Mendera - Empire

Chapter 1 – Cataclysm

"The Chalné had seen many cities like Garanesh fall to ruin as the cataclysm approached, but this time he had a plan, this time it would be different"

The city of Garanesh on the planet Optilion had enjoyed over a billion years of peaceful existence. There had been periods of unrest and a few major redevelopments, but on the whole, for most of the people who lived there, it had been a place of peace and tranquillity. Then two days ago The Chalné had ordered the very heart of the Temple of the Flame to be removed and taken on board the giant eight mile long space craft, Leviathan. There had been no warning for the eight million inhabitants of the city, or the other hundreds of billions of inhabitants of the other six thousand or so planets of the Great Optilion Empire. There had been rumours that the Multiverse was coming to an end. The Genova, the Angels had been seen hovering in ever larger numbers around The Temple, but no one took the non-corporeal creatures seriously. Several respected scientists had noted that no new stars had formed in their stellar nurseries for several million years, but a cataclysm ? No, no one believed in such things. Until The Chalné packed up everything of value and seemed to be fleeing the planet.

"Sikush, we should be leaving." Said Herusher.

The Chalné looked at the last surviving Holy Warrior and thought he looked worried. Herusher, his only remaining immortal warrior had never been through a great switch before, in fact no one had except him and Minraver the only other eternal and of course Chlo. How long had it been since the last one ? Eight hundred billion years or so for each age of the Temple, and they were now in the 24th age. The numbers had long since become so large, that they had little meaning. He'd lost track of how many planets they'd moved the capital of the Empire to, and how many times they'd had to build a new capital city. Perhaps there was another way ?

"The army are attacking the city militia." Said Herusher.

Sikush had ordered Chlo, the intelligence that ran the Empire's data processing and much of its technology to cut herself off from the Empire two days ago. To the people and security forces of the Empire it was like losing one of their major senses, like being suddenly blind. At first they thought it might just be a mistake, but then the Arcadian guard had removed the heart of The Temple, and panic had set in. It wasn't that he was heartless, but there was only one thing that really matters and it was safely on board Leviathan. Yes, almost every living thing was going to die, but that was just part of the regular cycle of the multiverse and life would soon return in, all its wondrous variety. Sikush and the leader of his forces were stood on the highest tower of the Royal Palace and had a perfect view of an army attack raptor as it was hit by fire from below and crashed into the city's banking district.

"Are there any outsiders left in the detention centre ?" He asked.

The beautiful city in front of them was still largely intact, but the battle for power between the army and the militia was causing an increasing number of fires. Then the ground shook and a mushroom of fire rose into the air from the space port ten miles away.

"There are just two," said Herusher, "a dark magician and a mutant from the 1st rift."

Sikush had an idea and as he watched the highest building in the banking sector crash to the ground, he decided to have a look at the two outsiders. Over the past year or so several outsiders had come in from the rifts, claiming a cataclysm or apocalypse was approaching. At first they'd been ignored

and then a few had been killed by the militia, so they stopped coming. The two outsiders in custody had only recently arrived and had been arrested simply for being outsiders in the wrong place. "Let's walk across Lewin Square," said Sikush, "and have a last look at the city."

The Chalné moved his reality to the opposite side of Lewin Square from the Imperial detention centre and Herusher arrived by his side.

"We seem to have arrived after the battle." Said Herusher.

They had arrived outside the collector of taxes building and the detention centre opposite was also the headquarters of UM4, the infamous secret police, so Lewin Square wasn't a favourite place for the citizens of the city. A militia transport lay on its side in front of the detention centre and several badly burned bodies had been left lying around it. By the lack of army bodies, Sikush assumed they had won the encounter. As he picked his way through the wreckage he noticed a body he seemed to recognise. As he knelt down the young man in militia uniform managed to look up at him.

"Grorky ?" asked Sikush, "is that you Grorky ?"

There was little left of the man's left leg below the knee and his chest was badly burned, but he obviously recognised The Chalné and tried to speak.

"No sir, Grorky was my great grandfather. He served in the militia too."

As Sikush put an arm around the young man he died in his arms. He prided himself on knowing those who fought for him, but he had little memory of the man's great grandfather. Perhaps a memory of a smiling face, a man in line at a ceremony ? It seemed a poor appreciation of two generations who had served him. Once again Sikush thought there had to be a better way and the switch was the perfect opportunity.

"Stay down Sikush, there are armed men approaching." Said Herusher.

A handful of men had walked into the square and from their appearance they were looters out to see what they could grab from the ashes of the Empire. The Chalné was invulnerable to almost all damage, but like all guards Herusher wasn't going to let anyone shame him by attacking his Emperor. Herusher waved his hand in their direction and they were engulfed in a wall of flame, so hot that it turned them and the street furniture nearby into small heaps of ash.

"Sir. We should get inside !"

Herusher only called him Sir when he was stressed and as if to emphasise the situation a burning army raptor screamed overhead and crashed into a building a few blocks away. The doors to the detention centre were open, so they walked side by side into the building.

The entrance hall of the Imperial detention centre was the usual sort of waiting area of a public building. There were rows upon rows of metal chairs that were fixed to the floor and a few drinks machines along the walls, all festooned with adverts for junk food of course. Across one chair was just the torso and head of a militia officer. There was no sign of his hips or legs and he'd obviously been dead some time.

"This all seems to have happened hours ago." Said Herusher.

As they walked across the entrance hall they discovered another two dead members of the militia between the seating, but no dead soldiers. Once again it looked like the army had taken their dead away with them. There was now a power vacuum in Garanesh and it seemed the army was trying to fill it. They approached a long reception desk and walked around it.

"Animals," said Herusher, "they've become animals."

Behind the desk on the floor was the body of a pretty young receptionist. Her skirt was pushed up to her waist and her uniform had been ripped away from her breast. Herusher picked up her body and

laid it across the reception desk and smoothed her skirt back down to her knees. It was obvious she'd been raped repeatedly before someone had cut her throat. Herusher started wiping the congealed blood from her legs as best he could.

"Animals !" He kept muttering.

Sikush watched his oldest friend and realised that like all good men he was horrified at the army, who had always prided itself on its professionalism and integrity, being reduced to a mob in just two days. Herusher was good, as had been all the Holy Warriors and their families and of all the tens of thousands who had filled the Temple courtyard on Remembrance Day, and only one was still alive. Without the Arcadians he would have needed to hire mercenaries to police the Empire. Good men and women the Holy warriors had been and Sikush realised that was part of the problem. Ordinary men and women, even immortal ones, were too vulnerable to the everyday dangers of protecting the Empire. He looked at Herusher arranging the body and realised that for all his billions of years of experience, one good hit from a heavy blaster and he'd be dead. As to his being good ? That too might be one of the problems.

"I'll check the computer for the outsiders." Said Herusher.

They could have reached for Chlo and had her find the information. She may have cut off the city from her, but she could still access every computer in the Empire, but Sikush could see Herusher needed something to occupy him. The Holy Warrior ran his fingers expertly over the touch screen. "On level 3 Sikush, a man calling himself Elthriaxer, claims to be an architect. Arrived on a shuttle and started talking about the end of the world in a bar. The Militia rounded him up and put him here until they worked out what to do with him. The mystery is that Chlo has no record of him as a citizen of the Empire."

The building shook from a nearby explosion and some dust fell on them from the ceiling high above. Herusher continued searching the computer.

"Found her. Female mutant, no name given. Was picked up after she killed a merchant and was on level 5, but she recently killed two guards, so they have her in maximum security on level 12. She was down for trial and execution today, so it's been her lucky day."

Herusher looked back at the dead receptionist and Sikush wondered if any of them really could afford the luxury of being that personally involved in every death. Perhaps he needed to darken his oldest friend a bit ?

"Ok," said Sikush, "let's visit level 3 first."

One unique power the Empire possessed, that was granted by The Chalné was the ability to manipulate reality. Computer nerds had long ago realised that to move a file on a computer, you just have to change its directory settings. In much the same way The Chalné moved his own reality settings to a corridor on detention level 3. Herusher arrived next to him a few seconds later. "This looks fairly recent." Said Sikush.

Two dead militia officers were lying in the corridor and one of the cell doors was open. Obviously someone had taken the opportunity to rescue a friend. Organised criminals ? There were plenty of them on Optilion. As they walked towards the guard, their footsteps must have been heard and the noise hit them like a hammer.

"Hey, let me out. I'm here, in Cell 86, let me out. I have no water, no one has fed us in days." As the noise spread, more and more shouts for help filled the corridor. There must have been hundreds of people locked up in cells around them.

"We want this one." Said Herusher.

There was no grill or window to look through, but on the cell door was a screen showing the inside of the cell from four different angles. Inside, sat on his bed was a small man who looked just the wrong side of middle age. He had greying red hair and looked like what he said he was, an architect. Sikush felt for his link with Chlo and had her unlock the cell. There were two loud clunking noises and then with a gentle hum the door slid back into the wall. The lights brightened in the cell and they walked in.

"Stand before your Emperor !" Shouted Herusher.

The man calling himself Elthriaxer jumped up and stood blinking in the lights. Chlo was telling Sikush what his eyes could not. That the person in front of him was a long lived immortal, who didn't exist in any of her records. Sikush sat on the grubby bed and indicated to Elthriaxer to sit next to him. "So Elthriaxer, just where did you design buildings ?"

Sikush's hand shimmered and he was holding a large glass of water, which he handed to the man next to him. As he drank it there was another explosion in the distance and they felt the shudder and the lights briefly flickered. Elthriaxer looked anxiously at the lights.

"Don't worry," said Sikush, "we're good at power blocks in the Empire, famous for them in fact, the lights won't go out."

The man looked at him and his empty glass, so Sikush gave him another, and a bowl of fruit pieces. "I'm from Arcadia." Said the man.

"Sorry, but we haven't time for lies." Said Sikush

He held onto the man's arms and his own flesh seemed to melt into it. Elthriaxer screamed and tried to pull away, but his arm was now fully joined to that of The Chalné. Then Sikush withdrew his hand. "So you really are called Elthriaxer and you really are an architect."

The man had very white skin, corpse white some would say and he looked tired.

"You helped the demons rebuild The City of the Lost God and Neosto was so impressed he made you an immortal." Continued Sikush

Herusher tensed and glared at the man and Sikush realised that Elthriaxer would have probably been killed if the militia had learned of his history. Those who aid the enemy were given no mercy in Garanesh.

"He made me immortal so I'd be his slave forever," said Elthriaxer, "I've already rebuilt that damned city about four times."

Sikush had hoped to find an immortal warrior, but what he had found suited his purpose.

"You know what's coming ?" Asked Sikush.

"Yes, there have been no new bubble universes created for over a billion years and I've heard the rifts are beginning to shrink."

Elthriaxer looked anxious, and started fidgeting.

"How long until it happens?" He asked.

Well why not tell him ? Thought Sikush, it didn't matter now, the Empire was history and everything precious was now on its way to safety.

"The point where it all ends is still a billion years off, but in two hundred million years or so what's left will just be clouds of super-heated dust and plasma. Then it will all start again and new bubble universes will start to form."

The lights flickered again and the whole building shook.

"Come with me Elthriaxer," said Sikush, "and build for me. I can give you a permanent home, but you'll need to give an oath of allegiance to the Empire. Or we can take you onto the streets above and you can take your chances ?"

"I'm not stupid. I came to Optilion to find a way out of this dying multiverse. Of course I'll come with you."

There wasn't much for the architect to collect, just a few of his clothes that were strewn on the bed, and he was ready to leave.

"Take him on board, I'll go and see the lady in the basement." Sikush said to Herusher.

Herusher wanted to argue, but he knew better. No matter how many arguments they may have had in the past, they were always carried out in private. He held Elthriaxer's arm and they both vanished. Sikush felt for his link with Chlo.

"What's happening here Chlo? There are a lot of close explosions."

"The army appear to be using heavy bunker busters on the militia compound about five miles from you."

It was all going much faster than Sikush had anticipated, but the final end was always a mess and impossible to organise. He'd seen a lot of them, but his memory was mostly wiped with Chlo's once the final moment came. Where his memory ended and Chlo's began was uncertain and they had a strange, almost symbiotic relationship. Sikush moved his reality to a corridor in level 12, the basement. The lights were low and there was no sign of fighting. There were a lot of security doors between here and the upper detention areas and the army had probably moved on, or of course they were still on their way down ? He walked past rows of closed office doors and eventually came out into what was obviously the high security area. In front of him were three large metal cell doors, and only one had a green light above it, to show it was occupied. Then he noticed the blaster on the guard's desk, and the uniform jacket over the back of the chair. He sensed movement behind him and turned just as the jailer was about to hit him with an electric prod. The man recognised the Emperor and was obviously flustered.

"I'm sorry sir, we heard that you'd left the city, I had no idea...."

Sikush touched the man's arm and used a simple but effective calming control on him.

"There's nothing to worry about officer, you can return to your post."

The guard sat back in his chair and examined the screens in front of him.

"How bad is it sir ? Outside I mean." He asked.

Sikush touched the man's neck and sent him off into a deep sleep. Chlo could have calculated the guard's chances of surviving the next twenty four hours to several decimal places, but Sikush took a guess at them not being good. Let the man sleep for a while. He approached the cell, but didn't open it. The last thing he needed was for her to rush out and then having to chase after her. He looked at the screen on the door and saw a woman of about 25 or so, with long dark hair and an odd blue hue to her skin. The Empire had citizens of every shade of skin colour and they were often artificially changed to keep up with the current fashion, he seemed to remember that light brown was the current 'must have' skin tone. He looked at her athletic figure and decided hers looked the genuine article. He moved his reality inside her cell.

As he appeared she didn't move or speak, she just sat on the bed and looked at him through very dark eyes. The cell was small and in one corner was a toilet with no curtain around it, obviously privacy was impossible, even for female prisoners.

"Are you proud of how you keep your prisoners ?" She said to him.

He liked the voice, it was feminine, and there was a hint of something from beyond the 2nd rift about it.

"I've seen worse." He answered.

He continued his inspection of her and noticed she had on a tight knee length dress of local manufacture, so no clues there to her origin. When they entered Elthriaxer's cell there had been the scent of a long unwashed body, but somehow she had kept herself fresh. He sat himself on the bed next to her and took hold of her hand. There was no resistance, but he felt her tense. "Do you have a name ?" He asked.

Chlo began analysing the woman and Sikush wanted to handle this in a much gentler way than he had with Elthriaxer. Not that there were hours to spare, but he didn't want their first meeting to end in a brawl.

"Lurisiana." She answered in almost a whisper.

He now had Chlo's full analysis and one part of it was a shock, perhaps even to the woman herself, so he kept on with his questions.

"You know the end is coming don't you ?"

She just nodded at him and leant back against the wall. Without asking he had Chlo give him a glass of water which he gave to her. There was no haste, she sipped at the water.

"Where are you from Luri? Can I call you Luri?"

Chlo had told him the woman was mortal and in good health, yet there something in her eyes that looked older than her 25 or so years.

"I'm sure you know I'm from the rifts." She told him, "my mother was much like the people here, but my father was different, very different."

Yes he knew what she meant by different. Although she looked like a citizen of the Empire and her mother could have come from any one of the 6,000 worlds, there was also a lot of demon in her DNA. She was almost certainly quicker and stronger than the people of her mother's world and like so many misfits she'd ended up on the rifts. The rifts were seven dimensions between the reality of people and that of demons and had been fought over by both sides for, well forever. Did she know everything about her own makeup though.

"Have you heard the term Chinnura Luri?"

She tried to back away from him, but there was nowhere to go. She screamed at him, and it was no human scream, it was pure demon. She had enormous strength and started to crush the bed frame with her hand, he could now understand how she'd killed two of the militia guards. This wasn't how he'd wanted things to turn out, but he took the opportunity and merged the flesh of his hand with hers. She screamed louder and long sharp claws appeared on her hand, but she didn't attempt to use them on him. He held her until the rage subsided and the pretty woman with dark eyes was calmly sat next to him again.

"Can you always control it ?" He asked.

"When I want to."

Chinnura he knew were very rare. Sometimes the multiverse adds something extra to a soul, it adds a spark of something truly powerful and immense. Sometimes that spark is light, but in Luri's case it was dark, very dark.

"I went to a seer on the 1st rift," she said, "she told me some get a spark of god, but I got a spark of the devil."

It was an over simplified explanation, but he had to admit he'd heard worse. He didn't want to offer her immortality now, that would come later. He wanted her to come with him out of curiosity.

"Do you know others like you Luri ? Perhaps in hiding, who need a home."

She leant in towards him and he thought she was going to kiss him, but she pressed her cheek against his, and then nuzzled his neck. She pulled back and smiled at him.

"Yes, I know of a few, but the rifts are shrinking, they might die soon." He kissed her softly on the lips and there was no resistance. He hoped he'd found the first of a kind and that his half formulated idea just might work. "Will you come with me Luri, you will need to take an oath to serve the Empire ?"

She looked around the cell and then into his eyes.

"Are you going to try to drive the dark out of me ?" She asked.

The Chalné laughed and put his arms around her.

"No, I quite like the dark where it is."

"Then take me away from here," she said, "a long way away."

Sikush held onto her and transferred their realities onto his eight mile long Imperial flagship, the Leviathan, which was already at the edge of the Optilion system and heading into interstellar space.

He had intended to take her straight to her quarters, but at the last minute decided to take her to the huge centre bay of the Leviathan. The citizens of the Empire see the great pieces of technology like the eight mile long Leviathan and think they were designed and built by the Empire. In fact the Empire has developed little of its own technology and simply improves and adapts what others have invented. Being eternal The Chalné saw the best and most successful technologies in the multiverse, so why do your own development when you can copy from others ? Add unlimited power, a superb self-repair system and of course Chlo and you have the unbeatable technology of the Empire. "It's not a legend, it's real." Said Luri.

They were high on a gantry in the central bay of the Leviathan, which went right through the centre of the huge craft. At either end of the four mile long hole through the centre of the craft, they could see the blackness of space through the force wall. The bay was circular with a diameter of about two mile, with a flattened bottom edge. It had been designed with one intention, holding the entire Imperial fleet for a journey such as this.

"Yes it's real, I wanted you to see why we fight."

The bay was incredibly busy, with a constant stream of craft entering and leaving. Above them Imperial Raptors were moving into mooring bays for the great journey ahead and mile long mighty Hyperion, The Chalne's personal craft was gently edging itself through the bay entrance and wedging itself against one wall. In front of them though everything seemed quiet and the gantry they were on seemed to lead to a door with no guards.

"Are you sure you want me to go in there ?" She asked him.

In front of them was what looked like a giant boulder, or pebble almost a mile in height, which was in the centre of the bay and reached to the gantry way halfway up. It looked pock marked and blemished, as though it had been in space and struck my meteorites, which it had. There was no symmetry about the rock, but on its top and seeming to grow out of the rock itself was a small chamber.

"You'll be ok, it's important that you see this."

The door was unguarded and slightly open and Sikush took her inside the chamber. They were in what looked like a very old temple, and in the centre a large rock protruded about an inch from a large hole in the tiles floor. It looked what it was, a giant bung held in place by unimaginable forces. In the exact centre of the rock plug a blue flame started a few inches above the rock and rose up to about three feet high. Luri looked in distress and kept to the walls, but Sikush walked onto the rock and sat in front of the flame.

"He can't escape," he said to Luri, "he's trapped in here for eternity."

Luri approached him slowly and went down on all fours and seemed to be sniffy around the rock. Eventually she sat opposite him on the other side of the rock. Her natural curiosity had brought her here and he hoped it would take her much further.

"Is it the devil himself in there ?" She asked.

He put his hand into the flame.

"Hold my hand."

Luri slowly edged her hand forward and then when she could feel no heat, she firmly held his hand. She fell into a dream or a vision. In the dream she was at Gateway on the lowest level of the last reality that even Holy Warriors could survive in. There was no humidity, no oxygen, and the temperature was hotter than an oven. Nothing except an army protected by The Eternals could survive, yet coming towards them hundreds of miles away was a moving mass of creatures. Part insect, part mollusc and red in colour the creatures of chaos moved forward. There was no horizon here and no night or day, the light came from a constant red glow that seemed to come off the baked barren rocks themselves. Yet in the distance millions of creatures could be seen picking their way over the broken landscape. Some seemed to move on a great mass of tentacles and others on hundreds of legs. She looked to either side and saw the Holy Warriors spread out to either side, thousands of them in a long line going into the distance on either side. Not The Holy Warriors but the previous warriors used by The Chalné way back through the switches until the amount of time becomes almost meaningless. The Chalné means The Eternal in the old language of a long dead race from the forbidden times and he has had many types of warriors to defend whatever empire then existed. She as Mardoun held up her hand and her fingers glowed and a ball of pure white light grew and then hurtled off in the direction of the creatures. It hit the front row and instantly many hundred thousand of them crumbled to dust. Then the world seemed to go crazy. Thousands of miles away great fissures opened in the ground and huge creatures crawled out in their hundreds, then thousands, them millions. The whole landscape was alive and on either side she knew The Holy Warriors were sending off every offensive spell they had. No one seemed to worry about the proximity of the damage they caused and she felt herself scorched by massive heat and then frozen to near absolute zero, then a huge explosion would rock the ground below her. The creatures died in their millions yet kept coming and then in the far distance the ground shifted and from it came crawling chaos. She couldn't bear to look but neither could she look away as the formless impossible crawling chaos forced itself into existence.

"No !" Screamed Luri, pulling her hand away.

"That was a memory of Mardoun," he told her, "she died that day, but the crawling chaos was defeated."

"That thing is here ?" Said Luri and she looked nervously at the ground.

Was it too soon to tell her the whole idea he had, try to pull her all the way in ? She was going to be the first, his trial run and he needed her to willingly agree. How would she cope with immortality, did she have the patience to cope ?

"Luri I want you to help me guard this, be the first of a new elite group of fighters who will police the new Empire and guard the flame."

Luri moved to sitting crossed legged and moved her hand back into the flame. She stared at him for so long, that he thought she might have gone into a trance, but then she simply said. "Yes."

He'd been expecting a huge debate about her pay, access to the forbidden texts and much else, but none of that now seemed necessary. Tomorrow he'd take her to Qasit and carry out the initiation, but for now he'd take her to her quarters.

"You look tired, let me show you to your rooms." He said.

They stood and as held her he thought of the pain she would have to go through, but mentioning that to her could also wait for tomorrow. He held her tight and moved their realities to her quarters at the rear of the craft.

"Is this all mine ?"

The room they were in had a blue colour scheme and had been a VIP suite for visiting dignitaries of the Empire, but he'd decided that as they'd be on the Leviathan for some time, Luri would appreciate a bit of space and comfort. There was a comfortable seating area around what looked like a large picture window into space. All done by outside vision feeds and screen of course, her rooms were yards from the outer hull.

"Where do I sleep ?" She said looking around.

He laughed and showed her through a door into a bedroom with a similar large window and then on into a large study. She looked at him questioningly.

"You'll be on the Leviathan some time, you'll need space."

She never asked him how long and he wondered how she'd cope with learning there was still a billion years until that moment, when everything ceased ? Would she see it as an opportunity to learn and hone her skills ? He hoped so.

"This is fantastic." She said as she walked back into the bedroom and sat by the window. He reached for Chlo and had her put some of his favourite food and drink on the table in front of them.

"You'll need to ask Chlo for your meals, but you'll soon get used to it." He told her.

Luri asked for a plate of delicacies that she obviously considered to be a great treat and looked at the Optilion sun, now a very long distance behind them.

"Will many survive when the end comes ?" She asked.

"Very few. The people on board Leviathan, some Arcadians, the Genova and for some reason whoever is on the 1st rift, which always seems to get left alone." He answered.

Luri carried on eating in silence, and then stood and walked behind his chair and put her arms around his neck.

"I don't want to sleep alone tonight." She said.

On the common channel Chlo was asking him how long until he wanted to shift reality to outer world #448.7 and Herusher wanted him to talk to the clerics. Why was it always the damn clerics causing trouble ? He dealt with Chlo and shut off the constant chatter in his head. It had been a while since he'd been with a woman, too long, but there had been a lot to organise.

"Neither do I." He said, as he stood and kissed her.

It was a long hungry kiss between two people who'd both been far too long without intimacy. As his hand went to her breast he made a mental note to bring the desire, no in fact the need for intimacy into the plan. Luri felt behind her neck and her dress fell to the floor. He picked up the subtle scent of a woman who hasn't had a shower for a while, but he found it highly exciting. She wasn't wearing any underwear, so his fingers could go straight for the dark fur between her legs, as he pushed her back onto the bed. She suddenly tensed and held his arm.

"Are we being watched ?"

"No, there are no cameras here."

She relaxed and as he kissed her breasts he noticed the blue hue of her skin increase, this was going to be quite a night he thought. He moved down her body and used his tongue to tease and excite her. The perfume from between her legs was driving him crazy and as he pushed his tongue deep into her, he let himself completely relax. There was a lot to do, and the plan needed a lot of work, but that was all for tomorrow.

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