



Ducc II

by Alex Taylor

What really is a Ducc?

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***Prologue*, but a heartfelt one.**

Thank you, again.

I - Waking Up Is Hard

Gristle accumulated in the corner of Johnny's mouth as he sat down to eat, yet again separated from his friends so as to discourage bond-forming amongst the greys. The Drydenites, still orange-clad and somehow cheery, sat alone together, their social groups preserved by a regime that by all accounts should not have cared. The whatever-bird tasted worse than usual, cooked far too much. Somehow, they had turned one of his favourite dishes into a struggle. Perhaps the overcooking was because of their recent coal mine development, just out of town. The deposits were discovered when the communal graves the Busbites were digging struck lumps of harder material, below the clay and sand above. Of course, being responsible and not in the slightest bit vain, they celebrated by having a bonfire made of pure coal in the town square.

He could see his friends at the other ends of the hall, their heads bobbing up and down, looking for each other's gazes so they could reconvene later. Over the course of the year, they had formed a routine of meeting up in the day, as to not attract attention during the curfew hours of the evening.

Life had been hard for them, working in disparate jobs, their souls spread thin across the vast expanse of sand that they were herded into and out of every day. A long time had seemed to pass since any of them remembered what they used to do, so was the monotony of the work they did. It was just engaging enough to require a level of thought, but not so much as to make it interesting. In a state of perpetual incompleteness, they waddled through the desert, laden with tools and equipment they very well knew their supervisors could carry in their carts. Of course, they wouldn't want to sacrifice their leg room at the expense of worker satisfaction.

In the grander scheme of things, there were more negative changes to be observed. The leaflets which had been dropped from the balloons caused the exact opposite effect of what it intended, more and more Collegians turned to Ducc in their time of need as the living conditions within the city deteriorated. The services that a few of the Busbites reluctantly put on were now being whole-heartedly attended by flocks of concerned citizens. The Busbites themselves mainly stayed out of this religion, citing it as 'cultish nonsense', all the while following Bradshaw as if he was a godlike figure, claiming that he 'turned the city around' in an act comparable to a miracle.

Stockdale was the weaker of the two, and as time went on, the difference in power between them began to become much clearer. Bradshaw's immediate control over the Busbites was apparent, whereas Stockdale had to jump through hoops to even get a simple squadron of guards to protect him if he wanted to go down to the Immigration Office to check up on the latest stress-related deaths.

The city still lacked a proper name, due to the Busby-Dryden Empire being swept under the rug by Bradshaw, in favour of the more concise Busby's Empire, which he insisted the 'p' was just a rotated 'd' and therefore it represented Dryden fairly. Stockdale, already having made more concessions than he wanted to, accepted this new name under the pretence that Bradshaw would kick him out if he disobeyed.

Stockdale did not get a lot of free time to do as he liked. Most of the boring, bureaucratic things that Bradshaw avoided were delegated to him. It reminded him of his time in Wren, sitting alone at a desk, between trips to various points around the city. He had received a letter fairly recently, within the last week or two, saying that his father had died in a factory accident. The letter went into great detail describing how it happened, and at first, he put it away in a draw in his bedside table, not wanting to know, but still wanting something to hold on to. Eventually,

he got around to reading the full letter. At the end was an invitation to his funeral, which would be taking place whenever he got here. Wren had personally signed the letter, too, although he thought this may have been something he did for everyone. Hardly likely, seeing his usual attitude towards death was one of apathy.

He had thought about seeing Bradshaw and asking him for some time off, but every time he had approached him, he had been told of a new workload which he would have to do, which would eat up more of his free time. Of course, it was his duty to do these things, as king of the Busby-Dryden Empire, (as he still mentally referred to it) and as leader of the Drydenites. By this point, almost a year after the takeover of College, he could see that the Drydenites themselves were becoming bored. Their tolerance for new experiences was running low, especially considering most of the life of College had been taken away. Using his past experience with the Ducc Scripts, he altered the new laws to give the College people more freedom. Curfews were shortened, food rations were increased, artistic endeavours were encouraged. Of course, most of this went by without going through Bradshaw first, making them unofficial laws at best, treason at worst.

Stockdale got up from his bed, put on his normal clothes, and headed to Bradshaw's quarters. He wasn't there, the guard outside saying something about 'planning for Magiston'. That was another one of his worries, that the new kingdom would come under scrutiny following last year's Magiston Peak meeting. According to the few people he had stationed in Dryden a few months back, no one had even attempted to visit while they were there. It seemed too easy to get away with things of this scale. Perhaps the community of kingdoms at large were all doing this sort of thing, and letting each other off the hook so they didn't fall under the spotlight either.

After being sent away, he walked downstairs to check up on the prisoners. Over the course of the year, the guards had allegedly got quite a reasonable amount of questionably reliable information out of them. Bradshaw seemed fine with keeping them locked up for now, lest they try and repeat the balloon incident. Each and every time Stockdale walked down there, he was reminded of his own opinion on the prisoners. Wanting them to be let go, or at the very least, released into the city, he brought it up with Bradshaw whenever he got the chance. Bradshaw, of course, was always dismissive, citing them as a potential threat.

Tarek seemed to be holding up for himself, the routine of the cells had become a sort of rehearsed drama for him, and as the months wore on, it didn't seem so bad anymore. The two weeks before his incarceration seemed to play out slowly in his head, whilst the previous year flew by, talking to Kalivas and the others whenever the guards would permit. He had heard some time ago that they would be picking a prisoner to kill by vote, but apparently the turnout was so low they were forced to cancel the operation.

“Hi, Stockdale.” he said, comfortable of his position as a prisoner, and Stockdale as a man unlikely to scold him.

“Tarek. You can't be informal like that. You are a prisoner of the Busby-Dryden Empire.” said Stockdale, in a hushed tone, as to not wake the others.

“Uh, yes I can. And it's the Busby's Empire now, if you're being pedantic.”

Stockdale increased his tone. “Look at you, using big words. Who taught you that one?”

“You.”

“Alright, fine, I guess I did. Maybe. Can’t remember. But still, you mustn’t talk back like that.”

“Says who?”

“I say so. So you follow.”

“We’ve already done enough of that to know you’re not trustworthy!” Tarek shouted, waking Kalivas and a few of the others.

“Tarek, shut up.” said Kalivas, groggily clearing the sleep from his eyes, not quite noticing the figure outside the cell. “I’m sleeping.”

“Well, not anymore.” said Stockdale. “I’m leaving to go to Wren. I won’t be visiting for a week or so, so you’ll have to do without my company.”

“What a shame.” said Kalivas, rolling away from the light, attempting to fall back asleep.

Stockdale walked out of the cell block, the eyes of most of the prisoners trained on him, muttering to one another about how he was the epitome of evil. In his head, he wasn’t capable of doing this kind of thing any more. It was easy to send the Dryden army to bring back Tarek so he could be killed, but only when he didn’t see Tarek personally. It was easy to lock up political dissidents, but it became harder when he knew these were people he had been talking to for ages, he knew their lives, where they came from, their jobs, their hopes and desires. When he got back from Wren, he would try and set them free.

Meanwhile, Tarek and Kalivas had been plotting an escape for a decent amount of time, and now that Stockdale was heading off, it was the perfect time to execute it. Bradshaw didn't care about them, it was Stockdale who wanted them locked up, after all.

II - Sleeping Is Easy

“So, what do we think about the others? Where have they got to?” said Johnny, in a hushed tone. “It’s been three weeks since we last caught sight of any of them.”

“That’s because we made friends with that Busbite guy who goes into the prison tunnels every so often. But he’s gone now, not sure where.” said Hawken.

Sword butted in. “You mean Tolley?”

“Yeah. Strange individual.” Johnny said.

“He said something about going to work at the office.” Hawken said.

“Which office?” Johnny said.

“The office.” Sword said.

Johnny looked confused.

“*The* office.” said Sword, with enough emphasis to look suspicious to the guards on duty.

Johnny nodded, “Oh, yeah, alright.” He still didn’t understand.

“Well, we should go over and find him.” said Sword.

“Why didn’t we do this before?” said Fred.

Johnny walked out of the hall, his gaze having met with a guard, and a great deal of tension was left with the other three, who continued talking about where the office was inconspicuously, but filed out one at a time, as to not raise any further concerns. He continued walking, leaving the others behind as other greys filed out of the dining halls, and made his way over to the Immigration Office, which had been renamed to just 'Office', due to the fact no one was going to be immigrating soon. There was no queue, and Tolley was sitting inside his side of the desk, behind a glass panel. Johnny walked up, navigating past some rope cordons.

“How’s life in the fish tank, then?”

“Well, Johnny, same as ever.”

“Growing a beard, are we?” he continued, trying to provoke some natural conversation.

“Yes.”

Johnny paused. “Any reason why?”

“No.”

Another pause. “Have you been doing anything down at the cells lately? We haven’t heard from you in a while.”

“Went back to Busby’s for a week.” said Tolley, taking a large bite out of a strange meat.

“Was it any good?”

Tolley finished his mouthful. “Oh yeah, it’s hairy-dog, want to try some?”

“No, I meant Busby’s.”

“Busby’s is good anyway.” said Tolley, tucking in again.

“Even with Bradshaw in control?”

“Not much has changed.” Johnny could just about make out some syllables underneath the serving of hairy-dog Tolley had just engulfed.

“But all the markets and things have closed!”

“Yes, but John, I never used to go there anyway.”

Johnny sighed, his breath ever-so-slightly condensing on the glass. “At least, can you report back to me tomorrow with some stuff about the prisoners. We’re thinking about getting them out via legal means.”

“I don’t think you can do that.”

“I don’t either, Tolley, but that shouldn’t stop me trying, should it?”

“You’re not getting past Bradshaw.”

“Tolley!” said Johnny, raising his voice. “Don’t be so defeatist. Seriously. Just-”

“A-a-a! My turn, Johnny. I’m a realist. A realist. Do not assume I am a defeatist.”

“Yes, but-”

“But what? You are not going to be able to do anything about Bradshaw while he’s here. You’ll have to wait until next week when he goes to Magiston Peak with Stockdale.”

“What’s Magiston Peak?”

Tolley got up from his chair, hairy-dog in hand, and grabbed a small folder from out of a filing cabinet, and looked at Johnny. Johnny took a small lump of frayed notes out of his pocket and slipped it under the glass, and Tolley returned.

“Thank you.” said Johnny.

“Everything you need to know. Now go on, get to work, I assume your lunch break’s over.”

“Don’t assume my lunch break’s over.” said Johnny, walking out of the room, looking back and smiling, and to his surprise, Tolley smiled back. The other three were waiting outside, all in different areas, attempting to look as if they were doing their jobs. Gathering themselves, they walked back to the city gates, and headed back to their group, and were loaded up with equipment, and then forced across the desert, worn-down tools swinging in the cool breeze, clattering against one another, providing a discordant, wind-chime backdrop to their abrupt, breath stopped conversations.

III - Departure Of Sorts

Stockdale looked out over the city, watching groups of miners depart for their activities in the heat of the sun, which seemed to grow more and more intolerable by the day. Heat had never seemed to be an issue when he was in charge of Dryden, but the ever-increasing strain on his life increased the power of each of the rays, even the ones that dared to creep in past the clacking shutters.

That reminded him, he must get those shutters fixed.

Anyway, he thought to himself, mustn't get bogged down in the low points. You're going to Wren soon, and that should be interesting at the very least. See how everyone's getting on. Attend your father's funeral.

That last one resonated with him for a while, a fitting backdrop to the clacking noises from all the various windows as the wind picked up. A dust storm, maybe? Prolonging the departure? Perhaps there would be more time to think about things? No, not now. He would have to leave as soon as possible. He sent for a guard (a Drydenite one, of course) to pack some of his things together, and leave a note under Bradshaw's door. Bradshaw was out himself, touring the underground as he so often liked to do.

The cart sat waiting outside, and Stockdale climbed into it. A Busbite guard sat opposite him. They said nothing. The wind picked up, making the canvas cover flap in a small but irritating way, and the guard leant over and pulled it shut. Less than a minute later, it was back to flapping. They spent the rest of the journey in silence.

They passed by a small group of greys, who were almost at the new mine, and they attempted to take shelter from the harsh sands, nipping at their feet. The guard lifted up the outer flap, and poked his head out, along with a sword, and attempted to wave it around threateningly. Due to the fact he was using one hand on the handle, it slipped as the end caught the wind that curved around the canvas cover, and landed in the sand.

Too scared to admit his failure and risk being talked down to, the guard stayed inside the wagon, leaving the sword outside. Johnny, who was in the group of greys, leant down, shielded his eyes from the rolling sands and picked up the sword, then quickly walked back over to the group, keeping quiet, in case any of their supervisors thought something wasn't quite right.

“Hold still.” said Johnny, wrenching Hawken's bag open and putting the sword in. The hilt stuck out, but it was barely noticeable amongst the rest of the tools.

“Johnny, what was that?” said Hawken, his questioning tone altered by a slight straining to keep himself upright.

“I found a sword.” said Johnny. “But we've got to keep it secret, the guards'll kill us if they see it.”

“Why are we keeping it?” said Hawken, wanting to stop and face Johnny properly, but not wanting to arouse yet more suspicion. “What do you need a sword for?”

“Because we might need it.”

Fred butted in, causing Hawken to sigh as now, more people were on on this so-called 'secret'.

“And it’s cool.”

Hawken turned his head, almost amused that someone was supporting Johnny. “Cool? We don’t want ‘cool’. I stopped caring about that almost a year ago. It’s survival of the blandest here. Head down, get on with it. No swords.”

Sword walked over. “Yes?”

Johnny turned his head. “What?”

“What?” said Sword. “Ooh, nice sword.” he continued, spying the backpack, which he then promptly reached for. Johnny grabbed his arm and pulled him back firmly but smoothly.

“What do you think you’re doing?” said Johnny.

Sword snapped his arm back. “I just wanted to see it.”

“As does the man sitting on that bugbear back there. The only difference is that he will brutally torture us to find out where we got it, and we will eventually come out with a statement that we stole it from the kings, and that’s treason, and so after we’ve been tortured to within an inch of our lives, we get to die, but not in a nice way, in a horrible way, like that whole bonfire that was set up for the death poll.”

Sword put his arm back down by his side, and looked away, just round Johnny’s head.

“That’s right,” said Johnny, moving his head around in an attempt to block Sword’s gaze. “Now you can look at it later when we’re back home.”

“If you take that sword into my house then it’s mine.” said Sword.

Fred turned round. “Since when? Wait, we’ve all been in your house, so are we all yours? Are we your slaves? I don’t bloody think so, mate.” Johnny nodded in agreement, which seemed to worsen Sword’s mood.

“Don’t do that. Don’t act all smug, Johnny, you don’t even have to pay rent.”

“Fine then, we’ll leave. In fact, we’ll leave tomorrow, and we’ll escape you and this horrible place entirely, and leave you to deal with everything.” said Johnny.

Hawken walked up alongside Johnny, putting a hand on his shoulder. “But Johnny, we don’t have-”

“Nope. Tomorrow it is. Oh, and we’re taking Tolley with us, too.”

“Why?” asked Sword.

“Because then you won’t have any people left to talk to.” said Johnny. “And that’s assuming he wanted to talk to you in the first place.”

“You’re not even allowed back in my room to get your stuff if you’re going to be like this.”

“With all due respect, Sword,” said Johnny, “we have a sword. You don’t.”

“I do too.”

“Where?”

“In my safe.”

“Sword, I have opened that safe hundreds of times in the past year. I have used it to store sandwiches I’ve stolen from the guard’s dining hall. I am pretty sure I would have noticed if I had seen any kind of sharp metallic object in there. Besides, its longest side is like... the length of my forearm. That’s a pretty weak sword, if you ask me. More like a dagger.”

Sword broke away from the other four, followed by Joe, who was attempting to calm him down, wanting reconciliation but fully willing to abandon Sword as soon as the opportunity presented itself. His book had remained largely unwritten in for a while now, and he felt it was time for a new adventure to spice things up. In fact, the edges had become slightly frayed from his constant carrying of it. Taking it to the mines had been a rather futile endeavour, nothing ever happened worth writing about. He had thought about putting an obituaries page at the end, but he winced at the thought of having to ask Tolley to shuffle through all the files, and watch his sullen face as, shoving out heaps of loosely bound pages, sighing after turning each one.

The emotional effort was simply not worth it. That, and it would probably be massively demoralising to have a list of his deceased friends. He wondered if any of the Drydenites had died, or if any of the prisoners had, too. Looking back at Johnny, who sneered at Sword who he had just mockingly called ‘Dagger’, Joe thought that it might be time run away and just try to get away from everything. After all, they had never come and checked their shared room. Perhaps it was due to the smell, which lingered, no matter how much he tried to chase it away. Surprisingly, Johnny’s signature aura never integrated itself into

the air, but wafted around random corners of the city, almost taunting him with the possibility of a chat, but never seeming to materialise into Johnny himself. Joe walked away from Sword, who he mentally referred to as ‘Dagger’ now, and drifted back over to the much more conversationally lively Johnny and Fred. Joe perked up, imbibing the vibe (he’d learnt that one from Johnny) of the duo. “What are you guys talking about?”

“Blemsball.” said Johnny, readjusting his tools.

“Oh, not that again.”

“It’s perfectly fine!” he replied, Fred nodding in approval.

Joe pointed at Fred’s forehead. “What is that from?”

“That is from a fight, not blemsball.” said Fred.

“Did the fight happen on or near a blemsball pitch?”

“No.”

“Then where did it happen?”

“On some street.”

“Who did it, then?”

“Some guy.”

“What team does he support? I assume he was a Southers fan?”

“Yeah, duh, the idiot headbutted me but had his mouth open, lodged a tooth in there. ‘Course he was a Souther.” said Fred, miming pulling a tooth from his forehead.

“Johnny, you see this is what happens when we make factions. We all need to be working together, but blemsball is tearing us apart.”

“Well, that’s easy for you to say, Joe. I make money off of blemsball, so I’d like to keep it.” said Johnny.

“You make money off of it? Why haven’t you said anything about it or, you know, moved out?”

“Oh, it’s just trading with Tolley.”

“You spend your money on Tolley’s information?” said Joe, slightly incredulously. “You do realise that that stuff is free if you give it back, right? It’s just a deposit.”

“Seriously? Then I can get all my money back! It’s all at the flat right now. Oh, that’s great. We’ll get it later, Joe.”

“I suppose we will.” said Joe, stepping into the first layer of the deep spiral that wound down to the coal mines.

IV - On The Way

The cart was closing in on Wren now, and mercifully, the flap finally stopped flapping when the wind settled down. By that time, Stockdale had grown tired of sitting still, not talking to anyone. The guard out the front switched with the guard inside, and he was pleased to see it was a Drydenite. However, he was wearing a Busbite uniform, and not responding to any of his initial attempts at conversation, in true Busbite fashion.

Next, he tried asking questions about Dryden, and what things the man must have left behind. No question yielded any sort of answer. He recognised the face from one of his sermons. A back-bencher, a spiritual slacker, not a major duccian devotee.

“Excuse me. I know who you are, please talk to me, or I will have to use my... my royal powers.”

No response.

“Wurr.” said Stockdale, leaning over. “I know you’re in there.” he said, reaching out to him when Wurr suddenly drew a dagger out from his uniform.

“Stockdale! I know it’s you. Of course it’s you. I’ve had to spend a whole year under your insufferable regime. And before that, you made us lazy and complacent with our primitive lifestyles by keeping us fed and watered, and you expected complete devotion to Ducc in return.”

“Wurr, I-”

“The time to say anything has long since gone, Stockdale.” said Wurr, leaning to the front. “Stop the cart!” He paused, exposing the dagger again. “Get out of the cart.”

“What’s going on?” said the driver, barely able to keep the bugbears from pulling the cart away.

“Just need some fresh air, that’s all.”

Stockdale started shouting, and attempted to run away, screaming, “He’s going to kill me!”

Wurr quickly caught up with him, (jogging in the sand had been one of his daily training activities under Stockdale and Bradshaw’s orders) and pinned him to the sand.

“This isn’t time for you to explain what you’re doing. This is my hour, now. I get to tell you exactly what I’m going to do, and you can escape by some lucky coincidence, and I’ll be hung for treason.”

Stockdale kept screaming, and so, with his other hand, Wurr shovelled sand into his face, blinding him and filling his mouth.

“Shut up! Shut up! Look, you don’t get away with this kind of thing for so long. I saw what you were doing to Kalivas, to all those kids, some of them weren’t even from Dryden, for Ducc’s sake! Come on! Don’t you have some dignity?”

“I was just trying to help!” said Stockdale, spluttering intensely, face red, eyes veiny, opening briefly and closing tightly to keep the sand out. “You were a desert town beforehand! I gave you all you needed to live through the driest months, your educations, your livelihoods!”

“What good is all that if you were just going to keep us away from the rest of the world?”

Stockdale cried, still trying to scream.

“Do you have an answer?” shouted Wurr, too close to Stockdale. He got his dagger out again, and waved it up and down, above his eyes.

There was a silence, the driver dared not question the scenario any longer. The bugbears grew restless, and shuffled around a bit.

“Ok, ok, I’ll help you. Look, to find the copy, enter in, left, in north grave.” said Stockdale, twisting his head to look at the moving bugbears, barely snatching a look before he was twisted back to face Wurr; the hand holding the side of his head was cold with the metal blade.

“What is that supposed to mean? Why are you being cryptic when I have a knife literally beside your head?”

“Good point.” said Stockdale, mildly interrupted by the driver attempting to calm the bugbears down.

“Alright. If we go straight there, and nothing else happens, can I go?”

“Yes.”

“Can I have some money to live on?”

“Yes.”

“Well...” said Wurr, releasing Stockdale, “I don’t see why we have to-”

“Woah!” shouted the driver, as the bugbears careened over one another, brutally fighting, and as Wurr got up, the side of his head was clipped by the cart edge. Stockdale, however, did not fare so well. The bugbears did not take so kindly to him as they trampled over him. The driver sped off into the distance, uncontrollably.

Wurr returned to Stockdale, and picking the dagger up from beside him, realised he was dead. The neck, stuck at an odd angle. The chest, stamped on and accidentally clawed by those beasts. All that remained of him right now was the phrase...

He scoured his mind, attempting to remember the phrase. Something about graves? Regardless of what it was, any chance of anyone finding out what that actually meant was now gone.

The sound waves that made up the words that Stockdale had said still vibrated through the air, however quietly, and they had changed the winds and sands, however minutely. It would be possible for a very technologically advanced civilisation to reconstruct this phrase, and perhaps make some sense of it based on context. But there Wurr stood. Alas, the fragile human brain, capable of such feats of co-ordination and thought, yet unable to keep a six or seven word phrase in itself for more than about ten seconds.

It was as if his head being clipped had knocked the memory out of his head. Perhaps scrabbling at the sand would fix it. Maybe this action wasn’t inspired by careful thought like he had hoped, it was more akin to self-hatred, of being so careless as to let Stockdale die, despite the fact that he had threatened to kill him on multiple occasions. His mind now turned, straining, much as Stockdale’s head had done, to the prospect of getting

home, or at least to Wren. He would have to wait until sunrise for the visibility to improve.

There was a word which superseded all others in his mind, though. Irony.

V - Evening Meal

A small patch of grit fell off of Johnny's face as he sat down to eat in the evening, with a small metal bowl reflecting dull patterns, distorting the sunset above him. His next mouthful would have likely been a horrible, gritty one, but the food was of such a quality that the extra few grains of sand and gravel didn't seem to register. His tongue felt like it was rubbed raw with all this food, but this rawness of the tongue only served to dull the horrible flavour, so it was a sort of victory. They continued work into the night, and were almost pleasantly surprised when they were brought into a small dugout and instructed to sleep on the floor. They would be staying overnight for a large operation tomorrow at dawn.

Joe wondered why it was at dawn, it wasn't as if the rest of the world was fighting over these little patches of coal. Most other places imported their coal from Busby's, or in the case of the island kingdoms, they usually found their own, or used trees.

plotline v1:

stockdale dies

his body is found by wren, who makes a personal visit on his way to magiston peak

he blames bradshaw but he has nothing to do with it

wren declares war during the meeting

during the war, the prisoners are freed by toley, who is left pretty much alone in the city

during a hasty retreat, bradshaw's forces seek solace in a god - uh oh, it's quacc

kalivas and toley go away, seemingly crazed about a balloon of some kind, a great mechanical duck

the others attempt to go to hakluyts to get help

leader sends them overseas to fetch something

they get back and the leader lies

curran kills him, guards kill curran

they go back via busby's, which is pretty much unguarded

page starts a revolution

the citizens of busby's storm to free college

bradshaw is surrounded

they fight back with impressive force

suddenly, the ducc balloon turns up, and kalivas and toley celebrate everyone being peaceful in the name of ducc - for a few minutes, before the balloon crashes into wren's forces, killing a great deal of them and prompting 'ducc hates wrenites' thing - OH WAIT

page pulls the people out and goes back to busby's, now the leader, and bradshaw retires, with everyone united under ducc, but not peacefully

bradshaw culls everyone except busbites, and johnny and the gang fight up against him, and fred dies, but hawken tries in vain to avenge him, and dies too

lisa becomes leader of college and asks the busbites to leave

plotline v2:

stockdale dies

wren accuses bradshaw of killing stockdale

baits bradshaw into going to magiston peak

tolley frees the prisoners just before wren turns up

in this segment, literally everyone is here before they break up again.

bold means they were not in prison but in college

tarek: escapes, goes to milne's **DEFEATS / DRYDEN**

nirav: escapes, goes to milne's **DEFEATS / DRYDEN**

**joe: goes to milne's DEFEATS / COLLEGE
(INCORPORATING DRYDEN)**

kalivas: escapes, goes to build the balloon **DEFEATS /
DRYDEN**

ullathorne: escapes, goes to build the balloon **DEFEATS /
DRYDEN**

hartley: escapes, goes to milne's **STAYS / MILNE**

curran: escapes, goes to busby's **STAYS / BUSBY**

farr: escapes, goes to busby's **STAYS / BUSBY**

page: escapes, goes to busby's **STAYS / AROUND**

johnny: goes to busby's **STAYS / AROUND**

mem: escapes, goes to busby's **DIES**

sword: stays for the revolution **DIES**

lisa: escapes, goes to build the balloon **DEFEATS / DRYDEN**

norm: stays for the revolution **GOES MISSING**

fred: goes to milne's **DIES by TGHA**

teddy: escapes, goes to milne's **INJURED, STAYS / DIES**

hawken: goes along with the drydenites, cast out later on after an incident related to doubting ducc via quacc (the quaccist drydenites are classed as greys while the duccist drydenites are oranges) **DRYDENITES / AROUND**

phil: in liddells, relays news of Teddy's passing later

bradshaw: coming back from MP, only to find college occupied by wrenites, so he calls for backup from busby's, which leaves it unguarded, and he is sent out into the desert, along with the drydenites, who he then bumps into again later on, as he returns from a small village on the far coast which no one says anything about. **DRYDENITES / STAYS** and he's converted to duccism when the balloon comes along, with everyone else, and then the book ends when tarek comes down out of the balloon in the ruins of the hall in **DRYDEN**, and gives the final speech etc...

he tries to replicate the feeling of power by abusing the drydenites, but since they have no other option, they bow to him. at this point, there are children who have been raised

speaking duccish, who are mute due to the poor learning of the language.

wren: ruling college, gets overthrown by his forces who see the old leaflets and think nothing of ducc, but when they see the balloon, they lose it and revolt. **SPARED BY TAREK / REHABILITATED**

stockdale: dead

tolley: goes to build the balloon **STAYS / TAVERN**

kershen: found dead in busby's

botton: missing

mann: also dead

rev w.: missing

tgha: still in milne's **DIES by HARTLEY**

wren attempts to take over college, succeeds, breaks the news about ducc to the drydenites, who are sent back to their homes

wren rules over college, refuses to let anyone go until bradshaw comes

they begin to deteriorate and starve, and bradshaw returns from magiston peak to find college taken back over by wren, dryden occupied by near-dead drydenites, who attempt find their faith in ducc once more

page, farr, curran, johnny and mem go to busby's to free them, and see busbite soldiers coming the other way

all the groups go the same way to start with, but disagree on certain things, and split into **BALLOON, BUSBY and MILNE** groups. There are also the **WANDERERS and COLLEGE** groups.

mem dies and johnny almost sacrifices himself to avenge him but page convinces him otherwise 'it's what mem would have wanted'

the drydenites starve so hard they up sticks and begin wandering the desert, looking for the actual oasis

tarek and the gang go to milne's in search of help to defeat wren and free college one last time, and also to help the drydenites

they go to the island of ashburnham and face difficulty there, fred and phil stay behind to guard the boat but is missing when they come back, although he leaves a note somehow

current status of each character:

tarek nirav joe hartley teddy hawken

tolley, kalivas, lisa and ullathorne build a balloon which is so much larger than anything before, it's basically a blimp, and they take it over to milne's where the grand high autistic says if they go to Mount Hooke and retrieve a load of stuff from the top of the volcano, they can get some help, so they dutifully go and do it, refilling their fuels at the tavern island (read: saporis) and purcells on their way back

bradshaw bumps into the drydenites, who, despite living with stockdale's knowledge, have not done well for themselves. they say it's because they abandoned ducc, and bradshaw picks up where stockdale left off from.

chapter order as summaries:

6: wren goes to college and loses it, baits bradshaw into going to MP by telling him he needs to declare war there. wurr tells wren that bradshaw ordered him to kill stockdale, he was just following orders. wurr becomes a useful asset to wren when it comes to the purges, and he kills sword unceremonially, but is killed by wren later on to avoid letting secrets out.

7: toley frees the prisoners, and tells people to get out, the drydenites are left wandering the desert with hawken to guide them, who wants to see the world, but doesn't have a map

8: the gang have their disagreements on how to deal with the wrenite occupation, but as they pass a group of busbite soldiers coming the other way, the busbiters go to incite revolution

9: bradshaw is at MP and realises he's been had when a messenger comes in and says 'you've been had'

10: the ballooners and milne plots split, with teddy finding the grantite rowers and buying a top of the range boat for nirav with his previous prize winnings (ie. multiple golden belts) his posture increases greatly after he takes them off (hahahaha)

11: the ballooners set to work in the newly reformed busby's as the soldiers are mowed down by wrenites in college

12: sword and norm are the only two left in college, and norm attempts to manipulate the wrenites using the same ducc leaflets that he hoarded (mainly to use for fuel as his coal had been taken by the busbiters) and it kind of works, they have a secret church and all

13: the milne's lot make a great deal of progress, stopping off at liddell's to pick up phil (who is happy with teddy getting rid of his belts), but stumble on to the island and are not able to look after the boat, but phil and fred say they can.

14: the caves, the exploration

15: the drydenites worsening condition

16: the busbite revolution, the balloon is finished, but they decide to go to milne's first on a test flight

17: the boat gets wrecked, fred goes missing

18: the grand high autist is met, and they head back to the boat but it's not there - not even phil can fix it

19: the balloon turns up, they head to mount hooke

20: the drydenites are seriously getting worse, and they excommunicate hawken for his sentiments. he then travels the lands, and we don't hear much from him because he achieved what he wanted to do. he makes a stop over at dryden's, though, and finds the original ducc scripts in the CEILING (duh!) and finds that it's empty, with a couple of words on the first page, 'Ducc is whatever you want it to be.' he starves to death, contented, sitting on stockdale's old chair.

21: the busbite revolution, and the guards fend off bradshaw and the drydenites when he drags them round, begging for food, as he is helpless and can't run a kingdom to save his life. when they visit grants, the grantite rowers recognise ducc from nirav, and warn them about the cult, but then bradshaw pulls them out right before they get food, for fear he might lose his grip on them.

22: the mount hooke bit goes very well, lots of laughter and joking, calculating how much fuel they can have with all the volcanic stuff

23: the church is expanded now, and successful, but underground, and wren orders a purge to take place in a few weeks time

24: the balloon heads back to TGHA after stopping a few times, and then stuff goes down, TGHA is shown to have killed fred for sport, and hartley kills TGHA, and becomes the new Milne's King due to a law. he stays.

25: the balloon returns to busby's, right as mem is killed, and everyone gets in, despite johnny's protests

26: the purge is about to take place, the drydenites are on their last legs, and they head back to wren to admit defeat, when the balloon comes along. it reinvigorates the drydenites, and spurs on a revolution which wren loses, as literally everyone is against him.

27: they watch from above, as everyone follows the ducc as it moves across the sky, and they head towards dryden

28: tarek delivers the final speech in the ruins of the hall, using the loudspeakers of the ducc at first (I AM DUCC. DUCC IS WHATEVER YOU WANT IT TO BE. I AM NOT REAL. I AM JUST A PERSON.), and then he gets out, walks down, and does the first part of the speech, followed by the second half. he renames dryden to 'the oasis' and it is rebuilt, with stuff taken from wren and bits reclaimed from college and busby's, and tarek gives the kingship to kalivas and ullathorne, who then give the power to the people, and everything is well once more. tarek and the others take the decorations off the balloon.

tarek wonders where stockdale is, and when they're told he died, tarek gets sad. *then* he does the whole giving of power thing.

29: bradshaw and wren chat in stockdale's old house, reminiscing. page and johnny look out at the world now, as well as curran and farr, with toley running for prime minister of busby's, with nirav and tarek throwing stones across a little line in the sand they draw. kalivas comes out and jokingly tells them to stop violating the border, and then throws another rock out there. they find the stones right outside the border, and figure out where it used to be. joe and sword are together, but working as guards yet again, but personal guards for lisa, who is leader of college now. hartley sees his power and decides to kick back and relax. teddy and phil go back to playing table tennis. norm becomes a full time wizard.

"I never did try this. I didn't realise how fun this could be."

Character Status Check (VIBE CHECK)

tarek: running around

nirav: running around

joe: running college

kalivas: goes back to his old job as head teacher

ullathorne: leads dryden

hartley: running milne's

curran: in liddell's

farr: in busby's

page: travelling with johnny

johnny: travelling with page

mem: a public speaker

sword: died in the rebellion

lisa: goes missing

norm: full time wizard

fred: dies to tgha

teddy: ping pong champion still

hawken: dies in dryden

phil: doing his thing
bradshaw: doing nothing
wren: doing nothing
stockdale: dead
tolley: leader of Busby's
kershen: dead in Busby's
botton: missing
mann: dead
rev w.: missing
tgha: dies to hartley