

Act Two Questionnaire

What specific, tangible thing became the lead character's primary objective?

Nazila's Drift Blade.

Basically, it's a magical blade laden with energy from another dimension, the same dimension humans "drift" through in order to travel vast distances throughout the galaxy. They're rare and have mega-cool factor. Embla possesses a large drift sword, awarded to her for valorous duty. Matter that touches the blade's drift energy is transported to drift space (other dimension), so they're effective close range anti-armor weapons that can cut through just about anything. Doesn't make the bearer bullet-proof, however.

Really, it's a prestige item.

So! If the Black Skulls can defeat what appears to be minor, local revolutionary group and secure a drift relic—even a small one like a blade—the platoon might be able to reclaim some of their lost honor. That's the goal.

What Ethan and the Skulls don't yet know is that Nazila is a very effective commander of a well-armed, well-trained unit of revolutionary soldiers stationed in the area. They also don't yet know that a relic with far greater drift energy is only ~100km away, in the possession of a significant member of the revolutionary hierarchy, Rykal.

So, under the pretense of securing the area against some ragtag local fighters, Ethan gets the Black Skulls back on the surface in order to shoot some bad guys and chase down this minor drift blade. As they pursue this item and Nazila, they progressively discover that they're in for a lot more than they bargained.

Still, until they discover the presence of the greater, more powerful drift relic (ACT FOUR), Ethan is all about getting Nazila's blade, which alone would be a great win for himself and the platoon. This is in line with his adventurous and opportunistic personality.

How would the reader know the lead character has committed to this primary objective?

CONSTANTLY COMING UP WITH STRATEGIES AND TACTICS, SOME GOOD, SOME CRAZY.

Constant optimism in the face of continual defeats.

Overplaying the heroism of gaining Nazila's drift knife. IF THERE'S A DRIFT KNIFE, WHO KNOWS WHAT ELSE IS THERE THAT THE HERRAVÄLDE WOULD

WANT?!" [careful what you wish for, Ethan]

Aggressive sorties w/ fighting.

He presses on despite the lack of buy-in from his NCOs.

What significant ways did opposition try to inflict the lead character's demise (physically, professionally, or psychologically)? List at least three specific occasions this happens during ACT TWO:

1. Nazila attacks during a sortie that gets too close to Rykal's location on Bravarius.
2. During another skirmish, Nazila goes directly for Ethan (his first near death combat experience).
3. On Rykal's orders, Nazila inflicts major ambush that's disastrous for the Black Skulls.

How did the lead character combat the imminent demise?

Fought back bravely.

Came up with lots of ideas, mostly out-of-the-box.

Encouraged his platoon to press on, preaching about the future.

Encouraged his NCOs to communicate better.

Summarize how the lead character confronted his/her own flaw (wound, fear, or misconception) during the threats of the imminent demise:

The job was hard. Failure of this assignment was a real possibility, which would have led to a long life of dull misery (or death, sure). So this lingering possibility gnawed at him.

His quick, adventuresome spirit has already caused some near disasters. It's also caused head-butting with Embla, who's security-minded and methodic.

He understands that he was looking too far into the future instead of focusing on what was in the moment.

During a major self-reflective moment, what does the lead character learn about him/herself that must change in order to achieve the primary objective?

Ethan realized the soldiers in the platoon are counting on him (even though they're privately flippant and resistant) –just like his teenage girlfriend counted on him to guide her and help her survive.

Ethan realized that instead of resisting relationships in order to protect himself from pain, he needs to commit to relationships with his NCOs. Even if they don't commit in return. He must chose them as his family. Easier said than done, of course.

To do this, he's needed to control his impulsiveness, which is potentially negative trait, not a positive one like he's always told himself.

Can he reign in his self-centered impulsiveness? And listen to the soldiers he's trying to lead?

How do the subplots progress?

1. Embla's rise from fear. [Ends book 7]
2. Vernik's Revenge. [Ends book 4 or 5]
3. Svante Fagerudd matures to become a full Psyphage, manipulator of etherium (drift magic) [Ends book 7]
4. Embla's Sacrifice. [Ends with sacrifice of SSGT Sabine in book 3]