to learn how to do court..stuff. I can barely handle being the Warden representative, can you imagine me trying to be an advisor? Not to mention the fact that I'm a mage. People would flip their lids if they found out a mage was advising a Warden king!

I wonder what will happen to Queen Anora in all of this? She's Loghain's daughter, but by all I've heard she loved King Cailan. Is she supporting her father's coup? Or just caught up in it? Almost certainly the former, but it never hurts to go in without preconceptions. Still, that's going to be hard to argue, that Alistair is better for the country than Anora. She doesn't have blood rights, but she has done a fine job ruling. Alistair, well..he's got a good heart. And...

Alright, perhaps this Landsmeet thing won't be finished so quickly then.

Entry 110

I wonder if we can move around Denerim freely once we get there? I'd love to go by Wade's armor shop again; he always was so fascinated by some of the raw materials I brought him that he's never had the chance to work on before. When we left the last time he was almost tearing up at the thought of not getting anything else to work on. I wish I had his passion! His business partner could learn a thing or two about that level of enthusiasm.

Ooh, or maybe the Wonders of Thedas? I was hoping to get some Silverite runes for my sword in preparation for the coming battle with the darkspawn. They really seem to hate the metal, and I'll take all the help I can get. After all this, I don't want to die to some darkspawn who decided to wear padded armor that day!

Entry 111

There's no type of person I can't stand more than smug, arrogant types who think they're better than other people. Loghain and two others came by the Arl's estate shortly after we arrived. We were caught off-guard, especially me. I'm afraid I sort of let some words fly during the confrontation. Nothing much, you know...just calling Loghain a deserting regicidal coward and that smarmy prick with him a boot-licking gremlin. Honestly, I'm usually not that confrontational but I was just seeing red when he tried to tell me he was 'sorry' for what happened to the Wardens when they 'betrayed' Ferelden. How dare he say that when Duncan was doing more than he to make King Cailan see the truth of the darkspawn threat! If it wasn't for the fact that it's Loghain, capable and skilled war veteran I might've wanted to wallop him good right then and there. And don't even get me started on that arrogant, beady-eyed twat with him, -or- his little 'Ser Missus Daisy' running with him like a lost kitten.

Sorry Mr. Journal, temper's just running a little hot. I just got the chance to break away after that encounter, and came straight here to write. As an aside, the room I'm staying in? It's better than even the Senior Enchanter's chambers back in the Circle! Good linen sheets, thick rugs and a firm mattress with a servant that comes in to make sure it's all clean and the fire's being tended to. I feel almost embarrassed that I'm getting this level of luxury! I hope everyone else's rooms are just as nice; after so long on the road, this is Heaven! I'll bet Leliana's happiest most of all; she can handle herself on the road just fine, but she really does seem at home in the lap of luxury. Watching her look around the estate when we got in was like watching a child at a sweets shop. At least, when I wasn't doing my own gawking. I guess it never really set in that being an Arl means you own a ~~lot~~ of land, and the things on that land! It was always just sort of an academic thought, you know?

Entry 112

Arl Eamon wants us, me in particular to go and chat up nobles to get a feel for the Landsmeet. Why me? He doesn't want me to actively participate in the Landsmeet, does he? I'm just the anti-Blight lady! Plus, I don't know how to talk to nobles. 'Hello, Mr. Royal-Noble, I am seeking a message to ask of'

See? That was me trying! Put on the spot like that I just blab and lose my senses. Leliana could do it with her eyes closed, but..well, that's a thought. I wonder if she could give me some quick coaching on how to not put my foot in my mouth? Maybe I can take her with me, or maybe she can do the talking! Then again, Ferelden nobles might not like an Orlesian voice talking to them. Shame, I could listen to that voice in my ear all day..oops. Come on Zir, stay focused!

Entry 113

We were out in the market for not more than three hours, but when I returned to the Arl's estate I find that that miserable little creep Howe has kidnapped Queen Anora, and I'm to go and rescue her. It makes sense, I know..it's the best way to find out what she knows, but, well first off: I'm a bit of a known quantity. I can't just sneak in, even with disguises! Second, I'm not very good at sneaking in general. I should've told Arl Eamon the Circle basement story. Though I doubt it'd change his mind; for some reason he trusts me greatly. I suppose I did save his life, but that wasn't just me! I just followed the path already lain out by others. Brother Genitivi, his knights, others..it's not like I did all the work myself! For all that he's done and what he's risking I suppose I can't really argue the point though, now can I?

I just wonder how much of an ally Queen Anora could be, with the whole 'put Alistair on the throne' approach we're taking. If she wants to betray us, or get us captured somehow this would be a rather effective way to do it. I suppose I should trade out my armor for something a little more subtle, shouldn't I? Or at least not as clanky. It's funny; I complained all the time when first getting used to wearing armor; after the Deep Roads? After all the times a Hurlock's axe scraped against my shoulderplate, or an arrow that hit my back just scraped my skin after the chainmail slowed it down? I don't think I could go back. Though, most of those blows were because I'm sort of hard to miss in a fight. Will you attack the one in the back throwing magic bolts, or the one who's swinging a sword, blowing your allies up while channeling spells of weakness and entropy all around herself?

Heh, I guess I am a pretty good fighter these days. I just hope I don't start getting overconfident; I know I'm no master. The honest truth is your average darkspawn is just brutal, can't feel much pain (if any) and has the advantage of numbers. I might be able to take a few one at once if I'm careful, but I had some tough fights against even one dwarf back in those Proving. I'd rather not find out how me on my lonesome against say, five Denerim guards would fare.

Entry 114

I think, as lucky as I've been to have found Leliana, I'm just as lucky to have gotten so many loyal companions. Every one with us, I think at this point I'd trust with my life. Even Zevran, especially Zevran after what happened on the way to Arl Howe's 'new' estate. His old ally from the Crows showed up, offering him a chance to return, no questions asked. Zevran chose to fight with us over a chance at getting his old life back, the life he constantly talked about fondly in our time around camp. That took much courage for him to do; courage that I hope I have if I ever face a similar choice. I'm glad I chose to bring him along for this—especially since without him I likely would've not seen how intricate that trap the Crows set up this time really was!

Anyway, I just wanted to write while the encounter was fresh.

We're just about to turn the corner to the estate, and I hear quite the clamoring up ahead. It sounds like a riot waiting to happen; maybe we can use that to our advantage and slip by unnoticed?

Entry 115

Well, I should consider myself fortunate my pleading worked on my guard; they let me have you, Mr. Journal. Though instead of a quill and ink, it's a piece of loose hay and my own blood. Not that things are that dire! At least, yet. But I'd rather jot my thoughts down since I really don't have much else to do here.

So, to catch you up: Queen Anora was indeed rescued by us. Arl Howe was killed in the process, and a fellow Grey Warden by the name of Riordan was rescued from Howe's dungeons. All in all, jobs well done, right up until the part where the precious Queen decided to betray us not five minutes after meeting face-to-face for the first time. That tart following Loghain found us with a dozen knights, and any chance we might've had at convincing her of Loghain's treachery failed when Anora called a brigand. And a kidnapper!

It was just Zevran, Leliana, myself and Morrigan versus them all. I wasn't confident we could win without risking ourselves, so I surrendered. Mercifully, I was the only one taken prisoner; Loghain made the mistake of only ordering my and Alistair's arrest—and he's back at the Arl's estate. How glad I am that I told him to wait!

But I suppose that means it's just me here, in the dungeons of Fort Drakon, surrounded by hundreds of soldiers and who knows how many gates between me and freedom. I...I guess there's not much chance of me escaping, is there? I have magic, true; but I'm unarmed and unarmored. All it'd take is one good crossbow shot and I'm a goner. I hope the others managed to make it back safe, especially Leliana. I'd never forgive myself if I got her hurt.

I wonder if I could convince a guard to come near, just so I could get a weapon. If they don't have arrows, I could try something I did in a panic fighting Howe. He was a vicious, brutal foe that was cleaving right through my armor with that brutish axe of his. I just started channeling mana like mad, through my body as I do to focus my magic into enhancing my martial skills, and it sort of protected me, almost like armor. One blow of his struck my bare skin through my armor's mail, but it didn't go more than a little bit in. That blow should've hacked into my chest entirely, but it didn't. It was all I could do, and it was draining my energy faster than anything I ever did. But, if I could do that again just long enough to get some armor...

Maybe I should just wait. With luck, I'll be able to avoid torture or worse until the Landsmeet is over. I'm confident we'll come out the victors there; I just hope Anora doesn't try anything. We definitely can't trust her; I feel that she'd betray everyone there if it meant her own life.

If nothing else, I hope Loghain dies for what he's done here. How many of these people, reduced to broken, bloodied bodies were truly guilty? How could a man who had a legend almost as great as King Calenhad's own become so foul? From older men I've only heard great things about Loghain; even Arl Eamon himself couldn't help but speak fondly of his time fighting alongside Loghain, before all of this. If I ever get the chance to speak to him again, I'm getting answers. Why he betrayed King Cailan, why he's allowing this cruelty to run amok in what he calls 'his' country... I can't comprehend it. How someone could have that responsibility and just abuse it so flagrantly. I'm not saying I'd rule any better, but at least I wouldn't torture my own people!

I think I should leave it here however, at least until I've eaten. I'm starting to get a little lightheaded from all the bleedwriting.

Entry 116

I couldn't be more in love with Leliana if I tried. I don't know how she got past all those guards and frankly, I don't care—the ones we had to fight past to escape were all the easier thanks to her! I can't fully express just how happy I was to see that red hair brush past the entrance, but I'll have to figure out something I can do to repay her for this.

Anything she wants, really; I've got to think about that. What kind of gift is proportional to being saved from torture or outright execution?

I'm so exhausted, in all ways from that whole ordeal, I think I'm just going to go sleep now. I just wanted to make sure I wrote about how great Leliana is. Beautiful, skilled, charming, loyal, gold in mind, body and soul; worth more than all the coin in the world. I could go on, and I will after I've slept. Goodnight Mr. Journal.

Entry 117

It's exactly what I was afraid of Mr. Journal, exactly! I'm getting embroiled in politics at the highest level—no, people are asking for my aid directly! Asking for my support, even! What do they think, the mage lady who likes to raise skeletons and wants to live in a tower is going to be giving sound governmental advice!? Anora, with proverbial balls the size of boulders asked me directly to support her for being Queen. And then, Arl Eamon pulled me aside to discuss this! He's a good man, and he keeps asking me for my input. Why? Don't tell me he wants me to take an active role in leadership! Oh no, what if he wants me to be the new Loghain to Alistair? I'm not cut out for this!

Maybe, maybe if I just. I don't know what to do! What really threw me for a loop is what Anora said after she pulled me to the side after Arl Eamon and I were done talking (why can't we just talk openly, all at once!?). She started talking disparagingly about Alistair, saying he's not 'kingly' and all that. I blurted out after awhile, 'So just marry him and you both get to rule. Problem solved, right?'

Problem solved? **PROBLEM SOLVED?** She asked me to talk to Alistair about it. Marriage! I can't even begin to think. I-

I just want to curl up in a tiny closet. Small, with a little candle for reading light. Maybe a bale of hay with a blanket over it so I can sit on it. Put a barrel in front of the door with a little slot for food and water. Cakes and maybe some wine brought in. No talking, no people. I want to hide. But I can't do that, can I?

I've got to go and talk to Alistair now, about marrying a woman he's never met before. If I don't, Anora will keep pestering us for support, and if we don't support her (which I won't!) then she'll likely turn against us again. If she turns against us, Alistair may not be king. If he isn't king, we have a hostile Queen. Why is this marriage thing the only possible path now? What happened to just putting Alistair up on the throne?

Ugh..now I have to go talk to him. I should've just asked Leliana if she wanted to dip off to get a room at an inn for an evening before coming back here...I'd take fleas and scratchy sheets over political intrigue any day.

Entry 118

Sorry if I'm a bit rough with writing. I've never had a hangover before. I've also never been drunk before. Er, was drunk. Not that drunk at least.

I talked to Alistair, about Anora. He picked up on it quick; reacted like I did. I don't blame him, it'd terrify me to marry her too. I'd rather marry Leliana. Anyway. Alistair agreed to do it. Right after, he wanted a drink. I said I'd go with him to get one, so we talked to the castle cook. It turns out Oghren had been keeping a whole barrel of cider in his chambers, so we helped ourselves.

If you think sober Alistair is fun to talk to, drunk Alistair (Drunkistair?) is on a whole other level. I just about soiled my drawers laughing! No shame, that man; it was glorious.

Oh, we talked about everything under the sun. Duncan, Eamon and his silly walk, worst animal Morrigan's shapeshifted into, our futures...especially our futures. If things play out as we want them to, as they need to, then he's going to be king. Me? He asked me to help him once he's taken the crown, and I think I wrote here that I'd do it if asked. Either way, that's what I said. I guess traveling the world with Leliana will have to wait for a bit.

It also means I'm probably going to be stuck with politics, aren't I? Or worse, actually ~~be~~ the new Loghain. I'm being trusted with the army side of things for the Blight; wasn't that what Loghain did for Maric? Noo...

I bet Morrigan is just laughing her ass off at this. King Alistair and his Warden right hand. She'll probably laugh until she gets old and Flemeth-like. Why couldn't Loghain just quit? You know, just call it in? At this point I'd let him just leave if it meant we didn't have to do all this. Actually, I'd rather fight three ogres at once, by myself than do this. Can we find them? I guess not. Bugger.

Entry 119

'Commander'. That's what Riordan, the Warden we found in Howe's dungeons called me. You know what's the worst part? I see why he called me that. The Dalish agreed to honor the treaty, but only because of my actions. King Harrowmont dealt with me, not anyone else in our group. The Circle, especially Irving trusts me since I'm one of their own. I'm probably the only person that can keep this ragtag group of fighters following the same orders..but what would those orders be? It's not like in Leliana's stories, much as I wish it was; I can't just say "Fight with honor!" and we win. No there's strategy, tactics, formations and troop composition and—

Sorry, I needed a moment there. I guess it's something I can't avoid. I'm going to have to actually lead people into combat. A lot of people. A lot of those people will probably die.

How do I do that? Give an order that I know will get some people killed. Even if it's the best thing to do, someone's still dying because of me. Someone innocent, I should clarify. If this was an army of murderers and villains, that's one thing. But these people... I never wanted to hurt anyone who didn't deserve it. I may use magic people call forbidden, but I never got it by hurting other people who didn't have it coming. And sure, I've made mistakes in my travels; I've probably done things that have hurt innocent people. But..well I don't want to do it knowingly! Or...I don't know. I need advice from someone who's done this sort of thing. Leading men, ordering them knowing what will happen. Who though? Arl Eamon is the closest I can think of, and the man has as much trust in me as he does any of his knights; I can't show him how anxious I really am about all this since it might throw ~~him~~ off.

I guess for the time being, we focus on the task at hand. Now, it's following up on a lead Anora gave us; apparently Loghain's doing even more ignoble acts in the Alienage. I had wondered why it was sealed off; what could he be doing that he doesn't want anyone to even potentially see? Is he just wholesale slaughtering elves now?

Entry 120

We'll set out to the Alienage tomorrow; first, because it's a bit late in the day, and second, because Arl Eamon wants me to get measured for armor. Apparently, a mage walking into the Landsmeet wearing templar armor is seen as a bit of a faux pas, so I'm to get something made more 'Wardenesque'. This armor's served me well, so I take a bit of offense that I'm to get freshly-crafted stuff instead simply because it might upset some frou-frou noble. But, just for this once I suppose I'll wear what they make me. Apparently that Wade fellow I donated some materials I found to volunteered to make it once he heard it was for me; I'm surprised. A man with that level of smithing skill could get any job he wanted! So, sure; since it's from him, I'll wear it. They told me the armor should be ready by the time we get back from the Alienage; I don't know if that means they think it'll be quick or slow. I guess there's only one way to find out..please let this Landsmeet be over soon!

Entry 121

The Alienage looks worse than the ruins of Lothing, give or take a few buildings still standing. Looking out right now I see elves sleeping in muck barely covered by ragged cloth and pieces of broken wood, feral dogs running around and fighting over scraps of meat, and notices plastered all around condemning any elf to death who dares have something as simple as a sword for self-defense. How can Loghain allow this? These poor people are barely living above animals, and this is right next to the central district of Denerim itself!

This plague that's talked about, I have my doubts about its existence. For one, the healers handling it are Tevinter magi. As in, all the way from the Imperium itself. There's absolutely no way they came all this way just to offer healing free of charge. The guard hasn't said anything about them, yet an elf I spoke with just now said they and others have

complained. The guards then, are likely complicit in whatever these so-called healers are doing. I think it's time to take a look at this healing house they've got set up and see what's what for ourselves.

Entry 122

There's no easy way for me to get inside the hospice without causing a scene, but I did come across a rather curious lead. A blind templar has been in the Alienage, poking around for maleficarum. He's found none, but he has the sense that the abject despair in this place is being caused by something malevolent. I'm inclined to agree; Morrigan and I both have picked up the presence of some presence. It's almost demonic, and I think I know where it begins—or at least, where we can start looking. Perhaps this and the plague are linked?

It's strange, working alongside a templar like this; though I suppose it's no different from our fight in the Circle. If nothing else, he's a nice templar for a change.

Entry 123

I'll keep this entry going as a running log of what we've uncovered thus far. It seems like it'll be difficult to keep track. So far, I've seen:

- Blood that's fresh, yet smells spoiled and unclean
- An orphan woman that's ranting about the 'bad men' and how they attacked a nearby orphanage during riots that happened here
- After watching the stray animals for a time, they seem to avoid going near the orphanage. Mr. Kibbles also doesn't like when we go near the door

After sharing this with Ser Otto, he's convinced that the orphanage holds further clues on the source of this malaise. He's also insisted on accompanying us, even though he's blind. I tried to talk him out of it, but he's as stubborn as Sten can be. I'll do my best to make sure he doesn't get himself killed. I never got this obsession with risking one's life unnecessarily. I mean, if there's no other choice, sure; but there is here!

Entry 124

We found no answers to what's caused this plague, only the source of at least some of this despair. Demons had taken root; my guess is the killing during the riots weakened the Veil enough for some to slip through. Perhaps some of the orphans had latent magical talent? The poor souls there must've endured nothing but trauma and misery their entire short lives. And now, Ser Otto is among them. I wanted the foolish man to stay outside for this exact reason! There wasn't any need for him to die, but..well, he made his choice. I only wish I could've acted sooner to stop that damn pitchfork.

At this point, I don't see any other way around these Tevinters than confronting them directly. Well, not barging in! Leliana thinks she can find a way to slip inside the hospice from behind; I told her to shout if there's any problems. I'd rather not break down doors in this downtrodden place, but I don't want her suffering the same fate as the elves who've vanished.

Update: I knew they were up to no good! They had healthy elves trapped in cages, and a note said even more were taken down the nearby alley elsewhere! Openly taking slaves in Ferelden's capital; this is exactly why I don't talk about how I enjoy studying Tevinter. People would think I agree with this barbarism! No, it's time to hunt these people down. Hopefully we can find the elves before they're taken away for good!

Entry 125

Tevinter slavers at the heart of it, sanctioned by Loghain no less. This was such a big operation that an actual magister was here overseeing it all! How could Loghain do this? Every single thing I see or hear from others that he's done lately is just as bad as anything the Orlesians did! He had people, locked in cages like they were nothing more than meat. We've got an actual letter with his official seal on it, allowing the Tevinters to freely capture slaves in the Alienage.

And in exchange for this letter, I let the man leading this 'expedition' go free. Maybe they didn't get any slaves in the end, but a man like that would try doing it again somewhere. Is this another situation like the demon in the Deep Roads? My benefit, at the expense of others down the road? The thought about him, so casually referring to capturing people as a 'profitable' endeavor...it's sickening.

At least the elves aren't even worse off now. I can't believe this level of squalor is allowed to exist in the capital; it'd take so little effort to give them a better life. At least helping them fix their homes and sending a few guards to clean up the actual filth in the streets! It's shameful that the nobles here allow this to happen. I'm not surprised crime is as big a problem as it is in Denerim these days if this is ignored by those in charge. Maybe once Alistair's king he can do something about it. I know he hates this as much as I do.

Entry 126

I had a realization earlier. Riordan is our most senior member of the Wardens in Ferelden, but he's meant to be in Orlais. Alistair will be king; he won't be able to be involved in the day-to-day of Warden activities after this is all over. There's just one other person left after those two.

Is this why the Arl has been involving me so heavily? Knowing that I'll be the de facto leader of the Wardens in Ferelden? I can't even begin to imagine what that entails. Wardens are a small group, but what do we do after a Blight's over? Mop up stragglers? Help rebuild? Go to our fortresses and watch?

I suppose there's no escaping duty in some form or another after this, no matter what. Aiding Alistair, serving the Wardens here..it's coming for me whether I like it or not. I hope Leliana won't mind that.

Entry 127

Begrudgingly, I went to speak with Anora. If she's going to be our ally in this political play of ours, I should find out what I can after all. Not much light was shed on the Landsmeet, but I've got new insight into what may have happened with Loghain.

As Anora says it, Cailan and Loghain never fought harshly. In the end, Cailan always came around to his way of thinking. Apparently, their disagreement over the Blight was the first time Cailan refused to back down. Loghain is a proud man, one who's been given much by King Maric in the past. As he sees it, he's been granted great responsibility, so he must make sure what he was put in charge of watching over is safe. -He- must do it; no one else. Cailan wanted to ally with other nations, and if I had to guess Orlais was chief among them thanks to it being right next to us. For Loghain, the combination of

being challenged by Cailan and the subject of that challenge was likely too much. He felt his ability to ensure protection slipping, and the rest played out in awful consequence. So we're dealing with a man who feels like he really must do whatever is necessary to not lose control, so he can protect Ferelden. Even if it means selling his own citizens into slavery, or all but driving the sword through his own king's heart.

The Landsmeet begins tomorrow, and my new armor's completed and ready to go. As much as I don't like the idea of being the official Warden representative, it is rather well made, I must admit. And if the Landsmeet doesn't remain civil, then it'll likely come in handy.

I've asked Zevran to stay close to Alistair while we're there, and Leliana to stay near me. Both out of sight as best as they're able; Arl Eamon has his own guards and the rest of our group can look after each other, but I want to make sure quick hands are with us. I wouldn't put anything past Loghain at this point. Plus, if Leliana is near me, I can make sure she's kept safe as well.

Entry 128

There is joy in self-sacrifice; other people's happiness becomes your own happiness, and their success becomes your success.' Wynne said this to me just now, and I felt it worth writing down on its' own. I hope I never truly understand what that feels like, but so much coming up is uncertain. It's something to contemplate, if nothing else. As long as I have my friends, my friends and Leliana, then I'll take whatever else comes my way.

Entry 129

Is this why the Wardens are known to be a dour lot? At the end of the day, knowing that their duty comes first in the end, no matter what? Loghain is defeated. By all the gods that may be out there, I faced him in single combat. You have no idea how afraid I was, staring him down as I was. Not of him, but of how much was riding on our confrontation. The Landsmeet had sided with us, but he refused to back down. Ultimately, it came down to his will versus my own.

I was wild with panic the entire fight. Focused panic; the kind that was driven by a battle for survival. If I had lost, what would've happened? Alistair arrested or outright killed on the spot, all my friends, Arl Eamon, -Leliana- condemned to prison or worse. The darkspawn would proceed unchecked, and the country would've eventually fallen to ruin utterly. I thank that presence back in the Breilian Forest for

teaching me their skills, for if I didn't have them I think I would've resorted to anything to win that fight. Even with all that I've learned, all that I've become I barely won.

But I did, and Loghain lost. He lost his rule, he lost his title..he lost his old life. Just like Alistair did, just like I did. He's a Warden now, by my own order. We only had three in all of Ferelden, with one being practically indispensable because of who he is! Having another one, someone who is compelled to fight darkspawn even if they run, who will have no life but beating the fiends back..we needed that.

It cost me Alistair. He, and I cannot blame him for this, rejected my decision. He rejected it, and he rejected the Wardens. I'm grateful he hasn't rejected the crown as well, but I fear for what Loghain's survival may do to him. I want to talk to him, but I'm afraid of what my presence might do.

He calls being a Warden an honor, and in some ways it is, but not all Wardens came from good backgrounds. Daveth was a pickpocket at the very least, and he was still right there with us. Who knows what Duncan may have been? Besides, Riordan supported the idea. I trust his thoughts on the matter, since he was right there with Duncan at his very own Joining. If anyone out of all of us knows what being a Grey Warden means, then it'd be him. Still, I can't help but wonder if this was an unearned mercy to Loghain. He deserves to die for what he did. Selling his people into slavery, allowing a wretch like Howe to run amok, betraying his king and condemning thousands to die at the hands of the darkspawn..he can't atone for that. Not ever. But I suppose his remaining life spent in service to the order he tried to kill is a form of punishment.

Unfortunately for me, my duties don't end here. Anora has named me commander of all of Ferelden's armies against the Blight; why? I have no idea. I've told people before that I am no strategist, but here I am, in charge of the first and last line of defense for Ferelden. I want a drink, but I'm too scared to lest it disrupt my concentration. I need my wits for what's to come. And I need all my remaining friends with me. I know one thing; I didn't get here alone, and I won't remain here alone for very long. I just hope I've made the right choices. But if I haven't, then I'll have to live with them, won't I?

Entry 130

To share camp, to walk alongside this man...it's like I'm in the Fade, but I know it's real. When I look at him, I feel angry, but I also feel...I don't know. Not pity, not sadness, just...weariness, perhaps? So much energy, so much hate has been spent on him; now that he's no longer a threat? It's just, empty. I know this, and yet I still get the urge to tighten my fist when he's near.

It's going to be about a week's journey from here to Redcliffe; reports from scouts have said that the darkspawn seem to be marching north from Kocari in force, going straight to it. With luck, we'll get there before they do. If not, then I just have to hope our forces are prepared.

Entry 131

Leliana was the first to break the ice with Loghain. I'm shocked anyone did, but I suppose it makes sense. She was raised in Orlais after all; that, and her life as a bard likely taught her great restraint. Still, it was so strange hearing him just talk. Not as a general, or as a desperate, furious despot denouncing us at the Landsmeet.

I'm not upset. I want to be, but at this point what good does more antagonism to him accomplish? He's lost, and he is, as bizarre as it is to write, our ally. We've already had some roving wolves attack us, so we've already fought together. In my wildest dreams, I never would've imagined that the man I spoke to at Ostagar, that tall, armored warrior of legend made flesh I was practically gawking at would be fighting as my subordinate—and instead of me being starstruck, I'm just...even now, I don't what I feel about this.

Entry 132

It's a good thing that I've become more martial; or rather, that my first instinct is to go for my sword and use magic more indirectly in a fight. Otherwise, I may have set Loghain on fire earlier this evening. I saw him, sitting at the campfire. He was where Alistair usually sits; I just found myself standing before him, glaring down at him. He rose, asking me something. I honestly can't remember what it was. Our words grew more tense, and the next thing I can remember, I had knocked him back and had his blood on my gauntlet's knuckles. I don't even remember who stepped in; someone did, although I was done. I think that was just all my anger I had towards him just unable to resist an outlet somehow. Again, good thing I've trained myself to be less of a 'magic from afar' type of mage, since I was acting on pure instinct then.

Entry 133

Again, I found myself talking to Loghain today. Seeing the man here, who's himself seen so much, been such a part of recent history makes it hard to resist. If it's not Orlais it's something related to King Maric, so that's what came up. Hearing him talk about Maric is like hearing Alistair talk about Duncan. As Loghain tells it, the man was the Maker on earth—or the closest thing to it. How can a man like him hold someone like Maric in such high esteem and not feel shame? Or is the history surrounding Maric not as spotless as it'd have us believe?

I don't know what to think about all that anymore. Nor do I think it's really important right now; the Blight has to be our main focus. I'll have time to wrestle with all of this later.

Entry 134

How strange, fate works. When we were nearing the main road to Lothering, I sensed the edge of the horde. They were moving into the bannorn I believe; perhaps hoping to attack Redcliffe from the north to catch them off-guard. It won't work if Riordan made it there alive; if he didn't, then we have bigger problems than Redcliffe's defeat no doubt. The problem is, with the horde between us and Redcliffe, we can't go there yet. Unless we sneak south, to circle around it.

We also ran across a man fleeing brigands. This man, of all the people I could've ever run into was an Ostagar veteran—King Cailan's second, no less. He was run through before we could get to him, but not before he told us of sealed records and valuable relics of Maric's he was in charge of watching over. Relics that may still be at Ostagar. Information, that may still be at Ostagar.

If we were to sneak south to avoid the horde, it'd be an extra day of travel at most. Is it worth it, to recover a sword and some documents? I don't know, but...being this close to the place that started it all, it's hard to resist it. I find myself drawn there, if for no other reason than for closure's sake. Us arriving one day later, versus us arriving on time but without what could be invaluable information for our freshly-appointed king. How utterly fitting then, that Loghain is with us as we prepare to return to the scene of his greatest failure. The Maker must exist, as nothing short of divine foresight could've planned this.

Entry 135

We found nothing earthshattering at Ostagar. At least, at this point nothing we found really matters all that much. Cailan was considering divorce, and marriage to Empress Celene of Orlais. Arl Eamon was persuading Cailan to divorce Anora because she hadn't produced an heir yet. Cailan's body was strung up by the darkspawn, and Loghain remained as unrepentant as ever in the face of it all. I'm impressed Wynne was able to restrain herself as well as she did. If Alistair had been here, I expect we'd have made two funeral pyres.

I know it may seem odd for me to care about properly paying respect to Cailan's body, especially in light of these revelations about him and Celene. I raise the dead to fight for me; I use bodies freshly fallen as fuel to produce a mere explosion. I drain their life essence to fuel my own, and much more.

As I've likely written before, for me, necromancy is almost... I suppose if I were to have a religion, that would be it. When I raise a skeleton, it's to serve a purpose once more. If it's a foe, then that foe may find some small element of redemption in fighting against the darkspawn or other foes we face. If it's an ally, then they get a chance to continue fighting, or at least some small measure of vengeance for their demise. So I do care about the bodies of the fallen, in my own way. But for Cailan... so much happened that didn't need to. The man just wanted to smile and wave to citizens, let his wife rule and be seen as a good king. I think he was a good man, if a bit soft in the head at times. He won't know we paid our respects, but it at least let us get something from this excursion. Though for me, I got my satisfaction in getting to kill the ogre that killed Duncan again. It had to have been the same creature; I found his weapons buried in its' chest.

I gave his dagger to Leliana, and kept the sword for myself.

Leliana may not be a Warden, but as far as I'm concerned she's more than shown her worthy of carrying the weapons of a man like Duncan. A good man, someone who wanted to do what was best for everyone, no matter how hopeless it may have seemed.

At least the horde's moved on by now. There were just stragglers here, so I doubt we alerted the main body. Now let's get to Redcliffe, and figure out how we're to defeat this army and the archdemon. I hope Redcliffe's invested in catapults, because if not this may be a rather short battle.

Entry 136

It's settling in now; the same feeling I had at Ostagar. Seeing all those soldiers milling about, getting into formation; all the whispered words of unease and attempts to bolster confidence. Their commanders walked through their ranks, always as if it was just a casual stroll in the woods. At the time, I was in awe of them. How could they be so calm, so self-assured in the face of the darkspawn? But now, here I am walking amongst soldiers that I've recruited, doing the same things. Casual talk, smiling, nodding to everyone I recognize. I realize that it's not that those commanders weren't afraid; they were the most afraid of all. They knew just what was going to happen; how many of those faces they saw that day would be still the next. They had to shoulder the burden of fear so those who trusted their lives to their leadership could have a chance at victory.

I won't lie, Loghain has been useful in this regard. For a man consumed by pride and madness before, it seems the Joining has cleared his mind somewhat. He and I have actually had civil conversation; mostly about Anora or some aspect of Ferelden politics that was benign enough to discuss. I've also asked him about leading men in battle, which is where this insight has come from. It's so simple on paper, but in the heat of a fight I can see how so many things go wrong. Perhaps even so wrong that one might think leaving one's king to die is a preferable alternative.

I don't think I can ever forgive Loghain, but he's taken his sentence well. If he continues to serve the Wardens like this, then I can accept that he's been dealt justice. I'll have to. All I ask now is for the sheer dumb luck to survive the coming battle. I fear I won't have much time to do what I wish to do in the future no matter what, but I'd enjoy the chance at the very least.

Entry 137

I've made a choice tonight, a choice like the one in the Deep Roads; like the one in the Circle Tower. I've bargained with forces I do not truly understand, for my benefit. It's a failing of mine, I think; I don't think it's me seeking power, but opportunity rather. In this case, I want to ensure I can survive the battle tomorrow. A Warden's life must be paid to slay the archdemon; who's to say Loghain and Riordan will survive to that point? They may not, and then it would be me. I'd defeat the Blight, maybe; in the process however, I'd die. No strength of arms nor force of will would prevent that. All my plans, all my hopes for what comes after vanish in an instant. So I made a choice, one that I hope I don't come to regret. Morrigan's ritual..apparently the initial reason she came with us. Why Flemeth saved Alistair and I. What purpose could they have in saving the archdemon's soul? Or rather, the Old God it used to be?

It can't be them wishing to cause another Blight; that'd be as simple as digging through the Deep Roads to find another Old God. There were allegedly seven; we've only have five Blights thus far. So what then? Morrigan claims it's simply preserving ancient history, but I can't accept that. There's got to be some other reason.

Perhaps this is the best choice. If I refused her offer, she may have found another way to accomplish it. This way, I can keep watch over her. She says she's leaving forever after the battle, but I won't accept that. If she does vanish, I'll find her. I want to make sure this isn't going to be a mistake of mine. From a certain point of view, I've made many such mistakes already... I wonder if Loghain has these same thoughts. While I am nowhere near as lost as he was serving as Regent, I don't think that I can claim to be nothing like him. I'm fortunate that he was willing to 'do the deed' with Morrigan at least; I don't have to look Leliana in the eye after having lain with Morrigan now. I don't think I could've.

Entry 138

This is the last time I'll be writing before the battle; we're looking out at Denerim, able to see the wings of the archdemon flapping overhead as the city burns. Everything we've done, all the battles we've fought before have led up to this moment. I hope we've done enough. If we haven't, then to whomever finds this, please know that we did everything we could to right our wrongs. I'm sorry that this burden may fall onto you now, but perhaps you'll have better luck than we. Or at least, less traitors and mad tyrants mucking things up.

Oh, and take care of Mr. Journal here. He's been a loyal friend to me, as much as any that I've written about in his pages. Thank you.

Entry 139

It's over. At last, it's actually, really over. No more Blight, no more darkspawn, no more archdemon. Well, no more darkspawn running amok on the surface. They fled as soon as the archdemon died; who knows how many are in the countryside now. Our hands will most certainly be busy for quite some time.

True to her word, Morrigan vanished right after the battle was over. By the time I came to, she was already gone. I don't remember much of what happened...just a lot of light and pain coursing through me. I thought I was dying right then and there. We lost a lot of people, but none of our little group. Leliana in particular was only a little injured, thank whatever gods are out there.

I've definitely got some kind of injury with my leg; healers have bandaged and cleaned it, but I think the archdemon bit me or something. The pain's manageable with magic, but still reducing me to a limp for the time being. I imagine cleanup will take a few weeks; I'll do what I can to help, but if no one asks... I think I'm taking a break. Watching for a change, instead of diving head-long into the fray. I still can't believe it's over, but for the first time in a long while, I can sleep without nightmares.

Entry 140

My leg's getting better; I can walk for a little bit without needing a crutch. It shouldn't be long before I'm more or less better; the same goes for Denerim. It was damaged heavily, but what's surprised me is how many of the army's remained here to help with the rebuilding. Even some of the dwarves, despite the fact they can't stop eyeing the sky like it's going to swallow them up if they aren't careful. Everyone else is here too; Oghren, Sten, Zevran and the rest. I would've thought they'd welcome the chance to go their own way now that our journey's over. It's truly touching that they care that much about honoring our friendship to stick around. I don't know what I did to deserve such friends, but I'm grateful.

I suppose nothing comes without cost, however. As fortunate as I've been to have these friends, I've lost one. I tried to speak to Alistair today when I saw him walking out of a meeting in the palace. He didn't even look my way. He didn't even flinch when I called him by name. I know it hurt him, that he probably thinks I betrayed the Wardens just as much as Loghain did by recruiting him, but can't he see that the Wardens needed every hand they could get? If anything, it's shameful of him to denounce the Wardens simply because a man he hates is in their ranks now. Isn't it better to let people who wrong the Wardens atone by serving them?

Loghain himself at least has the good sense to keep at a distance. I think he's grateful to the duties he's been assigned in the Wardens; mostly with recruitment. It gives him something to do, something tangible to focus on. I'm likely soon to be joining him; I'm told that we should expect a missive from Weisshaupt any day now. Most likely a request for any information on what happened; particularly why none of us died slaying the archdemon. Somehow, I think the truth is not the best thing to relay.

Entry 141

Warden-Commander Zirdalen. That's what the missive was for primarily. No ceremony, no fanfare, just a letter with official markings declaring it originating from the office of the First Warden. One little letter, and now I'm Duncan in all but name. What does a Warden-Commander even do, really? I've read the letter, I know the name of the duties, but what; do I just..do more of what I did during the battle? Keep looking for allies? Sit at a desk all day? This is the last thing I would've wanted to do..but Alistair has his own duties, and Loghain can't be trusted with something like this. Not yet, at least. I suppose I'm really the only one here who qualifies.

Maybe I'll luck out, and I can have the Wardens located at Soldier's Peak once more. A nice, quiet, secluded castle with several towers to hole up in. That sounds nice right about now. Maybe Leliana wouldn't mind the seclusion? Or the biting cold?

Heh, that right there is another way we're breaking ground, I suppose. A Warden-Commander with an open lover not of the Wardens... Well, if they insist on giving me this burden of leadership, then they'll have to accept I'll be doing it my way. Which is really going to be Duncan's way (much as I can remember) with attachments, I suppose.

I think I'll be getting a drink to ruminate over all this..and some books on leadership. Or at least how to not lose one's mind.

Entry 142

Alistair's coronation and royal wedding has been announced for a week from today. Leliana thinks it's a good idea; a distraction, or at least something positive for the people. I'm inclined to agree, but it'll mean I'll have to be there most likely. A public face, one dealing with Alistair no doubt. He's doing well from what I see; from afar, that is. He still hasn't sent a letter or said a word to me since my last attempt; I'm not even sure if he's talked to any of our mutual friends—other than Arl Eamon and the like, naturally. I don't want this to be the way our friendship ends, torn asunder because of duty. I wish Wynne's words hadn't rung true like this. It's just such a silly thing to be holding a grudge like this over!

Maybe the coronation will be a good place to try talking to him again. If nothing else, it'll be a chance for the rest of us to catch up since the battle. I've been so busy with letter writing and the logistics of reforming an entire branch of the Wardens that I've barely even had time to spend with Leliana. Fortunately, we make do. It certainly helps that she's taken up an offer to be Ferelden's interim Orlesian Ambassador; because of my dealings with Orlais' Wardens it only makes sense for us to stay in contact during the reconstruction. Small victories!

Entry 143

A new king, a new royal couple..and an end to an era for all of us. I said many goodbyes today; more than I realize right now, I believe. They were all hard; Wynne in particular I feel was truly a final goodbye considering her 'borrowed time', but the worst was Alistair. We didn't argue, nor did we even raise our voices; we simply talked. A few minutes, not many words said. Every time the word 'warden' crossed his lips he said it like it tasted bad, and in the end the best we could do was wish each other well. I had thought I'd be in Denerim for some time, to help with him settling into the crown. I think now it may be best if I work to tie things up here, and turn my attention to the Wardens.

There's ~~much~~ more to do after today; by royal decree, Queen Anora has ordered scholars to research the darkspawn and report their findings to the Wardens, as well as granted the Arling of Amaranthine to us. Which means, as Warden-Commander I'm now in charge of that. An Arling. I'm now in charge of a whole chunk of Ferelden. Wasn't this how Loghain got into nobility? Royal decree granting him ownership of land? Do I have to now be called 'Arlessa'? Somebody wake me up from this fever dream...

Maybe it won't all be bad, I suppose. Leliana's sticking around, and so is Oghren of all people. Loghain too, and as much as it may be strange working with him, I can't rightly turn away a fellow Warden when they may have insight to offer. Plus, Mr. Kibbles has been a staunch ally through thick and thin. I think I might flex some of my newfound influence to get him a palace of his own built—for a mabari, that is. I don't want to get ostentatious!

It looks like this is going to be life for me from now on. Meetings with important people, administering the Grey Wardens of Ferelden, and praying for every free moment I can conjure. Perhaps I can use the pretext of recruitment, or scholarly research of the darkspawn to visit the Circle soon? I had a wonderful talk with Irving at the coronation, and it sounds like he'll be looking for a successor soon. I don't know who could replace him, but I'd be happy to be a silent observer in those meetings. I miss the old mage camaraderie.

I also think I may need a new journal. You've been stuffed with so many extra pages Mr. Journal, but your binding is starting to tear. I'll find a trusted bookbinder and get them to make you all nice and pretty, then lock you somewhere safe. Don't worry; I think I'll have much to write about still—I'll put it into a friend for you! Maybe something with a red cover, to go well with your rustic brown. For now though, thank you very much for holding together through all we've been through. It's so heartwarming to be able to read through all these pages and be reminded of just how far I've come.

Farewell (for now).

Zirdalen, Warden-Commander of Ferelden