

Characters Involved:

Enra
Xochi
Grael
Marlow
Renard

Minions:

Lorelei (Soldier)
Varden (Soldier)
Sligh (Archer)
Bordodus (Mystic)
Cromwell (Mystic)

Narrative Flow:

The encounter is split into two phases, with the first phase beginning with Enra and Xochi entering the ancient ruins near The Conclave camp, finding a captured Grael, and confronting Marlow and his Torminean footsoldiers, specifically two soldiers (Lorelei and Varden) and an archer (Sligh). During the fight, Marlow's negotiation insights are primarily Honor and Empathy; for more violent players, he uses wide-sweeping AOE attacks and unit-buffing effects to apply constant pressure during combat. When Marlow is defeated or negotiated with, Enra and Xochi are able to save Grael, marking the end of phase one.

Phase two begins with Renard ambushing the group at the ruins with reinforcements: Two mystics (Bordodus and Cromwell). Renard instantly 'revives' Marlow, fully regenerating his health and resolve while the Mystics spend a turn reviving (and partially restoring) any downed footsoldiers that they can. During combat, Renard can get Marlow out of sticky situations, using magic to heal and support the tankier and more defensive knight. Simultaneously, the more aggressive Marlow makes it difficult for Enra's group to reach Renard, who stands on high ground. Renard's negotiation insights are primarily Charm and Pressure; while he is primarily a support character, he can also pick from an arsenal of offensive spells to defend himself. Generally, the group must dedicate time to facing Marlow head-on in order to eventually get to Renard; pacifying or defeating both elites ends the second phase and ultimately the encounter.

Marlow and Renard:

Marlow and Renard, despite both serving under Ashlyn under a common cause, are very contrasting individuals. Marlow, being a Rhruvenist knight with a very strict set of codes, can sometimes struggle to get along with the more self-absorbed Renard; Renard, on the other hand, finds Marlow too 'boring' for his taste— an unemotional clump of bones. His obsession with theatrics can often place him as an outsider in The Order, where he prefers completing missions and tasks by himself, straying from the group whenever a chance to one-up them becomes apparent. While the more selfless Marlow follows Ashlyn with the hopes of saving the

Torminean people, Renard can sometimes become sidetracked. Their interactions between one another highlight the differences between their personalities: Marlow, the disciplined, stringent brute and Renard the comedic-relief, flamboyant mage. However, they still respect one another's abilities, having formed a fragile, though kindling bond throughout their service to The Order. Each of them have gotten the other out of dangerous situations time and time again and, perhaps out of either loneliness or duty, have found in each other a brother. Ultimately, they are foils that bring out the best in each other.

When Renard comes to Marlow's aid during the encounter's second phase, the phase transition dialogue changes depending on whether Marlow has been defeated or negotiated with. If Marlow has been defeated, he is pleasantly surprised at the arrival of his comrade, and their interaction is mostly teasing. If Marlow has been negotiated with, he is initially reluctant to join Renard's ambush, though Renard will eventually draw him back to reality. (See "**Phase Transition Dialogue**" for an interaction between Marlow and Renard.) During the second encounter, Marlow becomes much more aggressive (combat-wise) as a result of The Fog influencing his mind.

Upon entering the ruins

GRAEL

(Camera zooms in to show GRAEL tied up with MARLOW standing above him)

Don't you move another step Enra. Stay back.

MARLOW

More chain hunters. If Valmont could not stop you then I admit you've made it farther than most, but here is far enough. Beyond these trees, you'll find what you've come for, but how much are you willing to give up before you get there?

XOCHI

(Camera pans to show XOCHI and ENRA approaching GRAEL and MARLOW)

A Torminean knight, but he wears two crests: A rose, and another I haven't seen in centuries. Enra, be careful with this one.

ENRA

Let him go! We only want safe passage, we don't mean your Order any harm.

MARLOW

But we're all here for the same thing, are we not? We're outsiders in these ruins, passengers in its history. What makes you think that its gift is to be taken without trial? You may pass, but only if you prove yourself worthy of it.

MARLOW DEFEATED

RENARD

How many names did they give you? “The Unbroken,” “The Kingslayer,” “The Headsman.” I didn’t even ask for much: Just “Renard, The Genius,” would’ve gone nicely. After all, I’ve probably saved your husk more than anyone has in the last three centuries, old man.

MARLOW

Names are not asked for, they’re earned through trial and you are far late on your ambush. But it’s relieving to see you, brother...

RENARD

Three centuries of knighthood and you were bested by Two Silvarians and a Zolish freak. That... that one doesn’t even have a sword! And... is that a kid holding a slingshot?

MARLOW NEGOTIATED

RENARD

For all the jokes I make, I was serious when I told you to keep an eye on the alchemist.

MARLOW

These are not our enemies, brother. They’re a righteous company—

RENARD

—here for The Chain— Ashlyn’s Chain. Two Silvarian snakes and a cretin. They’ll say anything to get in your head. We swore an oath, have you lost your head already?

MARLOW

We swore an oath to do right.

RENARD

We swore an oath to our people— and right and wrong is not something they can afford. Remember why we’re here, old man. Remember why we go on. Now get up.

MARLOW

I’m sorry hunters. I mean no ill intent against you, and I trust that you do not either, as regretfully it appears fate is forcing our hands today. Perhaps there is a better way, but alas the world never waits to be cruel. I hope this will be quick.

Marlow Dialogue

Insight ranking:

Honor

Empathy

Logic

Charm

Pressure

Highlighted = Effective

Engage Dialogue

MARLOW

A student of life treks into the land of the dead. Whether you've come to track simple inquiries or to fulfill a greater duty that's kept you from having long given up, I hope you find the resolution that you seek. But not here, where even I have struggled to find relief, everyday, for a century. This is no place for you, young one.

Surrender Dialogue

ENRA

Then for the sake of those we still care about, we mustn't fight. What is right should never force us to pick. Perhaps the Chain can help us both.

MARLOW

You've impressed me, young one, where very few have. Seek out Ashlyn. Find the Chain. If its mysteries are to be unraveled, let it be in the hands of those who still believe in the good of this world.

Negotiations and Retorts

3 Empathy

2 Charm

1 Honor

1 Logic

1 Pressure

1. Empathy

ENRA

I know what it's like, putting yourself on the line to save someone— something— you care about, but now I don't even know if I'll be brave enough to keep going when everything goes wrong.

MARLOW

True death is being forgotten. If we're not fighting for those who will remember us, why fight? Whether or not we go on is not a matter of bravery, but will: Any man with armor and a shield can walk the unpaved path, but very few can find the will to crawl, to keep going by all means, even when they lose everything.

2. Empathy

ENRA

The truth about your people... There was no justice in what happened that day. Life is a gift, and no person should have the power to take it away, not from anything, anyone.

MARLOW

Madness is a cycle. As long as the sun rises and sets, as long as there is order, there is always a madness playing the idle thief. We cannot defeat it, but neither can it destroy us. That is why it is our mortal burden to suppress it, endure it, and pick the world up when it is broken because of it. Madness may be a cycle, but so is life.

3. Empathy

ENRA

I know what it's like to feel lost. All I remember from my studies was the isolation from my peers. It must've been decades for you in The Delve, thinking you were the last Torminean left, before you found your Order. I never thought I'd ever find my people either, but look at us now.

MARLOW

Before I was resurrected, the last thing I remember were the streets of my city strewn with the bodies of knights, monks, even children. I wandered for a century in the Delve with only that image in my mind, but I knew still in my heart that I was not alone. Those that are lost always find a way, as long as they keep looking.

4. Charm

ENRA

When I first started to learn cooking, I kept a recipe book for all my dishes. One day, I was making a salsa and ended up knocking the book into the blender. I ended up eating moss for three days as I tried to piece together the pages...

MARLOW

During the invasion, foot soldiers were lucky if they could even eat once a week. While they were taught to survive off river water and tree bark, we kingsguard feasted on fruits and steaks. Never had I ever felt so weak— so undeserving. Now, I can't even remember the last meal I had. The moment you put your mind to luxuries, you become weak without them.

5. Charm

ENRA

The crests on your armor must've been through centuries of war, but they look like they've been polished everyday. You must be a proud warrior, Ser.

MARLOW

There is no pride in war, young one. I've seen good men go mad in their armor, possessed by anger, their codes lost in blood. Do you think they were proud in their final moments?

6. Honor

ENRA

I never believed in weapons and my father knew that. So instead, he let me surround myself with books and plants. But everyday it seems that in order to do what's right you always have to step over someone else.

MARLOW

When you step into the fray, you'll find that all that is 'right' has a shadow of doubt and all that is 'wrong' has an ember of truth. Honor cannot live on absolutes. To do what is 'right', weapons are as necessary as a kind heart and strong mind—two things you already have, young one.

7. Logic

ENRA

My memory of Torminean history is quite foggy, but I know that your people once had a king long ago. Did you know him?

MARLOW

When I was first knighted by him, I remember sparring with his daughter and sons in their manor. The queen would disprove of my stringent training, but their father insisted they learn to wield. It was the last time Torminea ever knew peace—a short-lived golden age I would give anything to return to. He was my brother and not saving him was my greatest failure.

8. Pressure

ENRA

We don't want to fight you ser, but by no means will we back down. You can't stop all of us.

MARLOW

Not once for the past three centuries have I yielded my guard young one, not to kings, not to warlords, not even to this curse of mine. Three more centuries can pass and I will remain, so tell me: Do you truly think that you chain hunters will be the first?

Engage Dialogue

MARLOW

Look around you. These woods are perhaps one of the few lands in this world still untouched by war. There were fields outside my people's city just like this, where farmers flourished and children were raised, until chemists of your kind, the so-called pillars of reason, tore it from us. If you think you've the right to destroy more of what is not yours, then you are duly mistaken.

Surrender Dialogue

GRAEL

Then I ask that you grant me your word: Allow us passage and perhaps we shall discover our goals to be in alignment. There are too few honorable souls left in this world for us to fight.

MARLOW

I hope Ashlyn will hear your case, as I have. If with your words and consul we can avoid further bloodshed, then perhaps we have truly come a far way from the madness of our pasts.

Negotiations and Retorts

3 Logic

2 Pressure

1 Honor

1 Empathy

1 Charm

1. Logic

GRAEL

While you spent centuries practicing combat, I followed reason. Decades of toil taught me that we'll never be safe lest we master the world we live in. How will a sword save you when you stumble into a poison you cannot even name? Allow us passage, and perhaps I can uncover the true nature of The Chain.

MARLOW

I acknowledge your work, alchemist: Without reason and the will to learn, the world today would be that much more unpaved. But reason only goes so far in a world so strange. Thus, those that seek to understand everything often obsess themselves over unanswerable questions. That obsession then leads them to madness.

2. Logic

GRAEL

Be realistic, Ser. Tell me, is chasing after paracausal artifacts truly the smartest tactic in your book? Greater wars will come, and when they do, your soldiers will need someone to follow. Do not let pride swing your blade.

MARLOW

Indeed, a good leader knows when to swallow their pride and retreat. But not all wars are fought between armies. If Ashlyn believes that before us seeking out The Chain is a battle worth fighting for, then my soldiers and I are where we belong.

3. Logic

GRAEL

I know very little about Torminea's Blue Road; even during my studies such magic was scarce. Tell me: In the moments before you were resurrected after the fall, what did you see?

MARLOW

Some mention dreams of a vast sea and The Blue Lands just out of reach, others a narrow road under a deep blue sky, but I saw nothing. Only darkness— an empty void of silence. And I had never been more afraid. Perhaps there was nothing greater for my people in the afterlife and we were truly just souls woken from death and nothing more.

4. Pressure

GRAEL

You stand tall, Ser. More fearful men would consider you a force to be reckoned with, but all I see is a brute yet to be toppled under his own weight.

MARLOW

You carry an artist's blade in a world of soldiers. I have tasted the blood of better men than you, I have slain hundreds of Silvarian warriors stronger than you, and my armor did not shatter under blades heavier than yours. So dance well, fencer, for it will be your last.

5. Pressure

GRAEL

No matter how heavy your armor, my flames will smelt it down to the crude steel it was conceived from. Lay down your arms, ser. If I were you, I wouldn't test yourself against a Roadmaster.

MARLOW

Sorcery is an illusion used by men too weak to wield steel. You rely on the totems and scriptures of dead men to ward off your foes, yet you cannot rely on yourself. When your tomes are burned and your spells rendered useless, where will you turn, coward?

6. Honor

GRAEL

I've fought and lost wars. But I always did what I believed in my heart was just, even if it drove me away from the one soul that I believed kindred to mine. Sometimes I wonder if it was ever worth it. When you're left alone in the world with nothing but your code, how do you live with yourself?

MARLOW

Honor is suffering. When you walk our path, expect no celebration or kinship, but the mud in your boots and scars in your soles. Yet we walk it regardless knowing that those who come after us will not have to. We may be buried in shallow graves with none to mourn us, but at least we might feel the sun rise for the day we suffered for. For that I live.

7. Empathy

GRAEL

I was born in Silvarus, but the city saw my family as a disease simply because we were different. But we had each other, so when my parents passed, the few friends that I had became

everything to me. I know that I will never have children of my own, but over time I found a lover and a daughter that have gotten me farther than I am willing to admit.

MARLOW

Not all are born with a family. I had a father who didn't care about us and a mother me and my siblings never knew. My family was not defined by birthright— but choice. There are always those whom we've chosen to fight for, to live for, to care for. From the Du Tormes to Ashlyn and her Order, I've chosen, time and time again, people who push me onwards.

8. Charm

GRAEL

During my squiring days, my swordmaster always spoke highly of the Torminean defensive form as a masterclass of discipline and resolve. I would practice the stance during spars, but never at the level like a kingsguard as yourself.

MARLOW

Many men believe swordship to be some kind of exhibition to be studied like some spectacle, yet none of them have even seen combat. Now, ask any soldier about the beauty of combat and he will only tell you of its ugliness. You consider yourself a swordsman, but all I see is a court-raised apothecary pretending to be someone he's not.

Engage Dialogue

MARLOW

More disciplined knights and men have lost themselves in The Delve, but here you are standing upright, neither knight nor man. You're Zolish yes, but this is no land of discovery. I've lost three centuries to war and macabre, and I am here to repay that time. So either you're foolishly ambitious, or you too have made promises that you refuse to break.

Surrender Dialogue

XOCHI

It's a strange and terrifying world, but if we're to find our place in it yet, it's better to do it together, rather than against each other, right gramps?

MARLOW

Indeed, the path ahead of us remains unpaved, but I will not raise my weapon against one of my own. If we are to walk it, it is better to do it in terms of peace.

Negotiations and Retorts

3 Charm

2 Honor

1 Empathy

1 Logic

1 Pressure

1. Charm

XOCHI

I think I've been to every corner of Lodo, but of all the places I've been, I'll never forget the ocean. The sandy shores and shiny waves, it was unlike anything I'd ever seen. If we walk North from these ruins for a few days, we might be able to catch the high tide!

MARLOW

Every time you leave for the farthest corners of the world, something pulls you back. You can't escape duty. There's always someone to save, something to stop, somewhere to go, because the world isn't something you can just leave— but that's not something I expect an explorer to understand.

2. Charm

XOCHI

In Zol, we had these huge solar arrays in the city and I thought: What's a better place to get a tan? Sure enough, it was a bad idea lying under concentrated sunlight: I still have burn marks to this day! Let's compare scars! Surely you have a few with good stories?

MARLOW

Scars are not tokens to be collected— their reminders that we're damned. Some nights I wake with nightmares of pain and there's no end to it, no rest, no death. Immortality is a curse. Treat it as a gift and one day you'll beg for a calm that will never come— the dreams only get worse from there.

3. Charm

XOCHI

Is that... a real Torminean halberd? One of the Kingsguards own? From before The Fall? I've only ever happened upon shards of the blade— to see a real one, whole, is a dream come true!

MARLOW

Gauge your optimism. The blade you see before you could shatter into a thousand shards, and you would not be able to lift even the weight of one piece. It's seen war, it's seen death, and even I struggle to wield it still. To call it a collectors trinket is amongst the lowest insults one could give it.

4. Honor

XOCHI

There's not many things I'm good at. I was there when The Fall happened, but I couldn't save your people. But I stood by them to the last, as you did, because I've always promised to do right for those I think need it— I've always been good for that.

MARLOW

Every morning, I wake from dreams of all those I couldn't save. Do not let remorse take you to the ends of the world as it has once taken me, for it will grant you no forgiveness because there is nothing to be forgiven. If what you claim is true, then my people will forever be indebted to you, friend, because even in failure you tried to do good in a place where most would not.

5. Honor

XOCHI

The moment I saw your King duel Tekiel, I knew he was a trueborn leader. I had someone just like him, someone I dedicated myself to through thick and thin, someone I couldn't save from their fate. But even without them, we follow their example: We honor the promises we've made and the debts we've taken, because that's what they would've done.

MARLOW

If you bore witness to their duel, then I apologize for underestimating you. That is truly a unexpected feat. He was indeed the greatest leader Torminea ever knew. His love for his people was pure which was why, even through his madness, I could not dishonor him by forgetting him. Our idols chip and wear, which is why we become better people where they could not.

6. Empathy

XOCHI

Every day, I used to ask myself: Why even fight for someone if you'll outlive them anyways? Fifteen centuries of that and I started to get tired of going on. Living is a burden for people like us: But where we get to choose is who we'll live for. Being there for someone we love for even a moment is enough to keep us going, right?

MARLOW

For most, life is a blessing, a gift, but for us it has long been tarnished beyond repair. In many ways, it is too late for us to change our paths. We can either walk it, or choose to stay stagnant

and never move again. The difference is having an ember of something to go on: Kings, cities, races can die out, but my love for my people will remain. For them, it is never too late.

7. Logic

XOCHI

Nobody here is entitled to anything. None of us here even understand how The Chain works—you said it yourself that we're passengers in its history. Shouldn't we try to at least figure out what we're fighting over before, well, fighting over it?

MARLOW

Indeed, part of what you say is true. The Chain is not something we can grasp—perhaps Ashlyn doesn't even fully understand its nature. But you should understand that the world is not something you can simply study into submission. Gauge every action on how clear and comprehensive the consequence is and you will never discover anything.

8. Pressure

XOCHI

You've fought 'centuries of war' — so doesn't the rust weigh you down? I'd like to see you catch up in that armor, gramps.

MARLOW

When the Silvarians first invaded, their warriors fell one by one to Torminean steel. Even when the bombardment commenced, I cut down every snake I saw. War has rusted my armor only with the reds of enemies, so tell me: How will a group of chain hunters break what has not been broken by entire armies?

