

Echoes of the Labyrinth

Volume 10a-d: Winter Solstice 385YE, Autumn Equinox 386YE

A collection of notes on the experience of
Pure Liao Visionaries, collected by

Alcuin of the Auric Horizon of Urizen

by the direction and authority of the Assembly of Nine
given to the Seer of the Gateway,

Livia of the Celestial Cascade of Urizen

Edition 2, printed after Spring Solstice 387 YE

Accounts taken by Alcuin and Livia and Dinah. Writeups by Alcuin.

Information contained here is incomplete; future editions of this pamphlet may contain more information as the authors consult again with the visionaries and their guides, particularly for the information returned to visionaries by the Civil Service as a result of their inquiries.

These notes were taken from verbal testimonies of witnessed events, so spellings and exact pronunciations of names should not be considered definitive.

Winter Solstice, 385 YE

Introduction

Three visionaries experienced a vision induced by Pure Liao at the Solstice.

Following their vision, the visionary and guide priest were questioned by the authors. Their stories are recorded in the following pages, in the order that the visions were received.

- * **Bridget Talbot de Coeurdefer** (??), accompanied by Atte (??)
- * **Livia Cascade** (Urizen), accompanied by Alcuin Auric Horizon (Urizen)
- * **Gisli Baerson** (??), accompanied by Iniska Ashford (??)

Bridget Talbot de Coeurdefer (??)

Accompanied by Atte (??)

The visionary came to sit at a table in a house; poor, but well-provisioned, with good food, candlesticks and a fire in the hearth, and nice rugs and straw on the floor.

The woman sat to the visionary's left shouted to summon a child since the food was ready, and commented that she was worried about her. Moments later, a girl entered with Navarr tattoos: a red branching thorn on the left side of the face, and right stripes vertically.

As the child sat and ate a bread roll, the visionary asked the child how her day had been; there was no answer from Brennan, who dashed off excitedly after finishing her roll, but the woman said that Brennan had been so excited about becoming a thorn.

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Time passes: things change, and stay the same. It is the same table, and the woman is excited that the girl is returning to visit them, fussing over the table and prettifying the place.

The girl returns, but is now a young changeling woman wearing the Imperial Crown. Her mannerisms have changed: she is no longer excited nor shy, but arrogant and cold. She gives a briefing of how wonderfully things were going: there were successes in Narquist and plans to push into the Barrens against the Druj. None of this was news to the woman, who was a soldier in the Black Thorns; the guide priest noted that Brennan was entirely focussed on the military situation.

Brennan was also very close to establishing a deal with Eleonaris for great power at a great price. There is discussion that that is a Vate matter, and the woman looks at the visionary, as if they are one.

The visionary asks the price, but is answered with silence.

The woman asks about the news of the senate, as that would be new news to her, but is rebuffed and the subject is changed. Brennan is asked what the Senate thinks of the military spending, but she retorts "They can suck it, they elected me, they have to do what I say". There was a mention of how someone in the military had failed Brennan, but no details.

The Empire was doing well, so Navaar was also doing well, said the Empress, eliding the two together. They were about to cast Dance of Navarr and Thorn.

The woman opines that the price for Eleonaris' gift is too high, Brennan bristles at this disagreement: "When you're general of the Black Thorns, I might listen to your opinion".

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More time passes; Brennan returns, uncrowned, to a table with an empty space where the woman had sat, presumed to be dead, possibly on campaign. She laments how everything has been taken away from her; the crown, the throne. She had done her best for the Empire, but the Empire hadn't appreciated it. She was very alone, at the end; the visionary tried to comfort her but Brennan fled from.

"I'm the only person to have had the crown taken off me", she said, covering shame with anger, commenting that Senate had turned against her and Conclave were a bunch of amateurs. "I was doing the right thing by the Empire", she said, jabbing at the table with a finger.

"They took the throne", said Brennan, to which the visionary replied "what did you expect? The price was too high." Brennan retorts with "And I don't even have a parent who understands" and the vision ends.

Both before and after the vision, the visionary bore a testimony of "Dedicated Servant", and the guide priest had no marks.

The Day ritual Eyes of the Soul's Past revealed that the visionary was Dewin, the High Thorn Path, a woman with marks of a Vate, mother of Brennan the Relentless, during the time of great turmoil and dark times for the Empire.

The Night ritual Secrets of the Soul's Desire gave this insight: Loss. A braid bearing weight that snaps and falls away. Her letters to Brennan were either never sent or never replied; they did not reach her. When she left my table, her head was bowed as she left my house for the last time. I never saw her again. She was alone. And so was I.

Livia of the Spire of the Celestial Cascade (Urizen)

Accompanied by Alcuin of the Spire of the Auric Horizon (Urizen)

The visionary awoke in the hold of a Grendel ship with some light coming through from a ventilation hatch above, surrounded by sailing paraphernalia; a ship's wheel, rigging, chests, and some manacles. A flag of blue sunbeams on a white field was stored here.

The visionary awoke in a chair, with a headache that came and went, with two fellow prisoners, one taller and lankier with long hair, the other younger, shorter and with short hair and a hood. The shorter one exclaimed "You're awake!", and explained that the visionary had been beaten up, although there was no sign of injury.

They talked of how the visionary had been a wayfarer who lifted their friends' spirits; they still looked for guidance from them even when things seemed bleak.

They pondered ways out. They could jump over the side to their death, giving up on their Ambition, perhaps?

The older prisoner said they had something; the front of a skull with the eye sockets filled in with flat black paint; possibly a boon of Sorin. They suggested that when they got to the fort of Dubhtraig, they could "set it off", which would

cause immense despair; the guide priest thought it caused some sort of contagious disease.

The older prisoner was resigned to this last resort, but the younger wanted to go back. The visionary looked for ways to fight other than using the boon.

The visionary asked what the younger would do when they got back home? They'd say goodbye; let the members of their chapter know they cared about them. The older said there was no chance of that happening.

The visionary said that they must believe they can do **something**. "We could talk to the slaves?" "Ask them what they want to do when they get back home" "But what if they were born enslaved?" "Ask what they want to do when they are free."

They discussed and agreed to talk to other slaves on the ship, and in Dubhtraig when they arrived. They would play the long game; "they can't watch all of us", and they'd have better chances shoreside. There was some discussion of keeping Highborne traditions alive, in captivity. The younger suggests that it's extreme missionary work.

The visionary tries to get the older prisoner's spirits up, to get them to stop doing Sorin's work for him. It's suggested that the boon is flung into the ocean.

The group hugs, and the visionary holds the others' hands: "I believe in both of you."

And there is nothing they can do but wait.

The visionary felt strongly that this was a time for ministering to their flock, and not a time to pump them for information, and that they brought Ambition where it was sorely needed.

Both before and after the vision, the visionary was dedicated to Wisdom and had the testimonies "New Scion", "Teacher" and "Enduring Scion". The guide priest

was dedicated to Courage and had the testimonies “New Scion” and “Experimental Courage”.

The Day ritual Eyes of the Soul’s Past revealed a middle aged Highborn woman with a bruise on her forehead, who says, ”I am Miriam, daughter of Tamar. I was a Wayfarer, and then a slave, but still I fanned the flames of Virtue.” and that the vision took place during the Age of Renewal. [This would date it to the post-James interregnum or the reigns of Deanne or Ahraz, 60 to 100 years ago.]

The Night ritual Secrets of the Soul’s Desire gave this insight: A guttering flame in the darkness. Slowly, delicately, it is kindled, so that one day someone may relight it. You feel chains around you, chains of hundreds, thousands. And yet those chains feel lighter, for though they are strong, they are not eternal.

Gisli Baerson the Provider (??)

Accompanied by Iniska Ashford (??)

The visionary was a well-respected Ilyarch of Axou whose uncle, the Grand Ilyarch had died, leaving him with the best claim to the skull-encrusted throne. He was young and inexperienced, and his elevation might cause a civil war. But he could easily play Kingmaker between the other two candidates, Maximatis and Danzia. Two advisors, one named Nicotina, advised the visionary on the other two claimants; it felt a little like they were babysitting for the visionary.

They talked about how Axos had lost a citadel in recent history; it is theorised this might have been Kaban.

Maximatis was old and wouldn’t dilute the visionary’s claim. He was seen as conservative, a safe pair of hands; he would change little, acting much like the visionary’s dead uncle.

Danzia, on the other hand, would weaken the visionary’s standing, and was

proposing to invade the Salt Flats of Sanath and the Druj who lived there. The advisors said that, currently, the Druj were quiescent and not a threat, but the barbarians in the Bay of Catazar were a problem. They also thought the Casineans might not be happy with taking the Salt Flats.

When the visionary asked for their advice, Nicotina asked "are you asking me as Nicatina, or as your advisor?" "Both", replied the visionary.

As an advisor, she would play it safe with Maximatis. But she saw Danzia selling something more – it was important that the Axou grow and learn and not look inwards. But either would be massively indebted to the visionary.

The transition would be smooth if Maximatis was appointed, but there would be blood if Danzia was – the visionary took that as a threat of civil war.

The visionary decided that it was necessary that Axou grow in the long run; the guide priest commented that in this life Gisli has never ever gone for the safe option. The other advisor says they will make preparations.

After the vision, the visionary commented that they knew they had a connection to Axou; in this life they purchase all their drugs.

Before the vision the visionary had a dedication to Prosperity and the testimonies "The Provider" and "Autumn's Broker"; the guide priest had a dedication to Prosperity and a testimony "Prosperous Friend"

Spring Equinox, 386 YE

Introduction

Three visionaries experienced a vision induced by Pure Liao at the Solstice.

Following their vision, the visionary and guide priest were questioned by the authors. Their stories are recorded in the following pages, in the order that the visions were received.

- * **Landon Hawcombe** (??), accompanied by Fabio de Sarvos (??)
- * **Lady Eleanor Novarion** (Dawn), accompanied by Edward Novarion (Dawn)
- * **Emperor Vesna** (??), accompanied by Aspar (??)
- * **Gancio di Catazar** (??), accompanied by Isaia Pavone di Sarvos (the League)
- * **Esteban i Guerra** (??), accompanied by ?? (??)
- * **Aulus Warcaster** (??), accompanied by Able the Taller, Zenith Ascendant (Urizen)

Landon Hawcombe (??)

Accompanied by Fabio de Sarvos(??)

The visionary awoke sat down in a small camp with a small fire, with a boyar in front of them, who wanted advice. The boyar was worried about the Way being pushed on them; Dawn and Highguard wanted them to join their Empire. The boyar's concerns were chiefly about how it would affect their relationship with the Sovereigns.

An emissary from another vale came in. Other va`les were joining, and seeing that, others were joining too. (it was assumed this was about joining the Empire, but at no point was this explicit). During a conversation about this, the emissary noted that "the Fair" wanted the vales to join, with more concerns about the sovereigns. The emissary was not sure on the details about the Way, and didn't

seem to be able to persuade the boyar despite the visionary's insistence. Eventually the emissary left, and the boyar and visionary continued to discuss their sovereign concerns.

The visionary said those (the Way and the Sovereigns?) aren't necessarily incompatible. If they are, that problem needs to be addressed, because not being able to deal with sovereigns would jeopardise the safety of the vales; otherwise the Empire needs to sort the sovereigns out instead.

The visionary asked if Dawn and Highguard were aware of the Volodny? The boyar said they **are** the Volodny.

What were they offering? The Boyar said financial and military support.

Then it came down to whether they should join or not. The visionary said that if they stand alone against the rest of the vales, they would be alone, whereas if they joined with other vales then at least they'd be part of Varushka and be safer. The visionary recommended that the vale join, and the vision ended shortly after.

Both before and after the vision, both visionary and guide priest were dedicated to Prosperity, the visionary having a testimony of "Loyal Servant" with the strength of seven priests, and the guidepriest a testimony of "Fabulous Playwright"

Lady Eleanor Novarion (Dawn)
Accompanied by Edward Novarion (Dawn)

The visionary awoke in a cell with an afraid friend, someone they loved. They had found a passageway through the Mountains of the Moon and been taken captive. Their captors in what looked like Urizen clothing offered a choice: return to the Empire and have their memory of that place taken, or stay with them and be part of their great project.

Their friend was angry, saying “that’s no choice”. The visionary suggested that they think of it as an opportunity to teach each other.

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When the visionary next awoke, a blanket had been draped around her.

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Time passed again, and they yet again were offered the choice; the violence of the Empire was mentioned. The visionary rejects giving up their memories because memories are what makes us who we are.

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Their friend was having difficulty, and began to think the other people had a point.

The visionary said what she felt: that whilst the Empire might be violent, we’re not, and tried to persuade the others. Eventually, their friend left with those who offered the choice.

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When the questioners returned the next time, their friend came with them.

Before the vision, the visionary had a fresh dedication to Pride with the strength of the entire Pride assembly (18), and the guide priest had a dedication to Wisdom and the testimonies “New Scion” and “Wise Symposiarch”.

In addition, each had an anointing of Understanding with the strength of one priest, which inspired an urge to see other people’s points of view. The

visionary's was removed, and the guide priest's replaced with the Focus of Wisdom.

The Day ritual Eyes of the Soul's Past revealed the visionary to have been Meti of Ankarien Spire, a sentinel in the Age of Renewal. They were eventually returned to the Empire with no memory of what happened in Tsark.

The Night ritual Secrets of the Soul's Desire provided the insight that their friend did not come back, and was never seen again.

Gancio di Catazar (??)

Accompanied by Isaia Pavone di Sarvos (The League)

The visionary awoke in the rehearsal space of a theatre in Tassato Regario with crowds outside the brick walls covered in masks and instruments, and a sideroom with similar items. They had just drained their cup and were sat next to a mirror and paperwork with lines from a play, including the characters Alderi, Aldones, Moloch, Sheber, Irida, Viola, Myfanwy, Long Tom, Robert, "The King" and Tom Drake. Everything was in iambic pentameter; a snippet was remembered:

ROBERT: Your Grace –

KING: – My friend.

ROBERT: [six more syllables to finish the line]

The visionary was greeted by two people; Antonio, an actor with tousled black hair and a femme presenting playwright with long pale brown hair.

Antonio greeted the visionary as Caterina. They had been friends for a long time – Antonio asked for a hug – but hadn't seen each other for ages. Antonio had called Caterina in to fix the play.

The play was possibly named "the Seven Companions of the First Empress". They had funding from Bastion, and hoped to take the play to Anvil; funding for

this would come from the Woodwych Harts [a chapterhouse], but this was on the down low.

They were looking at which characters to include, and what mask to pick for them; their backers also had opinions about this. To impress the backers they were considering putting Long Tom Goodfellow in - at that point an Exemplar, looking to be made a Paragon.

The visionary dismissed Long Tom (no problem). The visionary insisted they keep Viola (her lines were great) and discussed which mask; the others wanted the Witch but they eventually went with the visionary's suggestion of the Prince.

They mentioned they only crowned the First Empress after her death, and then Giovanni was crowned; Viola, Giovanni's mother, had apparently "set them up well" (ambiguous whether good or bad), and mentioned "feuds between families, you know how it goes". There had certainly more than seven companions, with strife between them.

Their backers had two key demands - first was that First Empress must not be mentioned by name. The visionary asked not Regan? not Naomi? These names did not illicit surprise.

The second demand of the backers was that they did not want Alderei named or cast in a positive light, only happy for him to be the Beast. The playwright was worried about losing funding. The visionary suggested the Mountebank, and have him be someone twisting the others; they would keep Alderei's words, to let them represent the common folk, but to placate the benefactors they would make Alderei a corrupting force. "Our Beast will be the Mountebank".

They chatted about Alderei and how things actually happened. Alderei was apparently the hero of the common folk, championing the cause of nations over Empire, opposing the idea of giving everything to the Empire, and suggesting the Empress demanded too much. Alderei was originally Highborn and moved to Varushka; there was a line in the script "you think because I rule a coven not a

chapter”. The visionary recommended using “fair” as a sobriquet: “fair Exarch”, “fair Boyar” to avoid naming them.

The nations that joined Alderei the Fair were mentioned: some of Dawn, Navarr, and the Marches. The script read: “and the war in the west // We’ll show her that her pride is not the only pride that matters”). [The visionary thinks this occurred later in the narrative, and was the important choice.]

The visionary felt Aldones was being portrayed as a prissy “ooh! look how many things I can do” sort – was discussed later because actor was sitting on the paper.

The writers wanted to portray the First Empress’s virtue through her companions, but her companions were squabbling constantly.

They did not discuss Sheber, nor get to Irida, or find out who Moloch was.

Aldones was glossed over; the visionary asked if they should include the relationship between Aldones and Violan, which was considered interesting

Tom Drake had the line “our mothers and fathers fled one tyrant; are we so quick to bend the knee to another?” The visionary mentioned Brigit, but she was considered too boring for theatre.

Myfanwy was controversial, but the Myfanwy / Regan (a name for the First Empress) love affair was not unknown, but was considered possibly too spicy by the others. She had the line “she brings one crown, I bring you four”. The vision came to an end during this discussion.

Both before and after the vision, the visionary had an Ambition dedication, a testimony of “Guild Dad” and an anointing with the strength of two priests that inspired encouraging others to do the right thing, regardless of laws or traditions in the way. The guide priest had a dedication to Prosperity.

Esteban i Guerra (Brass Coast)
Accompanied by Oriana di Sarvos (the League)

The visionary has requested that this vision be kept private for now, but it can be published after Spring 387 YE.

Aulus Warcaster (??)
Accompanied by Abel the Taller of Zenith Ascendant (Urizen)

The visionary awoke in a room with three others. They were a Wise One named Piotr Ketsov, and had been asked to arbitrate on what to do about Empress Brannan plans to invade Ossium (where Ketsov was and is) the next season. The room was richly dressed: gold plates, fine wall hangings, good food, nice rugs.

The three people gathered with the visionary had three viewpoints.

A cambion who talked a lot suggested working only with the Druj. Their contact was Silkor Gutbrand. Ketsov would become a subject (not slave) tribe.

Another person suggested working only with the Empire.

The Warden suggested a middle ground: to find a way to work with both the Empire and the Druj: support both sides until they could work out the eventual winner.

Whilst the people gathered mentioned the Druj flaying people in trees, they didn't seem to be personally afraid. They had done deals with the Druj and were satisfied with them.

The cambion mocked the Warden, calling them short-sighted. The Pro-Imperial was very interested in how much wealth and slaves they would acquire when the Empire invaded.

They discussed Brannan and her whims – she was invading Ossium because she'd lost everywhere else. Others said they had other Empresses who had waged war; the visionary said “why would we care about Guntherm, who waged war in places we never knew”.

The cambion, (who said their job was to make deals with dark powers, “not that there are any here now”) dropped subtle hints that they'd already told the Druj that the Empire was coming. These hints became more and more unsubtle over time. From there, the conversation became about the practicalities – they would work with the Druj, as it was important not to appear to be “gutless worms”, which felt like a Druj quote.

The others asked “is that where you stand, then, Wise One? We stand with the Druj?” The visionary had the impression that Ketsov was already under the influence of the Druj already, and were doing well from it; they had the understanding of wealth that comes from being wealthy. The visionary said “if the Empire's going to lose there's no point standing with them. We stay with the Druj, for survival. We'll make friends with the Empire and sell their secrets to the Druj.”, and the vision ended, with no real mention of virtue.

Both before and after the vision, both visionary and guide priest had a dedication to Loyalty and an anointing of the Eyes of Loyalty. The guide priest's dedication was the strength of three priests.

The Day ritual Eyes of the Soul's Past revealed the visionary to be Piotr Ketzov,

who had had a long and difficult life, and had advised many boyars as a Wise One. In the vision he advised his young cousin, Boyar Vassily Ketzov. He went into the Labyrinth near the end of the Era of Turmoil.

(Empress Brannan reigned 249-257 YE, the Era of Turmoil ends 281 YE)

The Night ritual Secrets of the Soul's Desire gave the following insight:

They chose to collaborate with Druj, and prospered greatly. They sold information about their neighbours; and materials and magical items. With their help, it took just a few seasons for the Druj to conquer Ossium, which they held until very recently. Piotr is an important historical figure to the family; he was able to rein in Yekaterina's worst impulses. Polina, the warden from the vision, would become boyar.

Summer Solstice, 386 YE

Introduction

Three visionaries experienced a vision induced by Pure Liao at the Solstice.

Following their vision, the visionary and guide priest were questioned by the authors. Their stories are recorded in the following pages, in the order that the visions were received.

- * **Anastasiya** (Varuskha), accompanied by Arsenio of the Gilded Horn Carta (the League)
- * **Vasili, Pride of Ossium** (Varuskha), accompanied by Yavanshka (Varuskha)
- * **Clymenestra** (Urizen), accompanied by Veiko Bondforger (Wintermark)

Anastasiya (Varuskha)

Accompanied by Arsenio of the Guilded Horn Carta (the League)

Much of this account was provided by Arsenio, with Anastasiya present.

The visionary awoke in a well-appointed throne room with chairs and cushions, and a table laid with plates, tankards, bottles and fruit. Eggs fried in the fireplace of this Varuskan hall.

They were Brother, or Inquisitor Shem, and they had a letter to them, warning that a sword of Freeborn design had been taken from an Orc leader of the rebellion, and that sword was being brought to them. The correspondence also gave their best wishes to Naomi.

Another Highborne was present, and a thuggish Varuskhan boyar with a large axe entered, sweeping the table clear, unwrapping the sword and placing it.

The visionary picked up the sword, curious to note that they were right handed

in their past life, but left handed in her current life. It had an aura that felt like the wielder wanted to help people less fortunate than themselves, which upon the use of Liao, was discovered to have the strength of five priests; it made the visionary inclined to support the orcish rebels who were being oppressed. The visionary gave it a name of “the Sword of Rebellion”.

The sword was evidence that the ongoing rebellion had received Freeborn support. The boyar insisted that a statement needed to go into the Highborne assembly to denounce this; the visionary considered what to put in it. They suggested “The Freeborn must reveal the role they had played in the rebellion.”

The Boyar seemed happy at this, and apologised for bringing politics into it. “You must always follow your heart”, and praising the Highborne’s ambition in mediating this situation and their loyalty to their nation.

The boyar makes an excuse about needing some time to think, and leaves; the visionary discusses the statement with the other Highborne, but is interrupted by the Boyar asking the other Highborne to join him.

There are sounds of fighting; the visionary follows to see the other Highborne on the floor. “He didn’t matter,” said the Boyar. “Nothing on the paper matters.”

(The guide priest opined that they should have said that there was nothing the visionary could do but call them out; which will incite the rebellion)

“This is what needed to happen”, says the Boyar. “You’ll be found dead on the road. Don’t worry, it’ll be a courageous death.”. The visionary is then killed, and the vision ends. There were no lingering effects from this on the visionary.

In this life the visionary was involved in the Loyalty assembly using the Eyes of Loyalty in Spiral which bolstered those loyal to Spiral, and said that in this life, she mediates things.

Vasili, Seeker of the Woven Path, Pride of Ossium (Varuskha)

Accompanied by Yavanchka (Varushka)

The visionary has not given permission for this testimony to be published at this time.

Clymenestra (Urizen)

Accompanied by Veiko Bondforger (Wintermark)

The visionary awoke in a commander's tent; well-furnished, with much food (lobster and potatoes), and living quarters with really nice colourwork socks and some pants hanging . A prominent blue banner with three yellow Eels was present; the sounds of battle raged outside. The visionary was Yarl Fisher, and they were in the Dour Fens (another name for Bregasland), held by the Yotun, during the reign of Guntherm.

The visionary had been asked by the Yarl of Yarls and the Yarl of Kalpaheim (a hall in Hahnmark) to meet with an emissary of Emperor Guntherm. The Yarl of Yarls trusted the visionary's judgement as to whether the Empire was trustworthy. The Jotun desired peace, but not one that wouldn't be kept.

There was a briefing from an orcish advisor, who had paperwork detailing what the Yarl of Yarls wanted in red. There is discussion about how if there is a successful peace, the Jotun will have no claim on the visionary's ancestral lands in Bregasland. The visionary recognised that the borders would stay as they were.

The advisor brought in the emissary, a Winterfolk who was a close friend of Guntherm's. The hanging pants hit the Winterborn in the head. The visionary tells them to sit, so that their face is not in their leopard-pattern underwear. The advisor disrespected the emissary, calling them a thrall, for they had no weapon.

The visionary asked many questions to allow them to form an opinion of the emissary. The emissary knew why they were there, so the visionary was frank with their questions.

“Who are you?”

They are Winterfolk, and a close friend of Guntherm’s.

“Can Guntherm be trusted? Can the Empire be trusted?”

“Are you looking at other fronts? Do your eyes turn east?”

The emissary says that Guntherm was surprised by the unanticipated level of unity in the Druj.

“If the Druj sue for peace, will your eyes start looking elsewhere?”

There is an interruption. A very injured human with a sword, rotting flesh visible across their chest, a wound on their arm with a greenish tinge, missing an eye, looking very sickly. He was Jarl Eivar, the Golden, of the golden horde.

The Winterborn offered to help; the Jarl waved his sword at him and told him to get away. The orc advisor tried to calm the Jarl.

The visionary took command of the situation, telling the Yarl to shut up, the Winterborn to sit down and confirming with the advisor that they were able to see to the wounds. The emissary was a physick, and continued to give advice about getting the hair out of the eye to avoid it getting infected.

“Well, my next question was going to be ‘can you control your people.’”

It is mentioned that the attackers was Navarri, striking out of nowhere. The Navarr had desecrated the bones of the Jotun ancestors, and the voices of the ancestors in the human Jarl’s head had been silenced. But that is not an answer.

“How can we trust you if you cannot control your people?”

The Winterborn was stunned, and thought for a while. They did not deny the Navarri attack, declaring it to be unacceptable and disgusting.

The visionary pressed their questioning. “How can your Empire control his people?”

“The Empire, as you know, is a collection of nations, with many different

opinions. This behaviour is unacceptable and unsanctioned by the Emperor.”

“What assurances can you make that this won’t happen again? I cannot trust an Empire who cannot control their people.”

The Winterborn tried to make a point about the Empire respecting laws, but it didn’t go anywhere.

The injured Yarl piped up: “You’re a traitor, the Empire’s a traitor. How can you [the visionary] still do a deal with these people? The Navarri are human Druj. How can you trust these human Druj? They will betray us.”

The visionary continued to ask for assurances, asking the same awkward question: “How do I advise the Yarl of Yarls if you can’t control your own people?”

The emissary spoke up. “We can root out the banners that did this. What are the markings of those who attacked?” The yarl only recalls that they were tattooed.

The visionary stands. “I cannot countenance this behaviour.”, they say to the Yarl. “You speak of cutting out the rot – bring me the heads of those who did this and I will see about being able to trust you.” The emissary swears they will do that. The visionary queried whether oaths were important to the emissary’s people – was breaking an oath unthinkable? The emissary stated they were.

“If you bring me their heads, you can have your peace.”. The emissary gets on their knees and makes the oath.

“When they bring the heads, you can look in their dead eyes and know my loyalty to you, that I have not dismissed you, that they have brought the heads and therefore we can trust them.”

The injured Yarl was upset, disturbed, in pain, on knees. “Navarr will betray us.”

The Yarl asked the advisor to help them stand. Once standing, they eyeball the visionary. They will not accept the oath of a Winterfolk. They demand an oath on the visionary's honour, that the Empire will not betray them; that if it is broken, the golden horde will pursue the visionary to the end of their days.

The visionary steps closer, and grabs the blade of the sword, cutting themselves. "I swear this on my blood."

The Yarl grabs the visionary's hand, squeezing both his and the visionary's, and swears that the threats he made will be followed through.

"Then it is done." The yarl is taken away, and the emissary leaves.

The advisor returns. What is the Yarl of Yarls to be told?

"If they bring their heads, they can have their peace."

Both before and after the vision, the visionary had a dedication to Wisdom and a testimony of "Blackmailer Supreme". The guide priest had dedication to Loyalty and testimonies of "Oathsworn Loyalty", "Bondforger", "Clean", "Bond Forger", "Survivor", "Dagon's Crow", "Warm Hands", "Virtuous Bondforger".

Autumn Equinox, 386 YE

Introduction

Four visionaries experienced a vision induced by Pure Liao at the Solstice.

Following their vision, the visionary and guide priest were questioned by the authors. Their stories are recorded in the following pages, in the order that the visions were received.

- * **Coal Carefoot** (Marches), accompanied by Rhaego i Zemress i Erigo (Brass Coast)
- * **Rafael Barossa** (League), accompanied by Fieli i Sagrado i Riqueza (Brass Coast)
- * **Vladimir Sasha Volkov** (Varuskha), accompanied by Ilya Nikovich Volkov (Varuskha)
- * **Lord Alexander Tallstack, the “Nightstag”**(Dawn), accompanied by Prince Bishop Hildebrand von Holberg (League)

Coal Carefoot (Marches)

Accompanied by Rhaego i Zemress i Erigo (Brass Coast)

Permission has not been granted to reveal this vision at this time.

Rafael Barossa (League)

Accompanied by Fieli i Sagrado i Riqueza (Brass Coast)

The visionary awoke with a knife in their right (sword) hand. A total of six gather beside a broken wagon in a loose circle in the hour before sunrise. Phillipe, who had a head wound, sat to the visionary’s right, had a head wound; Isra sat to the visionary’s left. Directly opposite stood a big-horned cambion named Jack, no others bore trappings of lineage. The visionary is referred to as both Armand and Armond.

They are all escaped slaves trying to work out what to do next; they are six, but there are only enough supplies for two to leave by boat. Two other groups escaped with them, but their locations are now unknown; they had missed this rendezvous. This group hadn't lost anyone, but Phillippe's injury was grave. "We've had a good run; we've got this far on hope and force of will"

Iska says to trust in the dawn - hope - and to head east across the sea, which the visionary has their back to. "It'll be fine", she repeats, as a mantra, and "trust in the dawn" has the feel of a tenet of faith. "We just have to hope there's something."

Phillippe, the oldest, wants to stop and fight the orcs of the Slathering Rats, hypothesised to be proto-Druj. But not all of the slaves can fight, and some will be captured and made an example of at Leene, a few days walk to the south, which will diminish the spirits of the other slaves. He was unreasonable, wanting only to fight, not wanting to leave by boat. "I've done a lot of stuff I've wanted to do for a long time", he says, implying the corpses left in his wake.

Jack, the cambion, suggested they walk to Leene and blag their way in, claiming that they're someone's slaves.

Another option mooted was to head into the Forest of Ulnak to the west, but they know there's "stuff" (monsters) in there. The north is not mentioned. Not everyone can get on the boat, not everyone can fight, can't all head in the same direction. The problem brings the riddle about the Fox, Goose and the Grain to the visionary's mind.

They talk a lot about the future; splitting up now, and regrouping elsewhere, which felt foolish to the visionary. Going back seemed unreasonable. Phillippe promised to defend the other's escapes, although a fight was what he'd wanted anyway.

The visionary mused that they had a little conspiracy of six companions loyal to each other. If there had been seven, he would have pondered whether he was

about to witness the creation of bond magic... The visionary mentions their loyalty and ambition, but only confusion abounds.

The others looked to the visionary for direction; the visionary talked Jack out of trying to walk into Leene. Jack and Iska would take the boat and sail away, the others would stand and fight, so people would know that the orcs didn't get all of them, and that word would spread to the other slaves.

The Day ritual "Eyes of the Soul's Past" revealed the visionary to be Ahmond, leader of a slave rebellion against the Slathering Bats in "Leen Iskrid", near the city of Leen.

The Night ritual "Secrets of the Soul's Desire" whispered:
"No stories are told but echoes remain. There, four companions died fighting the orcs. The other two voyaged East into the dawning sun. One died of a punctured lung soon after. The other went East into an uncertain fate."

Vladimir Sasha Volkov (Varuskha)

Accompanied by Ilya Nikovich Volkov (Varuskha)

The notes for this vision were not available at the time of printing.

Lord Alexander Tallstack, the "Nightstag"(Dawn)

Accompanied by Prince Bishop Hildebrand von Holberg (League)

Both before and after the vision, the visionary had a dedication to Ambition and a testimony of Savvy Advocate, the guide priest had a dedication to Wisdom.

The visionary awakes in an open field, looking at the constellation of the Phoenix. "Beautiful" – "Quite" is the conversation exchanged between the visionary, who holds a sword and wears padded armour in the Urizeni style, and a man in black.

The visionary felt incredibly strong, and cocky, and felt as if they were a heroic figure.

The man in black – a friend? an agent? a handler? – speaks. “Same as you did before. Strike him down. Kill this time, it’s the only way.” The visionary knows this to be true.

In a glade, stands a single Urizeni sword scholar, in pale robes and leather armour, agitated, scared and anxious. The visionary is asked if they are “Zenno, who abandoned reason”.

They talk. The pale-robed Urizeni tries to convince Zenno not to do what they came to do, claiming that the Empire has abandoned its rationality and reason.

“Ever seen a paragon?”

“No, that’s not the point”, retorts the visionary.

“Ever seen proof of paragons?”, he says, wielding his blade with the desperate cornered energy of someone who believes the correctness of their position.

There is a standoff; insults are traded, “puppy” “you’re their puppy”, both hesitate to take the first blow. The sword scholar struck first, an attempt to kill, but parried. The visionary taunts, “ha ha, nearly”, and dispatches the sword scholar quickly, each blow taking a limb. The sword scholar laments “you have abandoned your reason”, as he falls to the ground. The visionary searches the body, but there is nothing to be found.

The handler comes towards the glade, but never walks into the light “It is time to go”. “How much longer must we do this?” “As long as it takes. You’re doing the right thing.” “I don’t like to do this to kin” “The sword scholars are a dangerous problem.”

The visionary is now exploring an interest in Astronomancy.

The Day ritual “Eyes of the Soul’s Past” revealed an androgynous Merrow in grey and purple robes, wearing leather and a sword, their face covered in duelling scars, and named them as “Zenno, formerly of the Temple of Perfect Moments”, during Giovanni’s reign during Foundation era.

The Night ritual “Secrets of the Soul’s Desire” whispered:

“They call me a traitor, my former colleagues. I killed the Temple. It no longer exists. I fought someone stronger, and I died. I was not a traitor, they betrayed themselves. I acted as the bloody midwife of a new world.”