



banana (GM): The old man and the young man drink tea, brought by steady-handed servants; a strong and traditional flavour unchanged for centuries.

At least he looks young. White-blond hair, not salt-and-pepper like the other, and his grip on the bone china is firm. Look closer, and you'd see something odd about his skin. It's paper-thin, nearly translucent; only the bulk of flesh beneath preserves his dull copper hue. That fragile epidermis conceals, too, the sunkenness of his ancient eyes.

The older-seeming man tosses tea back like it's a shot. Some runs down his beard. "This damn thing never ends. What have you done to the Erskines?"

Young Man: "I've merely fortified their resolve."

Old Man: "And their walls. You're dragging things out. For the Gods' sake, why not fight or capitulate? More die every day!"

Young Man: The young man is puzzled. "And why should I do either of those things? The current state of events suits admirably, not that it was of my making."

Old Man: "I'm beginning to wonder."

Young Man: "So you've noticed that this sham, tearing itself to shreds, becomes unshambolic? I've always supported order and reality."

Old Man: "You have to stop this. You're the only one who can stop it either way."

Young Man: "You think you're giving me too much credit, my friend. Not at all the case. I won't give in to barbarism, and I won't fall into the trap of lifting the wrong finger. The killing *will* stop at a moment of my choosing- but not until enough have died."

Old Man: The old man speaks with calm venom; centuries' goodwill turned to spite. "How many is enough? Wildwood, Creed and Amity? Everything to the north and south of the Sea? The point of the Federation was to *end* civil wars and the rule of violence."

Young Man: The young man, who isn't younger, claps. "We did things your way for quite a long time. Seems only fair to let Chaos have its day." Summoned, the servants swap the table for one of shad roe and a soup entree. There's enough to feed a King. "This is not that day, but soon."

Old Man: "What are you planning? I'll stop you if I can."

Young Man: "So it's come to this?" The young man's the first one to yell. "You're taking sides- going to visit Mara and tell her she was right? Will you hand over the keys to the High Fucking Arcana and sink my fleet in blizzards?"

Old Man: "What- you're the one who's threatening-"

Young Man: "Quiet. Listen to me-" There's a brief altercation, and then it seems the old man has no choice. "Listen: you've failed and betrayed the world's trust. The sham was an ideal disguised as a compromise. I allowed it, do you understand me? I *allowed* it, and now- it no longer works. All I'm planning is to save the world."

Old Man: The old man considers debating prices, definitions, the rule of law. He can't; he's too old. "*..what's left of it.*"

Young Man: The young and handsome man, with the skin of a withered hag: "And that will be all the world, therefore."