

Hell's Vengeance

Journals

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Participant List

- ❖ **GM/Vipostix** - LE Unique Male Apostate Devil (Justin)
- ❖ **Arcatraz "Archie"** - LE Female Draconic Scion Blood Arcanist/Dragon Disciple (Abbie)
- ❖ **Dexsius Ocellus** - LE Male Hellspawn Tiefling Fiendish Vessel (DC)
 - **Tyapket** - LE Male Imp (DC)
- ❖ **Dominus Fex** - LE Male Human Insinuator Tyrant Antipaladin (Justin)
- ❖ **Kezax** - LE Male Green Kobold Cleaner Slayer (Shades)
- ❖ **Paraduke Temoni Kennari** - NE Male Elf Twilight Sage Arcanist (Alundrell)
- ❖ **Companions**
 - **Quintus Remus Tanessen** - NE Male Human Magus (DC)
 - **Zylstra** - LE Female Kobold Wyrmswitch Witch (Shades)

Retired

- ❖ **GM** (DMY)
- ❖ **Ezra** - CE Male Human Mad Scientist (Blank)
- ❖ **Kalista** - Female Witch (Blank)
- ❖ **Magnus Verloran** - Male Halfling Drunken Master Monk (Grizz)
- ❖ **Zuzka Zly** - CE Female Human Knife Master/Brawler/Barbarian (Allie)

Character Images



Dexsius Oscellus



Dominus Fex



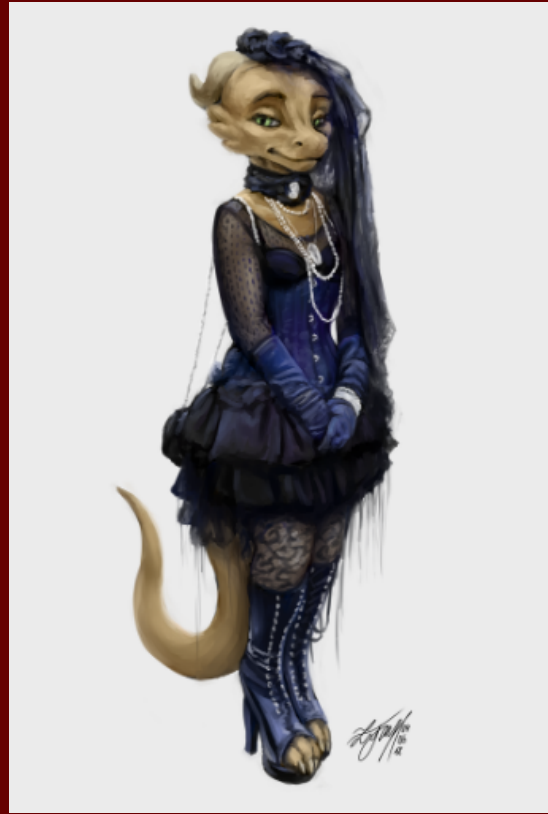
Kexax



Paraduke Temoni Kennari



Quintus Remus Tanessen



Zylstra



Arcatraz

HV1 - The Hellfire Compact

20/09/15 - Session 0 - Dominus' Introduction

Participants: Dominus (Justin)

I have known that I am blessed since I was a child.

Back then, I did not understand the meaning of the whispers that would come to me. My dear father was diligent in giving me a proper well disciplined upbringing, and he dutifully saw to it that I was taught in the faith of Great Asmodeus. Sadly, well intentioned as his efforts were, he was ignorant of that to which I am gifted with understanding. The Church taught me much, but not nearly enough to sate my voracious curiosity. It lacked those tools I would need to decipher the divine glyphs that coursed through my mind. How could I possibly be satisfied with a single step, when there are yet so many stairs left to climb? To think that all the others were satisfied to remain at that base, playing at being at the top of the tower... I did try to open their eyes, but they would not understand. I alone could see it, no matter how I ripped apart their veils. So I left them to wallow in their puddles of ignorance, and I continued to climb.

Beyond Asmodeus were the Diabolists. Oh what things they showed me! To explore not just the Prince of Darkness, but the princely kingdoms of Hell... Such craft put into it all, that which holds Asmodeus at its deepest summit! To neglect it is folly! After all, a bell is of little use without the tower it rests atop. Both are necessary for the whole to work... But even that is not enough. There is need of air to carry the sound, light to shine upon the realm... There was far more to learn. I was well fed, but my appetite was not so easily sated.

Now Heaven, that is a wondrous mirror! So alike Hell, yet so opposed. Naturally, those who only follow good and hold no place for evil were as blind as the Asmodaeans. They too could not appreciate the grander picture, the divine portrait that my muses sang to me. I tried to teach them, but they could not hear the song. When they sang, their melody was far off pitch... But still, they did still teach me something, and for that I am forever grateful.

For you see, I came to understand that this blindness is in and of itself part of the system! The hierarchies that construct the frame are not solely built upon the written rules of men and gods, but also their hearts. For those not gifted with my understanding, with the divine wisdom I am granted... They find themselves impure, unable to build that which they

cannot comprehend. So instead, they build what they can. They are the masons that place the bricks in the grand designs of the Architects, unaware of the wondrous palace they construct. To obey the rule of law and follow the will of one's god is the best most impure souls can do, deprived of enlightenment as they are. Though I confess I have been prone to frustration in the past, I now have come to appreciate and respect that. After all, despite their failings, they may still serve towards the greater work. I have come to be more tolerant of their limitations, for I understand that it is the product of weakness, not malice. What they lack in awareness they can make up for in diligence. Then at the very least, I can offer them a guiding hand when they clearly misstep. After all, is it not for the teacher to instruct their student, or the master to discipline a slave when they have erred?

It is for that reason that I have left the city to rejoin father dearest. These are sad times indeed! Of the noble Hellknights, the Godclaw were perhaps closest to the true nature of the divine template. For them to be so callously betrayed by what ought to be their brethren... This "Reclamation" claims to follow Iomedae, and yet they spit on the structures of which she is a foundation! Then to go even further and betray Cheliah? To try and destroy that which has been so meticulously constructed! To act in accordance with the divine will without understanding it is a permissible flaw, but to act against the dictums of the universe is a grave error! It is a treason of the highest order!

I see now why I was chosen to be blessed with the divine understanding. In their infinite wisdom, the guiding hands could see such calamity approaching, and I am here to correct the mistake before it can cause further damage. I wholly accept this duty! To be their will manifest, I shall cleanse this impurity! I will teach these lost creatures the errors of their ways. Perhaps there is hope yet for their salvation, if their spirits might be made open to these truths. It is my solemn vow that I shall do what I can to teach them, even if I must play the surgeon and tear every shred of filth obfuscating their soul's eye... If that is what is needed, then I shall tear, and tear, and tear...

Worry not, wayward lambs... I shall shepherd you into the true light!

20/09/15 - Session 0 - Dominus' Background

Participants: Dominus (Justin)

Dominus Fex was born of a tryst between Archbaron Darrelus Fex and a woman named Loredana Viorcia. Having no desire to keep the child, Loredana left Dominus in the care of his father and departed for Kantaria. Darrelus, for his part, also had little interest in raising the boy, and left him in the care of the Asmodaeen clergy in Egorian, where he was raised and schooled in the worship of the Dark Prince.

Dominus took to the lessons eagerly, quickly surpassing his fellow pupils. When interviewed about his progress however, the clerics found that his views, coloured by whispers he claimed to hear, seemed strangely divergent of those he had been taught. Dominus had a comprehensive understanding and appreciation for Asmodeus, but in his own opinion simply serving the Prince of Hell seemed “inadequate”. His deviation from the faith only became further exacerbated in conversations among his peers, which eventually culminated in him brutally assaulting some of them.

Given Dominus' noble status, he escaped any reprisals, which he claimed were a simple attempt to “make them see the truth”. Instead, he was quietly shifted out of the temple and over to a group of Diabolist scholars for his continued education.

Just as he did within the temple of Asmodeus, Dominus eagerly took to the new materials presented to him. By the scholar's accounts, the boy seemed to have a great interest in the various workings of Hell. Though in time he seemed to grow bored of this as well. Having learned the cost of Dominus' frustrations, the Diabolists instead suggested that he continue his studies abroad, rather than join the clergy. Dominus seemed to agree, and began a series of small pilgrimages to different places of faith in Cheliox, studying many gods and religious views. He would come to espouse the truth in many of them, though these “truths” often seemed like deeply heretical deviations of the faiths in question. While on his journey, there were some reports of mysterious and gruesome murders that were sometimes left in his wake. However, these were usually silenced before any formal complaints or investigations could be made.

After the emergence of the Glorious Reclamation, Dominus voiced a deep concern for his “misguided brethren”. And so it was that he made the trip from Egorian to reunite with his distant father, and begin his work in “shepherding the lost souls”.

20/09/15 - Session 0 - Dominus' Philosophy

Participants: Dominus (Justin)

The religious views that Dominus espouses are an enigma only understood by his own twisted mind, and even then only tenuously. The closest approximation would be somewhere between the faith of the Diabolists and the Godclaw.

In its most basic form, Dominus' faith is a pantheistic view in which all gods are striving to recreate the perfect society on Golarion. This model most closely resembles Hell, with other lawful societies such as Heaven and Axis serving as similar analogues, or mirror versions.

In his mind, it is the true purpose of every person to strive to reproduce this paradise. While frustrated in his earlier years by people's inability to see the greater picture of how all beings, even gods, are servants to this ultimate envisionment of the world, with time he has come to adjust his beliefs to accept that some people are too small minded to see the full scope of the project, and therefore align themselves with only a single faith as this is all they are able to comprehend. As such, followers of any lawful deity are seen as useful chattel to the gods. Their ongoing devotion is a necessary thing for their usefulness, so disloyalty to one's assigned faith is something Dominus considers to be extremely sinful that requires "correction".

What Dominus considers to be disloyalty is not always clear. Certainly, to consider any edifice besides Hell itself to be superior is heresy, as is any disobedience of those that serve it dutifully. Groups such as the Godclaw, where lawful faiths collaborate towards the same goal, is something Dominus approves of. It is Dominus' belief that House Thrune is a loyal and dutiful mouthpiece to Hell's will on Golarion, and considers actions against it to be heretical. Those that follow more neutral or chaotic gods, by and large, are deeply heretical, though in some cases Dominus has reasoned that their work is serving the project of Hell in its own way.

Publicly, Dominus considers himself a follower of the "true project", and sees no contradiction in calling himself a devout Asmodaeon, Diabolist, Abadaran, Kuthite, Toragian, Iroran, and even Iomedaeon, and will profess his love and admiration for each as it suits him. Those that would consider his stance heretical are simply too closed-minded to understand that simple fact.

20/09/15 - Session 0 - Zuzka's Background

Participants: Zuzka (Allie)

Zuzka Zly was born in the city of Longacre to her poor parents, who later had 2 other children (twins) they abandoned when Karla was around 5 years old. Zuzka's parents were thieves, and from the time she could walk she was encouraged to slip through crowds and forage through the pockets of travelers.

The first time Zuzka was caught stealing, she was thrown into the nearby river. Looking back, she believes she was no more than 3-4 years old. As she was tossed in, she saw her father hiding in the shadows, watching her struggle. After a desperate battle, she clawed her way onto shore, only to watch her father turn and walk away. Zuzka found her way home, and he advised her to only steal from younger and more innocent people than herself, to avoid that result in the future. Zuzka remembers that he never even asked if she was okay.

As an adult Zuzka drifted off from her parents to another part of town, more bored of them than anything else. She knows she is a more cunning thief than them and does not see the benefit in keeping their company. She has not seen her parents for several years now, despite residing in the same city. Thinking of them gives her nothing more than disappointment and bitterness. Now that she can look back on her upbringing, she can see the scorn that her parents had for her. To this day Zuzka does not believe her parents ever loved her, and still wonders what happened to the twins.

Zuzka's "friends" disappeared as she got older as well, leaving her alone but not exactly lonely. With the ability to sweet talk children and virtuous people, she often lingers near public areas out of sight, ready to strike up conversation with anyone that might wander away from their group or appear lost.

Lately, Zuzka has been feeling the unrest in the city, and after the martial law was declared has taken an interest in what House Thrune can offer her for her type of work. She has no interest in being loyal to anyone, but for the right price will listen to any offer for work.

20/09/25 - Session 1 - Dominus' Journal 1: This is No Place for Rebels

Fireday, 7th Arodus, Longacre, The Heartlands

Participants: Dominus (Justin)

Of the scents that I expected to be welcome to upon my return home, I confess I did not expect the first to be that of leather work. Perhaps my prolonged time among those of the cloth have left me unaccustomed to such aromas. More likely still it is the stench of heresy that overcame me. I understand now why my dear childhood friend requested my aid in administering corrective actions against this tax avoider. To think such avarice would be festering in this town! Well, the lesson has been taught now. It is a terrible tragedy that his four-legged companions needed to be cleansed of his corrupting influence. I was certain that the corruption in their minds was thoroughly squashed, lest it reform in the afterlife. I pray that their souls may yet find new glorious purpose among the hounds of Hell!

Dear Cimri's patron seems a curious sort, but it is clear that his words are those of one loyal to the True Order, and so if I might aid him in putting to rest the unease that stirs in these lands, it shall be my pleasure to do so! While I cannot help but feel that the compatriots I have found myself with do not quite share my zeal, they are nevertheless quick to comply as well. They were even so proactive as to put at ease a poor wailing soul, so there is yet hope for them! It shall be an interesting thing, to work alongside the blind. It has taken such perseverance on my part not to proselytize, lest they flinch at the light and disappoint me as so many others have... Perhaps in time I shall be able to inspire them to see the Fires of Truth without blinking. Now that would be a most joyous miracle indeed!

I am pleased to find that this Razelago is a diligent sort! No sooner that word of heresies came, he sent us forth to silence them. I was pleased to once again see Cimri's aunt, though her ignorant gaze upon me remains fierce as ever, assuaged only by the clever words of Magnus. I cannot help but wonder why a woman of the law would allow declarations of rebellion to be spoken. Perhaps she simply has faith that the good people of this city would know better than to be swayed by such villainy? Would that I shared her assurance, but I cannot stand idly by and allow deceit to be spread with impunity! After the confused Iomedaeen heretic spoke her lies, I made certain the Inheritor's true desires were heard by the people. Her will was made clear by how her light shone upon me and my words! Even Miss Zuzka spoke in favour of me! Could it be that she understands the wisdom of my preachings? The others were not idle either, I am pleased to say. They prepared an alternative, I hear, in case I could not reach the masses. To use fire in such a way, so evocative of the true blessings of this world! Perhaps the Voices whisper to them as well, albeit in more subtle ways. There is much for me to learn from them, I think!

From what our patron says, my father has seen fit on this third day to declare new orders in Longacre to ensure its continued prosperity in light of the apparent corruptions that have been forming. It is indeed wise of him to have this done now, before it has a chance to take hold. What passes for compassion among the ignorant simply will not do in matters of heresy, after all! But my dear father need not fear for his people, as my new friends and I shall see to it that they are properly doused in the light of truth and justice, as is Their will!

Oh what glorious fun this shall be!

20/10/09 - Session 2 - Dominus' Journal 2: A New Order

Sunday, 9th Arodus, Longacre, The Heartlands

Participants: Dominus (Justin)

Spreading the news of my dear father's decrees proved more taxing than I might have expected. It would seem the lambs of this town have become so accustomed to their routines that any alteration seems an affront to their way of life. To even go so far as to waste food in a fit of rage! Certainly, I can appreciate wishing to reside in the comforts of their lenient ways. Were I but ignorant chattel I too would struggle. But it is that which makes it all the more important that they be made to understand the danger posed from these dissident elements! Creature comforts must not be made paramount over something so important as divine mandate! This is something all beings must understand!

It is for that reason that while tragic, I must applaud the choice of having Miss Staelish stand down from her post as Sheriff. Truly, compassionate though she may be, times so dire as these cannot permit for such leniency. To think she would be so blind as to ignore the unscrupulous knavery of her subordinates! That they would turn against rightful authority at the drop of a sash is proof of how unfit they were to exist, let alone act as any sort of authority in this realm. At least I have reliable disciples as allies. They are perhaps crude in their methods (a symptom of their deafness, no doubt), but nevertheless efficient in carrying out the will of the Gods. My sole regret is that I lacked the means to pursue the one traitor who tried to flee. Ah well, perhaps he was simply confused, and will come to understand the error of his ways. I shall be happy to absolve him of his mistake when next we meet, assuming he is prepared for the appropriate penance.

It has been an awfully long time since I had not laid eyes upon my birthplace, or my father for that matter. Would that these were less urgent times, perhaps our reunion might have been more emotional, though I can most certainly understand his need for stoicism in matters of business, especially one so crucial as this. Such joy it brought me for us to punctuate the reunion by swearing fealty to the True Order so officially! It is a shame that my companions still hesitate at the light of such significant rituals, but perhaps that is simply the awe of those who are not yet accustomed to revelations. Oh, how I envy them, to bear witness to such wonders with fresh eyes!

With our loyalty proven with blessed flame, we find ourselves tasked with making an example of one who would refuse to comply to the true law of Hell. This tavern owner, Mister Bolgart Caggan, not only wasted food, but has disobeyed curfew despite my taking the time to inform him directly of its orders! Even worse, the man resorted to illicit substances and theft of sacred artifacts (stolen from heretics, granted, but not to return it to

the Inheritor's proper representatives is equally heretical)! Perhaps the fault lies in my explanation of the laws. I made certain to provide greater clarity to the misguided patrons at least. Much as I might be tempted to properly show these lost lambs the errors of their ways more thoroughly, I mustn't allow my passions to distress this frightened flock. My dear father's subjects are such delicate things, and I would hate to break them without due cause. For now, the tavern's operation shall be left in Magnus' capable hands, so that the people may continue to enjoy their libations. It is more than they deserve, but sometimes it is necessary to give the masses their opiates. Meanwhile Mister Caggan may rejoice in his new role as an exemplar of redemption through discipline, while the bard that spoke heresies may be given a room to contemplate the weight of his foul words in blessed silence. It is a more generous proposition than I might have chosen myself, but such is the way to lure herding beasts back into their pens.

One last point of interest was a visit from a rather curious man, and one that makes my judgement teeter. Mister Ingoe Zoags is a duplicitous sort, that much I understand, but I suppose one must be if they are to properly deal with scoundrels. A less scrupulous tactic than I care for when dealing with heresy, but an effective one by Hell's own recognition. He may seek more reward for his duties than is proper, though he is at the very least a man of genuine patriotism, which is something these lambs seem sometimes to sorely lack. I Well then, if I am to choose my battles, he requires comparatively minor correction. After all, it is through his own assistance that we have come to learn that the good Doctor Gerya Rohalendi, who so graciously asked me to elaborate on father's laws, presumably so that she may better adhere to them, is struggling to maintain the wellbeing of those less fortunate in the town. Her care for compassion and the law is far less problematic than that of the former Sheriff, though it has rewarded her poorly. Such a misfortune! But, she needn't fear. I am certain we can secure an arrangement which will properly reward her continued upstanding behaviour, lest she too fall prey to this ignorant rot spreading ever so insidiously in these lands. Rejoice Doctor, that your salvation shall come by way of the carrot, rather than the stick!

20/10/23 - Session 3 - Ezra's Background

Participants: Ezra (Blank)

Ezra grew up middle class in Chelax on the outskirts of Westcrown, parents semi-successful traders, but he was one of 7 children so he received little attention and more often than love or attention, his parents would throw money or presents at them to buy themselves some free time. Even among the emotionally neglected children Ezra was the black sheep of the family, while utterly brilliant and a unique mind for science and problem solving, most social interactions went over his head. His parents caught on to how useful he could be and put him to work creating things for them to sell, and with some of his unique inventions and handiwork earned him the eye of the Chelaxian nobles. Who he was then voluntold to work for, in exchange he was given ample equipment, resources, and experimental subjects.

For a time he was worth the effort, his occasional breakthroughs and unique way of perceiving the world earned them the odd advantage here and there, but his brilliance only covered up so much of his ineptitude in social interactions, with his habit of treating subjects, coworkers, and higher-ups alike as experimental subjects and writing in his notebook about their personality quirks, behaviours, and such -- often annotating what he was writing aloud. Along with other bizarre creations like his tumor Jerboa, Jenkins, and his habit of asking people to drink unknown concoctions earned him the disdain and disgust of many higher-ups despite his usefulness.

A ploy to avoid him working for someone else, and to still reap the benefits of having him on their side, he was sent down the line to the hapless Archbaron Fex. Unable to refuse this "gift" of a capable alchemist from his higher-ups, it quickly became clear to Fex this helper they sent was more to get him out of their hair than for the assistance he could provide.

20/10/23 - Session 3 - Dominus' Journal 3: Jam in the Works

Sunday, 16th Arodus, Longacre, The Heartlands

Participants: Dominus (Justin)

For such a quaint village, this place has yet to be dull. Before we even had the opportunity to speak with the good Doctor about her financial troubles, we found ourselves summoned to address a visitor to Longacre. The rules regarding passage are clear, but this creature bore the rightful authority of a truly respectable member of our fair nation. It simply would not do for a representative of such a righteous figure to be impeded! Therefore we assured that due process was respected before he was granted safe passage. Certainly, some might balk at the notion of a hobgoblin mercenary passing through Chelish streets (modest clumps of filth-ridden dirt as these ones might be), but even a disgusting creature such as this has its place in the Divine Order, so long as they remain adequately subservient to their masters, of course. I made certain to accompany the beast and showed him all the due respect owed to a representative of the Duke of Remesiana. Let the people of this village see how one ought to conduct themselves. Let them also know that I am seeing to their safety personally, should the creature step out of line.

Fortunately, this particular creature was mostly well behaved, if a little boorish. What's more, in exchange for our correct behaviour, the Gods granted us a blessing! This creature had seen the heretics fight against the honourable Hellknights. His information was sadly limited for my appetite, but still quite fascinating. To think that these blasphemers would usurp the structures of Heaven for their perverse delusions! Oh, the thought of it makes me itch so! But no, so long as I have my duty to conduct here, I must refrain from allowing my righteous indignation to lead me from that sacred obligation. I must be patient and allow my work to be done here before I may think of confronting such scum. Still, the temptation is admittedly tremendous...

Moving on as promised, we spoke to the good Doctor Rohalendi. I explained that her debts would be forgiven and her business considered a matter of public welfare. As a proper well behaved member of our community, it is commendable that she fears for the wellbeing of our faded soldiers. I sincerely hope that this act of generosity on our part will show her that the righteous path will aid those that remain righteous themselves. As I understand, she may have come to think that our intervention was the product of our intercepting her missive. Ah well, so long as she takes it as a lesson to come to us directly with her troubles in the future, then it remains a success of Justice.

In other news, it would seem that in her abrupt dismissal, our former sheriff neglected to pass along the transfer of supplies that we would need. Magnus' tavern may have

sufficient ale and jam, but a man cannot live on jam alone. Fortunately, beyond food there is little need for upkeep, and any necessities we can procure from our friend Mister Zoags. Additionally, we now have the support of a new compatriot. It would seem Miss Kalista had other business, and in her stead my dear father has sent us this Mister Ezra. Of course, I would not think to question my father's judgement, and even less that of the Great Divine Order that this man has pledged himself to, as we have... Though this is quite an odd fellow. His concoctions seem to fulfill their purposes, and he has been diligent in his support, but his manner is questionable and his odour palpable. Still, he was quite quick to track the vandalising actions of a miscreant and ensure that the child's parents paid adequate reparations in the form of vegetables. It may not have been my chosen method of dealing with the situation, but his methods were... Efficient, if nothing else. There is little need for me to over-contemplate it. The Gods do work in mysterious ways, so if they are to manifest in giving me the support of this curious man, then so be it! I welcome his support with open arms!

Less acceptable was the behaviour of our guest Mister Caggan. Despite his clear disrespect, we prepared to remove him from the pillory and return him to the comforts of a cell. Yet, in his poor judgement, he saw fit to transform into a beast and assault us! It is only with the greatest of restraint that we did not slay the disgusting monster on the spot. That such a creature walked among the people with impunity is a distressing thought indeed! I suppose at least his demeanour is more understandable now: boorishness is to be expected from a boar. Well, in the end a pig is just another form of livestock, and the methods of herding remain largely the same, if a little more forceful. Perhaps this second lesson shall hold better than the first. For his sake I hope so, as my patience for his stubbornness is growing thin...

Speaking of beasts, our otherwise quiet week was interrupted by a pesky feline thing meddling with the gate. In it's foolishness it attacked us and even proclaimed the gate to be in its ownership! The idea that something so wild would even consider the notion of having ownership over something is absolutely absurd! The beast, called an ovinnik, was suitably disciplined without much aid from myself. Thanks be for that; the thing reeked of chaotic energy. I would rather not approach such a vile spirit if it is not necessary... May the wretched creature be judged as fittingly for its deviancy as it deserves!

That leaves us with our most recent act of indecency. It would seem that the two rambunctious children of that false prophet of the Inheritor thought it appropriate to come into the jail in the late hours and attempt to release Mister Caggan. Perhaps they simply believed that his crimes have been suitably paid for, or wished revenge for his theft of the blessed helmet. A shame they are so ignorant of his crimes against humanity, or they may have thought to act with more trepidation. Never mind of course their inability to follow correct procedure. What misguided teachings did this charlatan priestess teach her spawn, for them to so brazenly disregard proper authority? Or perhaps this was the corrupting

influence of that heretical cherub that accompanied them? If it's the latter, than thankfully that hideous thing was properly smashed into oblivion, as is appropriate for such a perversion of divine effigy. Truly, this blasphemy is the most rotten part of this poor village! Now it has cost the freedom of one of its flock, and the life of the other (it would seem that my companions were less tolerant of their belligerence than I; something I cannot in good conscience fault them for).

Now then, come morning I shall need to have words with the cleric Miss Allamar to inform her of her sons' crimes. She must be made to understand the severity of her rebellious words, and the poison they have spread among the people of Longacre. Perhaps she and those she has corrupted are not yet beyond salvation! As the holy day of Armasse is upon us, it is all the more important that this community be brought together in defence of the True Order!

20/11/06 - Session 4 - Dominus' Journal 4: Armed for Armasse

Moonday, 24th Arodus, Longacre, The Heartlands

Participants: Dominus (Justin)

I must give my thanks to the Inheritor, for she chose this most holy of days to grant us the divine privilege of delivering justice against those that would commit heresy in her name! Truly, there is no day better suited to such a purpose as Armasse!

Of course, before taking such actions, it was necessary to arrange a visit with dear father. He was gracious enough to grant us an audience so that we may tell him the news of our trespassers. It would seem the false cleric of Iomedae, the mother of heathens Tileavia Allamar, came to him as well, demanding to know what happened to her traitor kin. I opted to remain silent in her presence and leave the words to my companions. It would be unseemly for me to make a scene in father's abode. I had a mind to speak to her before the Armasse ceremonies began to give her the opportunity to repent, though her blatant rudeness made it clear that she and her ilk have not earned that privilege. She shall learn the truth of her children's corruption with the rest of this village.

The ceremony would be simple, elegant, and thoroughly demonstrative of our righteousness. The pig Caggan would be burned at the steak, perhaps prompted to expose his true hideous form as he is bathed in the cleansing fires. Then the living heathen brother Loran would be subjected to Iomedae justice, as is befitting a thief and denier of the true light. The deluded priestess would learn that this is what must be done to heretics, not to elevate them to priesthood!

The ceremony would have been perfect, were it not for the most heinous interference of the supposed Angel Knight. Her ludicrous proclamations poisoned the minds of our flock, necessitating that they be euthanized. Ultimately, the knight fled, but not before forcing us to slay the bestial barkeep through more conventional means. An ill-suited death for such a creature, but satisfactory, I suppose. My greatest regret is not managing to strike down that wicked mockery of a holy being and enemy of divine order so that I might cleanse that tongue that would corrupt so many of our innocent flock. In due time perhaps, that judgement will come.

Well, at the very least I was able to deliver the appropriate divine punishment to our would-be false priest, before the eyes of the misguided flock and the conceited wolf mother that leads them astray. After that, I spent the week training my body and mind, as should

any devout follower of the Inheritor. Once more, the goddess granted me wisdom and clarity: I have until now been far too gentle with these lost creatures. I did not wish to interfere in the order already brought upon these lands, but now I understand that there was no order! I made the same mistake as the former sheriff, and offered the carrot when the stick was far more necessary. The generosity I have been granting was a mistake that I shall henceforth correct! Let these sheep know the cost if they do not repent their sins!

May the first to learn this lesson be this Dent Gramel, old fool of a chattel that he is. He and his wretched companion sought to smuggle weapons out of the village, to enemies of order and justice, no doubt. In his panic to survive, he nearly cut down an officer of the divinely sanctioned law. These crimes will not stand, nor shall he, and those whom he sought to arm will have their arms suitably confiscated, before they might make the grave mistake of rising against their true masters...

20/11/20 - Session 5 - Dominus' Journal 5: Ashes to Ashes

Wealdy, 26th Arodus, Longacre, The Heartlands

Participants: Dominus (Justin)

The old fool Gramel proved to be of some use after all. I know not what persuasion techniques good Magnus used, but we have at least learned the supposed location of these brigands and ingrates that wish to contest the Divine Order. Further encouragement on my part also persuaded him to tell us of a different plot being orchestrated by the former sheriff against our dear friend Cimri. For his cooperation, I opted merely to hobble him slightly, only so that he might not stray again. He has Magnus to thank for this mercy, as he and his wife earned far worse punishment with their flightiness and recalcitrance. I have grown ever so tired of running after this confused flock...

It was fortunate that we arrived when we did to intercept the elder Staelish and her strays. While we were unable to spare the Ash House from the inferno that would make its moniker all the more apt, we did at least get Cimri out before she succumbed to the fires. Her aunt was not so fortunate. It is a shame; I had wished to thank her personally for making clear the error of my mercy through example. Then again, that she and her subordinates so readily turned against the law once they were no longer its representatives speaks volumes to their false righteousness. Public executions would have been more appropriate for such brigands, kidnappers, and hypocrites, but a cleansing by fire will do fine. Furthermore, we have come across the loyal krenshar guardian of the abode, Gaurig, and brought it with us. The creature followed its duty obediently and without faltering. We have given the noble beast the new duty of guarding the jail; a suitably important role for such a loyal creature.

So it would seem that in our preoccupation, the false priestess of Iomedae has seen fit to commit even further heresies. Not only did she abandon her post at the temple (or perhaps the goddess finally saw fit to banish her from her holy domain), she also exhumed the corpses of her rightfully executed kin and quite likely resurrected them! I find myself utterly shocked that she would act against the very order of righteous judgement! I knew her to be a heretic of course, but the depths of her depravity shock even me! Needless to say, she has demonstrated a willfulness well beyond what could be tolerated. I had hoped the light of the Inheritor would bring her clarity, but I see now that the responsibility lies with me to fully correct the matter. It shall be my honour to cleanse this blight on the Inheritor's name! In the meantime, I shall ensure that the temple is properly cared for.

This leaves us with our next destination, the bastion of these wayward souls... Fort Estazano. By the decree of the Divine Will, this corruption shall be purged before it can infect our village any further!

20/12/02 - Session 5 - Zuzka's Journal

Wealday, 26th Arodus, Longacre

Participants: Zuzka Zly, (Allie)

I knew bringing on this maniac could be disastrous, but fellow comrades are difficult to come by, especially ones that understand the value that being loyal to House Thrune will provide us. I continue to be leery of this Ezra, this man that creates concoctions and haphazardly injects into his victims, one of such victims I have become!

Thus far, I have been pleasantly surprised, and neither have sprouted extra limbs nor lost the wit of my mind. I found myself to be rather spry and agile when he shrunk me down to a lesser size, though I was within direct gaze of Magnus. Yet I remain unconvinced of his methods, for before we departed the jail, he injected that oaf Dent with horse blood! How vile, how unclean to do such a thing! And who knows what the outcome will be! No, I should be more cautious with allowing Ezra to continue further study upon myself. I shall keep my door locked at night, and possibly take up temporary residence with Magnus at his tavern. Fighting off a drunken halfling in the night is much simpler than a madman that can throw a syringe whilst I am sound asleep.

I have much pity for Dominus and his unsound mind. The poor fool is wrapped up in his head most of the time, or else he would be a real force of intellectual power. I believe allowing him the liberty to continue on his righteous path of justice is the path of least resistance for all of us at this time, for his sense of "right" will lead him through the most bitter of circumstances. I do not care for his lengthy justifications of our actions, we have a clear set job to accomplish for House Thrune and he will see it done, even if he must spend much time wrapping his mind around the matter. I hope that Dominus will find whatever peace it is that he seeks with our mission. As for myself, a comfortable home, and enough gold to outfit myself in the attire that I deserve for my loyalty is what I desire, as well as a halfling to attend to my trivial needs when beckoned.

I have only briefly considered the idea that it is possible that when Ezra's mysterious concoctions are performed by someone sound of mind, with enough study and devotion, they can become wondrous! How amazing and fortuitous it would be for myself if I could make such creations! If he were a man of sound mind and moral character, I would enquire with him about his methods, his areas of study or experience. Yet I fear that he wouldn't be open to polite conversation, though maybe with some prompting of liquor or other forms of inebriation he would be open to discussion...

20/12/04 - Session 6 - Dominus' Journal 6: A Fort and a Fall

Oathday, 27th Arodus, Longacre, The Heartlands

Participants: Dominus (Justin)

Our path forward lay clear, illuminated by what is no doubt Divine guidance. It led us to the ruins of what was once known as Fort Estazano. Such a waste of good stone, to be used by interlopers. Though it seems the whole affair was a treachery meant to deceive us. Just as soon as we entered we were assaulted by a pitiful slave and a feral beast. Despite our request that she stay back, Cimri made short work of the halfling while the rest of us contended with the larger creature. Regrettably, it managed to slay dear Magnus first. Thus two halffolk were cloaked in flames and sent forth to Asmodeus.

There is a lesson to be learned here. A message from the Gods, no doubt. Magnus' conviction was weak. I have already come to appreciate the futility of mercy towards these cretins, and yet he still held me back. In hindsight, one ought to have expected as much of a lesser being. Meanwhile we sought to hold our rogueish friend back, but she refused, and was all the more successful for it. I am happy to see that the Truth has smiled upon my old friend, but clearly for me, the lesson had not yet fully embedded itself. I see the errors of my ways now, and shall correct myself accordingly. The Speakers are gracious for bestowing upon me yet another Divine Truth!

It could not come at a better time either, as a new path emerged for us, this one leading to something known as the Court of Spears. A den of wild beasts in dire need of taming. The filthy lambs wasted no time in trying to hold us back with cowardly tactics, though my justice comes for them unimpeded. The false speaker Kels burned in Ezra's blessed flames, and while I am annoyed that I could not deliver his treatment myself, it is perhaps my punishment for giving in to Magnus' mercy. Very well. I shall not allow the failures of the past hold me back as I have other scoundrels to educate in the ways of the Divine Order! May the baptism of blood make it as clear to them as it is now to me!

20/12/11 - Session 7 - Dominus' Journal 7: Court of Spears Adjourned Sine Die

Oathday, 27th Arodus, Longacre, The Heartlands

Participants: Dominus (Justin)

These petulant creatures continued to be stubbornly defiant, so much so that my companions and I needed to take a brief reprieve by sheltering ourselves in one of the small treetop hovels. Fortunately, we came equipped with more than enough curative magic that we were able to restore ourselves, and short work was made of those scofflaw deputies. The man of arcane disposition with them fled, cowardly beast that he is. The man of the trees would have to wait for now. Much as I contemplated cutting at the wood he seems to find so precious, we are ill-positioned to deal with his continued pestering. Both escapees shall be dealt with in due time.

Next, dear Zuzka saw fit to verify a hidden area to the south. Though the rest of us were ill-suited to accompany her across the ropes, she proved capable enough to silently dispatch the cowardly caster from before. It is reassuring to know that her skills in silent approaches might be used to hamstring such foes before they may flee, or even after. Regrettably, there was a second individual present, and without the full benefit of the element of surprise, taking her down proved more challenging for our rogue. Fortunately she was clever enough to lure the lost lamb into our sight. Weakened as she was, the wretched changeling did not last long, and following a bit of recovery, Zuzka was restored.

Our next obstacle came in the form of a curious thing. A hound of divine countenance that stood upright and sought to block our progress. Previously, I might have taken this for another misguided angel of some sort, but I believe here I understood the Divine Path laid before me. This was a test! It is the will of the Gods that I be presented with such an obstacle to challenge my conviction! My lessons have been well-learned, and I did not hesitate. Though the path collapsed behind me, I did not falter. Though my tester proved most challenging, I did not waver. It took me unleashing the full weight of my convictions, but ultimately my strength of will carried me through, and the gate that stood before me was opened! The Divine Order may test my faith; it shall not find me wanting!

The surge of strength that came as a reward for my conviction was exhilarating. So too I can sense it coursing through my friends who bore witness. The Gods have smiled upon all of us this day! We were yet further rewarded with our next encounter. The wretched false prophet and her children, the defiers of Iomedae's justice and the grandest heretics I have yet encountered, stand before me, ready for judgement! The sons fell swiftly, and with none of the mercy they so brazenly spat upon in their previous lives. The heretic mother was

slightly more challenging, trying to delay her judgement by holding myself and Cimri in place. She was granted a short reprieve, but this was merely enough time for me to gather the strength needed to thoroughly hammer the truth of her place in the Divine Order. The ringing of my instrument against her armour sounded akin to church bells. I wonder if this holy sign might have gotten through to her as she joined her children? If not, then no matter. I have done what I could to show her the error of her ways, but perhaps such education is a task better suited to the Gods.

While I preoccupied myself with correcting the Allamars, it would seem that dear Zuzka and Ezra had taken on the woodland man. His elusiveness frustrated us greatly, so his final appearance was perhaps their reward for diligence. I was pleased to see that they were able to fell the thing this time. Such irritating creatures ought to know the place of nature is to serve the will of the Divine Order, not impede it. Their chaotic disposition has no place on the True Path.

With the rest of the lost flock appropriately culled, we found ourselves facing the high heretic herself: the supposed Angel Knight. The corruptor proved herself just as treacherous and blasphemous as I might have imagined! Not only did she choose to challenge us in a shrine to Iomedae, but as soon as dear Cimri made her approach, the villain opened the floor and plunged my childhood friend to her death! Such treachery in a holy place! It is truly regrettable that I could not save her. My solace is that she will find herself in the embrace of the Gods where she may earn an appropriate reward for her commitment. To honour her memory on this plane, I shall channel my grief into righteous fury!

The battle was hard-fought, but brief, in no small part thanks to Ezra's guileful spell that rended the heretic knight's flesh. So fearful of our wrath she was that she cowered behind the effigy of the Inheritor! This would not spare her from punishment. Dear Zuzka did her part, but the responsibility of correcting a false shepherd like this needs fall to me!

A few clean strikes to expose the face of villainy was all that was necessary. Imagine my surprise when I found myself looking upon the visage of a denatsate! How fitting that such a false hero was in fact the lowliest of beggars! Much as I wish to further embed the weight of her mistakes, her countenance is something that might serve as a lesson to those in Longacre who still mistake her for a saviour. As for the heretic's soul, it shall be to Pharasma to deem the weight of her sins. May her judgement be in proper accordance with the Divine Order!

20/12/11 - Session 7 - Angel Knight Fallen

Oathday, 28th Arodus, Longacre, The Heartlands

Participants: Dominus (Justin)

The Sun remained only halfway above the horizon, tinting the sky red as the people of Longacre gathered before the Temple of the Inheritor. "A public announcement shall be made by the Angel Knight" the cryptic message posted around town read. Uncertain of what was to come after such a long period of brutal repression and aggressive resistance, the citizens amassed, ready either for celebration of further revolt.

They were not prepared for what was to come.

Much like the Priestess Allamar had done before, Dominus Fex appeared from the Temple balcony, dressed in a strange raiment of blended Iomedaeen and Asmodean iconography. He looked upon the crowd and smiled the same sickening grin those around him have grown accustomed to.

"People of Longacre! Three weeks have passed since Tileavia Allamar first stood here and proclaimed to be bearing a missive from champions of Iomedae's faith. And what a long and difficult three weeks it has been for you all. Now, I am pleased to make the same declaration! My dear citizens, I give you your Angel Knight!"

With that, a large wooden structure rose up. It did not take long for the citizens to recognise it as a crucifix, styled so as to resemble Iomedae's holy symbol, and upon it a figure. From her helmet alone, she was instantly recognisable as the woman Longacre had come to know as the Angel Knight. The hope that the people might have had in their supposed saviour turned to fear, as it became clearer that the body was limp. Was the Angel Knight dead? Had these villains killed her? Grips tightened, some even grasping at nearby farming implements, ready to act in the name of the cause their hero had been martyred for. This was swiftly interrupted, as Dominus spoke once more.

"I warned you of false prophets once before as well, and some of you acted out in frustration. But confused as you may be, this time we shall make it clear to you all the nature of the deception you have all been victim to!"

One of the people at the base of the crucifix reached up with an extended hook, removing the battered faceplate of the Angel Knight, to reveal the mutilated visage of Lencia Visserene. Past the initial shock, it swiftly became obvious to many among the crowd: this woman was a denatsate, a self-mutilated beggar, and a form of person so low even peasantry would look down upon them. Now that she was raised so high above them, the understanding sunk in, extinguishing all their rage in the process. What was left was utter crushing despair.

As though twisting the knife he had plunged into the mass below, Dominus continued, *"The Glorious Reclamation would have you turn against your fellow Chelaxians, against those ordained by just laws. They would have you die... And they send you this as a supposed saviour! They are false prophets and deceivers of the worst kind, that feed you with the worst sort of corruption. That corruption is no more! Those who would stand against the Divine Order have been silenced. Their souls shall be cleansed, and with it so shall the festering open wound that plagues this town be cauterised in purifying flame! Rejoice, Longacre, for the rebellion is ended!"*

Fex's agents marched through the square, bringing with them carts of bodies in rags and various states of mutilation. Each member of Longacre's rebellion was among them. Fifth Sword Knight Tileavia Allamar and her two sons, the former sheriff Rhona Staelish and her deputies, the various rebels present at the Court of Spears and others found within the town, as well as two other figures that clearly had been shown more respect: Magnus Verloran and Cimri Staelish. Each body had carved into their flesh the marking of Iomedae's faith eclipsed by a Chelish insignia, and above that, the Archstar of Asmodeus. One by one, the bodies were thrown into a pyre which was then lit. Beside, a cleric of Asmodeus chanted a cant committing the souls to the Dark Prince.

Bereft of any vigor to fight, the citizens simply watched as the bodies of these "rebels", once friends and family, were so carelessly discarded to the flames. Those same flames burned in the cold soulless eyes of the madman on the balcony as he smiled at his father. The Archbaron returned the smile, confident that as the last of the embers of their great pyre would be extinguished, so too would any thought of rebellion in the town of Longacre...

A few days later, Dominus Fex could be seen wearing the armour and sword once worn by Lencia Visserene, refitted to his frame and now coloured charcoal black with gold and red accents. None dared to stand in his path...

HV2 - Wrath of Thrune

20/12/18 - Session 8 - Dexsius' Background

Participants: Dexsius (DC)

Dexsius was born in 4621, 20 years into the Chellish civil war. He was the last of 4 children born to the Oscellius family. His father died serving house Thrune early in his life, and his only memory of the man is accompanied by the sound of screaming and the smell of searing flesh as his father burned the symbol of Asmodeus into his left hand, a scar he still bears. His two oldest brothers took up arms not long after their father's death and quickly came to share his fate, though he is told the younger died gloriously at the Battle of 100 Kings. Their departure and the news of their death left his mother a broken woman, barely able to care for herself let alone her two remaining children. His elder sister took Dexsius and left for an orphanage run by the Sisters of the Golden Erinyes. Dexsius does not know for sure what became of his mother, but she has likely long since passed from the mortal world.

His time at the orphanage saw his sister well taken care of. She had a great aptitude for the teachings of the Sister Monks and so quickly began her training to join their order. He on the other hand was not so well-liked. He was relegated to the role of a servant, often working beside the slips. The other children were instructed to ignore 'the beast' as he was called. It wasn't until a cleric of Asmodeus came through the orphanage that his fate seemed to change. The cleric took interest in Dexsius because he saw the divine spark that the boy carried. He and his sister have had several communications in the following years, though more to boast of their relative accomplishments than to inquire as to how the other was. The most recent letter he received was roughly 20 years ago and it was to inform him that she had passed away in her sleep and has hopefully joined the ranks of the Erinyes.

Dexsius took to the teachings of the clerics very quickly. He learned to tap into the power that Asmodaeus granted him, weaving spells with ease. His affinity for fire surprised even the senior clerics as he was able to easily conjure fire, a skill usually reserved for arcanists. He struggled however to learn to channel the negative energies that most clerics summoned. No matter how much he tried, he was unable to summon a burst of energy from his holy symbol. Through many harsh re-education sessions with his masters, he eventually learned to tap into his ancestral link to the 9 Hells and channel the raw energy of the plane itself. Unlike most of his fellow clerics, the energy he channels bolster those who welcome its power and leaves others reeling in disgust.

Dexsius was eventually ordained as a full cleric in the church of Asmodeus and now serves the Prince of Hell and as a Loyal Agent of House Thrune. He has travelled with several detachments of Hellknights and takes joy in bringing Law and Order to the people of Cheliah. All those who would stand before House Thrune, and by extension the Lord of Hell, deserve to be put in their place and shown the true might and glory of Cheliah.

20/12/18 - Session 8 - Dominus' Journal 8: Curing the Cancer in Kantaria

Starday, 5th Rova, Kantaria, Menador

Participants: Dominus (Justin)

The glorious impact of the Angel Knight's unveiling was as spectacularly effective as I could have hoped. The flocks have obediently returned to their designated pens, while any remaining lost lambs were appropriately culled. The ashen scent of justice administered has brought me a great deal of comfort. Would that this comfort were complete. Unfortunately there remains the question of the Gramels. The doddering old pair in their senility accosted an innocent guardian and have fled from their true destinies. It pains me that this loose thread remains in what otherwise would be a complete success, though I must come to accept that perfection is not always achievable by mortals. Such is the limitation of this form. At the very least I have commissioned good Mister Ezra to compensate for this through a few items of a magical nature. Perhaps they shall bolster my body sufficiently to keep pace with my spirit.

Fortunately, it seems I shall not have to wait long to see. Dear father met with us and granted us the boon of official recognition in the light of our Empire. Further still, he introduced us to a most fascinating individual to carry out the ritual. This cleric, Dexusius Oscellus... He bears the great blessing of the Infernal touch! Now, I know that father shares the unfortunate delusion many in Cheliax possess, that such a blessing in some way demonstrates weakness, but I know better. That this priest would be the one to bestow the sign of our station is very clearly a message from the Divine of where my path must lead! I did take an opportunity to ask him the details of his faith, in the hopes that he might share my Wisdom. Sadly, the Truth he espoused was muddled and narrow, as is that of so many monotheists. I suppose the fiendish blessing he bears has not completely effaced the human fallibility. Still, there is potential in his gifts as with my other dear companions. So long as they continue to assist in my Crusade, there is chance yet for the Divine Order to be made clear to them all...

I would have difficulty thinking of a better task to be given for such a purpose than our next one! I had wished dearly to make a pilgrimage to Kantaria during my travels. After all, to bear witness the place where Iomedae completed her Tenth Act would be a most holy privilege! But more than that, to rid the place of its terribly misguided heretical intruders... I cannot help but consider how Iomedae fended off the ugothols. These fiends are in many ways the same: they come bearing false guises of righteous and just people, when they are little more than leeches and vermin. It would be a great service to the Inheritor's Legacy to rid her sacred site of insidious pests such as these!

The voyage to Kantaria was swift, thanks to father's vast resources. Much the better, as it permitted us a chance to hasten our mission. It has not yet been a day that we are here, and already the corruption of Kantaria makes my blood boil. Charlatans such as this "Pious Pete" brazenly espouse heretical commentary in the streets, and wanton harlots such as Jana Holdus betray their duplicity in how readily they bend over for these false lords. Intolerable as it might be, at the same time I find myself fascinated. This is what the misguided seek to make of their territories? Such a low Kantaria has fallen to that it is almost impossible to look away, despite the disgust, or perhaps because of it. Perhaps it is merely the anticipation within me, the knowledge that as I bear witness to these miserable villains, I shall soon have the privilege to tear them down with my own hands. How I long to make this Pete cry out his litannies until there is no tainted air nor blood for him to expulse! How I ache to bend this Jana Holdus until the pliability of her convictions can go no further, and then push beyond that. How I am eager to meet this false speaker of the Inheritor who would strike down his better in cold blood, and open his eyes wide to his misdeeds! This is but a taste of the righteous healing that I must administer to this town! I look forward to using these complacent corruptors against themselves, to bleed them dry of their venom to then drown them in it!

There is yet one redeeming quality I have found among the people of this place, and that is the presence of our caretaker for the duration of this visit, Loredana Viorica. It is a true joy to finally find myself reunited with my dear mother. There is much I would seek to speak with her about, to learn of this side of the family until now alien to me. No doubt, behind her cold gaze, she shares my fire. Much as dear father might want his improprieties kept discreet, these circumstances can be nothing but another guiding sign in my Pious Journey! But I must restrain myself somewhat, lest my sentimentality cloud the true Divine Purpose of my current mission. Tempting as it might be to divert my attention, the needs of Kantaria must come first!

To that end, there is a meal to be shared by the upstart council that now enslaves this town. On the morrow, we shall have the opportunity to see in full light the enemies we must lay low. I can only pray to the Divine Order that I might sleep through my excitement!

21/01/08 - Session 9 - Dominus' Journal 9: Brunch, Bait, and Basements

Moonday, 7th Rova, Kantaria, Menador

Participants: Dominus (Justin)

Our time in Kantaria began with a meeting with the so-called Councillors that taint its legacy. Having now met the sorry lot, I can see now why father chose to send us to this place. These miserable heretics are little more than pathetic vermin, lacking any true ambition. That the deceived of the Glorious Reclamation would leave such a weak garrison speaks volumes to their arrogance and blindness! Even their leader, this Oppian Nevilindor, cowers in his plate at the sight of a true worshipper of the Inheritor! He is unfit to wear her sigil on his breast, let alone see over one of her holiest of sites! It shall be my pleasure to relinquish him of both, then send him to the goddess for a proper education.

My compatriots and I remained civil of course, lest we embarrass mother. Much as I would be tempted to enlighten this lost flock here and now, I understand that the corruption here requires a more steady relief. Through this first meeting, some avenues of inquisition have been opened. There is an illegal prison we might wish to visit, and Ezra has taken an interest in the articles of research of their arcane recluse. The merchant man also seems to have a desire to make dealings with us, which gives me the impression that he is an opportunistic leech, and therefore someone we might have use for. The operation to remove the tumours affecting this town shall be methodical then. Not my normal method of operation, I confess, but such is the Divine Mandate that I am sworn to follow.

Fortunately, it did not take long after our return to the Little Uskwood to find our first issue to resolve. A group of fine Nidalese businessmen had found themselves the victims of theft. Two of their flock had been unjustly liberated and left to roam the riversides in complete dereliction of their duties. Comparatively, a minor infraction, but nevertheless one that a principled crusader can hardly abide. The beasts were naive and thus easy to subdue. At least they were useful enough to bring us a meal before we returned them to their rightful owners. I've also come to learn that our new clerical comrade is fond of fishing. I cannot help but wonder if there is a spiritual significance to such a practice. The temptation and deception at play do seem relevant to one who would follow the Prince of Darkness. Perhaps I might ask him about it someday.

Needless to say, our quest givers were grateful for our deeds, and were quick to reward us with coin and an intriguing bottle that may yet serve our purposes in the future. The truest reward however is that the town will soon come to learn that trade shall not be impeded through these unlawful actions of theirs.

Satisfying as the day may have ended, there remained one surprise for us. It would seem that some time ago my dear mother shared this property with my grandfather. The man, now a boneless wrapping blessed by the graces of Zon-Kuthon troubled my mother by haunting her from the basement below. I know that Loredana is a private and proud woman, but it would not do for my mother to endure the hardship of knowing that her father is deprived the benediction of an afterlife with his deity! Though the creature did try to cling to life quite literally, enveloping Father Dexsius and Miss Zuzka, we did eventually see the man's essence released. Grandfather, may you find bliss in your eternal suffering in the great beyond, and in turn may mother find relief in this closure!

21/01/16 - Session 10 - Dominus' Journal 10: Signing a Bloody Oath

Starday, 12th Rova, Kantaria, Menador

Participants: Dominus (Justin)

While our time in Kantaria was still young, I thought it best to take advantage of the imbecile "Pious" Pete's tour of Kantaria's blessed landmarks. Guide aside, it was a wonder to finally make this pilgrimage! Furthermore, while I expected little of value from the maggot's blasphemous ramblings, among his inane comments there were some pieces of information that may well prove valuable. It would seem that in addition to whatever fortifications the heretics have placed in Valor's Fastness, it is also home to the spectral form of a dog the Inheritor once cared for. For it to loyally pledge itself to such a duty, even beyond death... I can only imagine the shame it must endure to see it in the hands of blasphemers! Worse yet, there is the possibility that it too has been seduced into believing these traitors to be true faithful. If such is the case, then it is yet another crime the Reclamation heretics shall be made to answer for!

Pete also spoke of a Toragian woman named "Kalcyra the Just" who committed the heinous crime of desecrating Asmodeus' church and assigning it to her lesser god. If her moniker is meant as a jest, I do not find the irony amusing. Needless to say Dear Father Dexsius shared my concern for this grave heresy. The blasphemer is outside the town as is, so full retribution for her actions will have to await her return, though we may yet take some other corrective measures if given the opportunity...

My next day was properly dedicated to seeing my grandfather, Masimo Viorica, properly laid to rest in the care of Zon Kuthon. Father Dexsius once more aided me in arranging the service. Naturally, mother was deeply moved by our actions, and we spent the remainder of our day in the pleasure of each other's company. For all her coolness, Loredana is a very loving woman. Truly, it is a gift that the Gods have granted me to reunite us in service to their Mandate! I saw too that she bore affection for Dexsius. Clearly she shares my understanding of the truly blessed nature of one touched by the Infernal, though I cannot say that I share her particular manifestation of that admiration...

While Miss Zuzka bonded with the monk over physical fitness (there was also an attempt to impress the tavern owner, though as I understand it was... less effective) and Mister Ezra worked his unique charms on the wizard and the alchemist, Father Dexsius and I continued our work by approaching the failed governor. He seemed less enthusiastic to receive us this time, and far more derelict. No doubt, our righteousness and closeness to the subject of his absurd infatuation have begun to erode his delusions. I made certain to

shatter them further, lest he remain under the illusion that he holds any claim to the Inheritor's Grace. Perhaps it is a sign of his recognition that prompted him to so easily guide us through Valor's Fastness. Such a glimpse at their feeble defences will certainly make the transition of power back into righteous hands that much simpler.

The incompetence and heresy of those holding Kantaria may have been evident to us, but the flocks of mindless sheep that roam the streets remained ignorant. For this, a more drastic action would be necessary. Fortunately, our Nidalese friend provided us with an excellent gift with which to do just that. As the Oathday market opened, Miss Zuzka shyly placed the Discord Bottle among the carts while we took our positions. The chaos that emerged was sickening to witness, as it brought to the surface all the disgusting corruption embedded in the hearts of these blind slaves. A hound servitor of the Inheritor must have glimpsed its folly, as it immediately set itself upon the heretic disciples it stood with. During this period of clarity, I slew the beast so that it might die in dignity. Meanwhile, my compatriots did a marvelous job of culling the weak vermin that plague the streets while thinking themselves just. It is fitting that on Signing Day, we ink our signature damning the "Glorious Reclamation" for their failures in the blood of their misguided livestock!

Naturally, the council and governor could do nothing in retaliation, as we soon gathered. I made a point to pledge myself once again to restoring the town to order. Perhaps as they came to understand in Longacre, the people of Kantaria shall also understand here that our Justice will prevail through righteous might and the blessing of the Divine Will. The realisation seemed to have already begun, as we learned of many troubles in the town. A Hellknight imprisoned, a traitorous pirate running the docks, and a missing family... We also came to learn that we are being observed by mysterious winged individuals, but that is ultimately of little consequence.

Finally, an interesting revelation from Mister Ezra's conversations and Father Dexsius' divine communion: councillor Linton Demeer is in fact a faceless stalker. Throughout my time as an Iomedaeon, I had believed Iomedae to have been thoroughly successful in her Tenth Act. That such monsters still live in this town, let alone that one is a councillor, raises questions that I would have to properly examine...

Fortunately, our visit to Hardship's Hearth the next day provided me with the necessary epiphany. While the internment camp is itself nothing impressive, the victims of this coup are suffering further from a mysterious enemy. In our search, I came to speak with one of the prisoners in the kitchen. Dexsius' sharp eyes caught the creature in a lie, and while our initial interrogation yielded no immediate returns, upon further inspection it confessed to being a minion of Demeer's, and subsequently we found there to be a room hiding a victim

of its hunger. The supposed cook attacked us for fear of retribution from our part, revealing its nature as a faceless stalker as well.

Though we would have had every right to put the wretched thing down, it is here that I had my revelation. The Inheritor's sparing of these creatures was not a failure, but rather a cunning tactic for a far future plot! Certainly, the Divine Path could predict such an insurrection of false worshippers, and in this moment, what better way to convey the message of their deception than for them to be brought low by the very monsters the Goddess left for them!? Leeches that feed off of those they deceive... I could not conceive of a more apt metaphor! The Divine Truth is poetic in its justice, indeed!

So then, this creature shall be spared, as shall their brethren, until their Divine Purpose is served. Only then can the Inheritor's work be done and her Tenth Act be rightfully concluded!

That said, our business at this camp is not yet done. There remain two auras unaccounted for after our inspection of the camp, and we have yet to face the Hellknight they have wrongfully imprisoned. The matter of releasing the prisoners may yet have to wait, but we would be remiss not to learn all we can while we are still here.

21/01/16 - Session 10 - Dexsius' Journal: Signing a Bloody Oath

Starday, 12th Rova, Kantaria, Menador

Participants: Dexsius (DC)

I detest this place.

It wreaks of contempt for Lord Asmodeus and proclaims the greatness of the lesser gods. They have even gone so far as to desecrate his church. The one they call "Kalcyra the Just" will pay for this transgression against the Lord of Hell. I swear upon my holy oath, and in contract with this agent of Hell, that she will be sent before Pharasma by my or my compatriot's hands and her soul shall be forever condemned to the 9 Hells. She will never know eternity with her goddess but will instead serve the Lord of Darkness. Her sacrifice will fuel the ritual that purges the blight of the 'Holy Reclamation' from this city.

That being said, the buffoon they call 'Pious Pete' has unknowingly done much to further the work of Lord Asmodeus. I admit that I was hasty in my desires to see him dead upon our first meeting. He provided us valuable information during his tour. We will no doubt be able to use it to bring the city to its knees. Perhaps I won't torture him before sending him to join the wretched bitch Kalcyra. I must remember to thank Dominus for counselling me against having Tyapket simply end him in his sleep.

I was given the opportunity to once again dawn my true vestments during the funeral to a worshiper of Zon-Kuthon. I do hope that burying him brings Dominus some measure of comfort as it was his grandfather that had been turned into that disgusting undead abomination. I find little joy in performing a funeral ritual for a servant of one of the lesser gods, but in doing so I have secured our connection to Dominus's mother, Loredanna. Her attempts to throw herself at me leave a foul taste in my mouth, though I dare not let her know. Her affections are a valuable tool to use against the so-called leader of the reclamation here in Kantaria.

Dominus continues to perplex me. He openly wears the holy symbol of the Inheritor and I sense no deceit in his words when he says he is a believer. But I also see that he shares my thirst for vengeance upon the one that desecrated the church of Asmodeus. Perhaps this is something I will inquire of him at a later date, for now there is work to be done. I must prepare myself for the day to come as it will be glorious.

Today Kantaria shall witness firsthand the might of the Prince of Darkness. They gather to celebrate "Signing Day" in the markets. The blood of these worthless fools, who believe themselves free from their service to Lord Asmodeus, will ensure the demise of those who dare oppose us.

21/01/22 - Session 11 - Dominus' Journal 11: Behind Closed Doors

Sunday, 13th Rova, Kantaria, Menador

Participants: Dominus (Justin)

I am rather pleased that we chose to end our visit to the internment camp by seeing the Hellknight that wretched monk has placed in captivity. This woman exudes confidence and a righteous fury that one should expect from a member of such a prestigious institution as the Order of the Rack! As soon as we revealed our Truth to her, she accepted it readily and eagerly. Of course, given our current method of operation, it does pain me to say that we cannot indulge her zeal just yet. There are still some machinations to be done. Fortunately, one such task is the retrieval of her armaments, currently in possession of the heretical scholar Faydreth Zaine.

But first, there is the matter of attending to our admirers. It is fortunate that Zuzka and Dexsius had the wherewithal to ensure we could adequately face these interlopers of Justice. Though these spies attempted to blind us and flee like the cowards they were, none can escape the Truth. Were it not too conspicuous to these heathens, I would proudly adorn the feathers we plucked from them upon my own wings to illustrate this point. Perhaps when the time is right to openly confront this scum, I shall see to it that this is done. But for now, we must journey to Narikopolus Manor while the night is still young.

Alas, this next objective is not mine to oversee. The arcane holds no interest to me, despite my father's inclination for it, and the subtlety required for the plot is sadly not something I am adept at. So, the honour of condemning this perverse scholar fell to Mister Ezra, who took on the unenviable task of seducing this cockroach, and Miss Zuzka. As I understood, the man simply closed his eyes and allowed his pitiful nude body to be perforated without resistance. Perhaps in his own way, this sheep came to be aware of his shortcomings and embraced his judgement, albeit in a most perverse manner. That may well be why Mister Ezra saw fit to spread his essence throughout the abode, in recognition of his sacrifice. Though I have been thoroughly educated in matters of the True Faiths, this is not a ritual I am familiar with, nor is it one I particularly care for, if I am to be honest. Nevertheless, it permitted me ample time to collect our new Hellknight associate's belongings. I look forward to returning them and seeing just what the woman is capable of.

It did not take long for word of the wizard's disappearance and the hedonistic display left in his wake to spread. Already it would seem that the town has come ever closer to understanding the Truth of their errors. Though much as I would love to bask in such revelations, there is still work to be done. We paid a visit to the creature Linton to make

use of his ilk. It would seem that he attempted to reach us earlier, but did not succeed. Fortunately, he was wise enough to repeat his message directly. He would request that we venture to the Blooming Caves and locate an associate of his, who also happened to be a true follower of Justice. If we are to liberate Hardship's Hearth, then perhaps such allies would serve us well...

21/01/22 - Session 11 - Dexsius' Journal

Sunday, 13th Rova, Kantaria, Menador

Participants: Dexsius (DC)

We have found a member of the Order of the Rack. She will be a powerful ally when the time comes to openly reveal ourselves and make our final move against the forces of the Inheritor. Her initial insolence towards me and the church shall be forgiven in light of her situation and the service she will provide when called upon. Why Jalila insisted we speak with her alone is beyond me, but clearly the machinations of The First serve to remove these obstacles from our path. Our mission furthers his eternal plans and undoes the chaos these Iomadaeans have wrought upon this place.

We finally addressed the issue of those who were following us. To know we were made by Spyglass archons is concerning, though I do not believe they had reported us yet. I am sure they were aware of Tyapket's presence and that in part drew them to watch us. Once we decided to deal with these foes, they fell before the might of the hells. They tried to use trickery and deceit to escape our wrath but I could not allow such a thing to happen. The very chains of Hell itself answered my call and ripped the wretched creature from the sky. Perhaps I could use this to advance my place within the church having slain several outsiders serving those who oppose The Prince of Hell.

The events of Narikopolus Manor will, unfortunately, be seared into my mind for quite some time. By ending Faydreth's life we have furthered our own goals while doing Kantaria and all Golarion a favor. My only regret is that I did not get to conduct a ritual to condemn his soul to Zaebos before his death. I applaud the use of trickery and deception by Ezra and Zuzka, though I wanted no part in the actions taken afterward. It would seem to have been effective though as news of Faydreth's debauchery and disappearance has spread and further diminished the faith the commoners place in the insurrectionists.

Tyapket has returned with a sacrifice I can use, so I must perform my nightly ritual. I must pray for spells I can use to give us an advantage in our discussion with Linton. We will confront him and see what use he may have in breaking this place once and for all. Kantaria will be brought back under the rule of Her Royal Magestrix Queen Abrogail II. The rightful place of the week is to serve their betters. We will remind them of this and by the end they will thank us for it.

21/02/05 - Session 12 - Dominus' Journal 12: Scraping Off the Fungus

Sunday, 13th Rova, Kantaria, Menador

Participants: Dominus (Justin)

As the day continues, I find myself ever more frustrated... Though I understand that the subversive nature of this Divine Task requires us to hold ourselves back to some degree, to restrain myself in the presence of such filth is dreadfully difficult. Were it not for my ample training in discipline, I no doubt could not have helped myself in the presence of such persistent and vile corruptions.

I had hoped this morning to arrange for a little reprieve before our departure. A simple exchange of favours with the faceless creature that calls itself Demeer was a small enough price to pay for his services. The fact that I even had to negotiate to acquire that service was an annoyance, but so long as his existence serves the Divine Path, I see no reason not to indulge his petty desires, at least until his purpose is fulfilled and I might finish the task that Iomedae started.

Our subsequent brief visit to the smithy did give us the pleasure of encountering a wonderful infernal ally by the name of Brextur. Hell has blessed us with an ally worthy of this curative effort. His affinity for fire will no doubt serve us well to cauterise this town's festering wounds. For such purposes, I have already arranged for him to assist in my little project for this evening...

Much less pleasant was the encounter with Pious Pete. Useful as his loose lips might be for spreading word of our Justice, the heresies and ramblings that accompany it make it difficult to tolerate his practicality. That said, his interest in Miss Zuzka is nothing if not amusing. Much as I might enjoy cleansing this one myself, I believe he would make an excellent gift with which to awaken her growing sense of righteous fury. Perhaps that new blade of hers that oozes murderous intent is to thank, but I cannot help but feel her growing passion for cleansing the impure. If it might bring her ever closer to Enlightenment, then I am all too happy to assist!

Unfortunately, my visit to the council's wanton whore did not satisfy me nearly as much as I had hoped. It was to be a gift for myself to muzzle her and eke out every moan of anguish as I rendered her spine as crooked as her values... But the "help" I enlisted ruined that fun by striking preemptively. Of course, the lamb was to fight back! To take away her resistance beforehand would be to defeat the purpose of crushing it out of her! Would you think ME incapable of putting her down!? And as for fears of alerting the patrons, that is what you

are here for, stupid beast! Now I must make do with guzzling a pleasure I had wished to savour... And here I had hoped if anything could slake my thirst, it would be the purging of a filthy drunken Caydenite. Ah well, at least I have the satisfaction of knowing that her and her domain shall be properly bathed in Blessed Flames by the time our business outside the town is done...

I was surprised that Father Dexsius thought to ask me about my beliefs on our voyage. I was of course all too pleased to explain the Divine Truth of the expanded hierarchy to him, and how every component serves the Greater Mechanisms. He did not yet seem to fully grasp my explanation however, which is disappointing. Much as I had hoped he would take to the revelations more easily given his uniquely blessed nature, it would seem the miopic views of the Asmodaeen clergy are still ingrained too deeply. Nevertheless, he was less objecting to it than most, so perhaps there is still a chance he might come to appreciate the wonders of the Divine Truth in time. After all, it is no contradiction to the teachings we both underwent, but rather an expansion of them.

The sour taste left by the Sweetest Drop was not helped much by our excursion to the den known as the Blooming Caves. From the onset we found ourselves knocking down former obedient lambs that have succumbed to a most repulsive infection. Setting aside an unpleasant tumble down some stairs and a mistake made by an overzealous Miss Zuzka, the delve was further worsened by the discovery of a pair of disgusting fungal creatures that deign to treat themselves as proper citizens. Were they simple plants pursuing their inherent nature, their transgressions might be forgiven, but to overstep their bounds and behave as actual people is an unforgivable insult! I stay my hand for now only so that my companions might take the opportunity to take what they can from them, but unless they can be made useful in being sent to purge the heretics of these lands, their corruption against perfectly serviceable livestock makes them too much of a threat to the Divine Order to not be pruned. Mister Ezra's suggestion that such unpleasant things be used even further against the uncorrupted is an absurdity unworthy of being seriously entertained. If we are to use them as a pesticide, fine, but they will be contained!

Then there is the matter of the wretched creature they call the "Wrong One". I was correct in assuming that Linton's "friend" was another of his ilk, though to meet a fate such as this is simply disgraceful. Fortunately the beast left behind a most blessed unholy artifact, and a note with which to conclusively determine his fate. The others opted to try negotiating for us to take custody of the creature. Perhaps even in such a state Linton will wish to reunite with his former companion. And if not, cleansing this creature will be an easy matter...

21/02/05 - Session 12 - Dexius' Journal: Scraping Off the Fungus

Sunday, 13th Rova, Kantaria, Menador

Participants: Dexsius (DC)

I hate mushrooms.

21/02/12 - Session 13 - Dominus' Journal 13: Frustratingly False Faces

Moonday, 14th Rova, Kantaria, Menador

Participants: Dominus (Justin)

We wisely chose not to stay the night in the company of the fungal abominations, but returned there the next morn to retrieve the Wrong One. With our repulsive quarry in tow we returned to the outskirts of Kantaria, hoping that the Faceless Demeer would be sufficiently wise to agree to join us beyond the borders of the town. He chose instead to tell us to wait until nightfall for his arrival. This, I can forgive, as it is still wise to be cautious when one is a public figure, though the caution with which he and his ilk comport themselves does test my patience...

Instead, we sought the council of dear Razelago. Father's watchful ally was sufficiently collaborative, but ultimately unhelpful in providing us with a task that might alleviate my boredom with this increasingly tiresome mission. Instead we have come to learn that the one that falsely calls herself "Just" has returned from her voyages and has declared us to be villains! Much as I share Father Dexsius' desire to disabuse her of her misguided notions of Justice, that task still must wait for our current objective to be complete.

Fortunately, a most fortuitous arrival remedied my growing irritations. Some apostate has seen fit to send a sacrificial ram to us, no doubt to test our righteousness. Miss Zuzka, ever the eager one, took to it immediately, but I fear she lacks the discipline that comes with an Ordered soul to stand stalwart against such a beast. It is by the grace of the Truth however, that I possess such a spirit, and with that in mind the beast could not stand against my resolve. Let that be a lesson, heretics! True Justice will not be faltered! It is inevitable, and it hungrily counts the days until your idols are returned to their proper place...

And count it shall. This ugothol beast tests my patience with every interaction. It makes us wait, as though wishing to establish some sense of supremacy. Then it feigns indignity at the sight of a fellow creature, as though it were any less of a repulsive maggot. And finally, it seeks to dictate terms of alliance to us. I allowed Father Dexsius to take charge of the discussion and ensure that negotiations were conducted in proper accordance with the Blessed Mandates of Hell, but I made no secret my stance. This filth exists only as a tool for our Glorious business, to be used and discarded at our discretion. Your life persists at the will of the Divine Truth, Linton Demeer, and should that will change, as its executor I shall be overjoyed to personally see you and your displeasing aberrations snuffed out! Take solace in the fact that Iomedae saw fit to spare you for this purpose, and that I have respect for her Judgement.

But that cretin has occupied enough of my thoughts for the time being. I must return my attention to our current mission. First, we must return to the cavern and resolve whatever matters we still have with the vile fungus. If we might retrieve the loyal servants they've sullied, all the better. If they are beyond recovery, then the Divine Order deemed them unworthy, and we shall make do with what we have. Then, we must return to Hardhsip's Hearth and see those other loyal lambs liberated, and the Monk appropriately disciplined for her misdeeds. Linton has already been instructed that he is to secure our arrival for this purpose.

Once that heresy is corrected, it shall come time for the apostate Kalcyrā of the false Justice, and after that, I shall take great pleasure in ripping the pitiful worm that is Oppian Nevilindor from the golden apple that is Valor's Fastness.

Be filled with joy, poor flock of Blessed Kantaria! Righteous Absolution approaches for your malefactors...

21/02/19 - Session 13 - Dexsius's Ugothol Alliance Contract

Moonday, 14th Rova, Kantaria, Menador

Participants: Dominus (Justin)

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I Father Dexsius Titus Ocellus, Archpriest of the Church of Asmodeus, and Loyal Agent to House Thrune, in accordance with the Mandates of Hell as laid forth in The Asmodean Disciplines, do hereby evoke the name of the Lord of Law to bear witness to the forging of this contract. May those who append their signatures, and those who they knowingly and willingly represent, be bound to all agreed obligations and parameters for an unending period.

This contract is made by and between Linton Demeer and those he represents ("The Ugothol" in short), of the city of Kantaria, and Archpriest Dexsius Titus Ocellus, of the city of Egorian, and those he represents ("The Agents" in short). With this agreement, The Agents agree to keep secret, to the best of their abilities, the continued existence of The Ugothol within Kantaria for an unending period of time or until the contract is voided as described below.

In exchange for their continued existence, The Ugothol agree to the following

- ❖ To provide aid and support to The Agents for the purposes of ridding the city of Kantaria of the Glorious Reclamation.*
- ❖ To fair and reasonable compensation, with fair and reasonable being defined by The Agents and agreed upon by The Ugothol, for aid and support rendered in ridding Kantaria of the Glorious Reclamation.*
- ❖ To provide one Ugothol to the Agents to use at their discretion. – To restrict their feeding to those proven un-loyal to Cheliah. – To have their feeding activities monitored for compliance with this contract.*

If at any time it is found by The Agents, those they employ to monitor the city of Kantaria, or by The Ugothol that any of The Ugothol are acting in a way that is not consistent with the obligations and agreements within this contract, Linton Demeer will be granted one opportunity to discipline the offender and to alert The Agents should it not already be known to them. Should such discipline be found unsatisfactory by The Agents or should the offending party repeat the offence, this contract will be voided for all. Additionally, should a representative of both The Ugothol and of The Agents willingly and without coercion mutually agree

upon the termination of this contract, as indicated by the signing the Termination of Contract agreement, it will be rendered null and void.

Should a single offence be so great, or enacted with intent and malice, The Agents can nullify the contract at their sole discretion. At such a time, 1 week will be granted all non-offending members of The Ugothol to allow them adequate time to leave Kantaria before their existence is revealed and The Agents, or those acting in their stead, determine an appropriate course of action regarding the new Ugothol threat to Kantaria.

Those represented by Linton Demeer and included in "The Ugothol" for the purposes of this contract include all ugothol, counted at 8 – 18, currently in and around the city of Kantaria and those outside the city in service to Linton Demeer, at this or any time in the future.

Those Represented by Father Dexius Oscellus for the sole purposes of this contract include The Hon. Dominus Fex of Longacre, Ms. Zuzka Zlý of Longacre, and Mr. Ezra of Westerown.

In accordance with the Mandates of Hell, this contract is crafted, witnessed, and maintained by an agent of Hell acting as a neutral party, and registered within the Library of Oaths so that it remains binding, and those who break this contract are damned to eternity in Stygia. Tyapket will act as the agent of Hell for this contract. For duties related to and the sole purposes of arbitration and execution of this contract he is free from any obligations to either party entering into this contract.

By signing or otherwise making their mark below, all parties agree on behalf of themselves and those they represent to be bound by the provisions, agreements, and obligations within this contract. All those appending their signature are doing so of their own free will and are under no influence magical or otherwise.

So be it that on 14 Rova, 4715 AR this contract is agreed to and signed by all parties, and therefor is now binding.

Termination of Contract Agreement

Upon the dissolution of this contract all parties originally bound by it are freed from any duties to it. May the record be officially removed from the Library of Oaths, and all those bound to Stygia freed from their prison. The imp Tyapket, as the agent of Hell, is to strike out all previous signatures with a single line. He will then bear witness to the addition of the signatures being appended.

By signing or otherwise making their mark below, all parties agree on behalf of themselves and those they represent, in accordance with the stipulations within this contract, willingly and without coercion, be it magical or otherwise, do hereby register this contract as null and void.

21/02/19 - Session 14 - Dominus' Journal 14: No More Spores

Toilday, 15th Rova, Blooming Caves, Menador

Participants: Dominus (Justin)

It would seem after all that my desire for action was indeed a reflection of the will of the Divine. Upon our return to the Blooming Caves, we found those souls we might have sought to save wholly eradicated, served as fodder for the mushroom abominations. Perhaps it was a lack of decisiveness, or merely an assertion that their lives were unworthy of reclaiming. Either way, the discovery was enough to make clear our next objective. No matter what use these foul creatures might have served, their putrid existence is enough of a crime to dismiss it. Our cleansing of this place was as swift and decisive as it ought to be. At last, I can breathe easy knowing that this blight has been properly purged!

Speaking of blights, we have it on good authority that word reached the apostate Kalcyra of our mission to this place, and that she intends to come and confront us. As such, we've made preparations for the encounter, making use of the defences of the fallen loyalists to aid us. I look forward to finally meeting this lost lamb and showing her the error of her ways. As Torag is a lesser god that puts value in blunt, direct approaches, I shall honour him properly by smiting his false believer in just such a manner. However, as per the mandates of greater deities, we shall also not neglect the value of tactical acumen and deception in the pursuit of the Divine Order. She will come to learn why the blending of these forms is what makes the Divine Order far mightier than any single being. The composite is far mightier than the pure, and she ought to know as much. Yet her single-mindedness betrays her lack of understanding, just as is the case with any of these simplistic monotheists. It is a lesson I look forward to hammering into her as Torag might hammer a blade. I pledge to the Voices that I shall reforge her with unrelenting justice!

21/02/26 - Session 15 - Dominus' Journal 15: An End to the Hardship

Wealday, 16th Rova, Hardship's Hearth, Menador

Participants: Dominus (Justin)

At long last, what joyous times have finally come! Never have I so eagerly anticipated the arrival of of a lost lamb to receive my Guidance! It truly is a great pleasure! Kalcyra the false approached us with all the limited subtlety I might expect of someone that has devoted themselves entirely to Torag. Her dogs were perceptive enough to see through the trap we had laid, but it was sufficient to allow us to define the terms of the battle. The pitiful beasts were easily discarded so that our attention might instead be focused on our guest. Truth be told, after all we had heard I expected her to be more formidable. Her wits were lacking even for one so simple-minded, and ultimately all it took was a few well-placed strikes from our group to fell her.

It is with this that I was granted the opportunity to make another attempt at illuminating the wondrous nature of the Divine Order to my compatriots, while also explaining to this misguided beast why she could not best us.

The Divine Order is, in essence, much like a body. Every God is a component that serves its purpose, while at its core lies the Pinnacle of that structure. There is nothing wrong with acknowledging the supremacy of this Core in the hierarchy, but to acknowledge it alone is to dismiss the value of the many components. A body without legs cannot walk nor run. A body without arms cannot write nor wield a blade. These lesser branches, though they rely on the Core, are nevertheless essential for the proper functionality of the Whole! Be him the soul, the heart, or the mind, Asmodeus is essential, but it is these other Gods that give him the extent of his power. Just as a body without limbs might still function, but it is quite limited. This is what it is to appreciate the beauty of the Divine Order! Every piece has its place, and has its value. This is as true for the Archdevils as it is for the Heavenly deities as it is for every devil, archon, and human.

This too is why Kalcyra could not withstand us. We defeated her because we do not restrict ourselves to such a narrow vision of reality. Her singular mindset did not permit her to anticipate our multitude of tactics! It is this same error in thinking that caused her to commit her heresy. After all, for her to usurp Asmodeus with Torag is as senseless as replacing her heart with a foot!

I sincerely hope my lesson will serve her well, now that Father Dexsius has dedicated her soul to Moloch. Perhaps the change in perspective will finally unlock the Truth, and reveal to her the errors of her ways. Moloch made clear his approval of our efforts, so perhaps he shall indeed be willing to reforge this poor lost soul to atone for her crimes against Hell, just as we have reforged her body. Such an outcome would certainly warm my heart.

Speaking of Father Dexsius, I was overjoyed to see that he seemed receptive to my explanations! Naturally, he still does not share my full cognition of the Truth, but he does not respond to it with the contempt that the unenlightened might. There is hope yet that he may some day overcome those biases, but for now I shall be contented in knowing that my words have at least reached him. It can be a lonely thing, to alone have this Blessed understanding...

Our next day of activity proved equally rewarding. After much preparation, it was finally time to liberate our dear allies of Justice from their wrongful imprisonment! Our new subordinate ugothol was given the chance to pull its weight, imitating that pitiful grub of a governor, while I took the liberty of embodying the role of a noble member of the Hellknights. I cannot deny that the guise suited me. The warden took no issue in accepting that the Hellknights would wish for one of their own to be liberated, and acquiesced to "Oppian's" request without question. The fact that she not only recognised his disgraceful weakness of the flesh, but still submitted to him, was proof enough that she too is weak in her convictions. She did not even dare challenge my authority, going so far as to offer me healing when her paltry defenses struck out at me. Perhaps she had come to realise her failings, and this submissiveness is her manner of atoning? If so, then I commend her for having this self-awareness. Her crimes against the righteous could not be overlooked of course, and she was made to pay for it appropriately, but perhaps her soul will find redemption in her implicit surrender.

Either way, the subsequent strike against Hardship's Hearth was swift and decisive. Father Dexsius and Mister Ezra wasted no time in dismantling the tower defenses, while the remainder of us, including our new ally Miss Zara Orcelani, made quick work of the remaining defenders. True to our vows, this fortress of misplaced tyranny was burned to the ground, and we allowed ourselves the chance to bask in the flames at twilight.

Kantaria has begun to revolt against the cancer corrupting it, and we now find ourselves with ample agents to storm the battlements and reclaim Iomedae's holy site from these heretic usurpers. Rejoice, lost lambs! Your shepherds arrive to return all to its rightful place!

21/03/05 - Session 16 - Dominus' Journal 16: There Is No Safety In Valor

Oathday, 17th Rova, Kantaria, Menador

Participants: Dominus (Justin)

Bearing the flag made from the holy markings of the dishonourable monk's flesh, our march into Kantaria was met with no resistance whatsoever. In fact, the people seem to have finally woken from their sopor to shake off the yoke of their oppression! Anarchy is not typically something a follower of the Divine Path ought to savor, but in such a case it is simply a byproduct of Order reestablishing itself, and that is a wonderful thing! In honour of our grand arrival, Father Dexsius arranged for the reconsecration of the Asmodaeon temple to its rightful deity. With this task done, I could sleep soundly, knowing that the next day would see us finally liberating the blessed town from the filthy grubs that sully its good name!

Valor's Fastness is everything I would expect an Iomedaeon Fortress to be. Such a structure is a difficult thing indeed to penetrate. Would that it were not being used for blasphemy! Alone, the problem of entering such a structure seemed nearly impossible for our talents. Mister Ezra seemed insistent on the notion of using Miss Zuzka's separated flesh to enter the structure, though such unpleasant notions were eventually discarded. It is thus that Iomedae's brilliance finally made itself clear to us! The ugothol, the very tool that the Inheritor saw fit to leave us for this day, provided us the means to gain entry. I needed only teach it to recite a hymn and display her sigil, and the path was opened! There can be no doubt that this scenario was engineered by Divine Mandate! Would that these lost heretics could understand this irrefutable proof that we walk the Path lit by the Inheritor's own Light!

But such things are beyond these lost lambs. Regrettably, their influence has even corrupted the blessed protector of this structure! That Exemplar, a hound of great loyalty, would act out against us, is troubling to say the least. I suppose I can understand the aversion to Miss Zuzka. Her aura is after all less Orderly than is proper. Nevertheless, the presence of a true emissary of its master ought to have given it pause enough to come to heel. Though I take no pleasure in it, the spirit needed to be taught Discipline, and to this end I assisted Miss Zuzka in seeing it put down. May the Inheritor's guidance teach the creature to recognise its true masters.

With our welcome made, I took to the front doors, and was met with none other than Oppian, the grub at the heart of this rotten festering wound. He spoke of parley and the sparing of innocents. I confess that while I had every intention of delivering Sinderbos'

metal to his wretched skull just as he cut down the hammer's former owner and his better, his pitiful pleas did give me the slightest pause. After all, those innocent that sought shelter in Iomedae's protection need not be purged. I am truly thankful that Father Dexsius was present to return me to my senses. These lost lambs that sought refuge here should surely recognise the sinfulness of those that hold this place! To accept these grounds under such conditions is to be complicit in the heresy, making them just as guilty! Thus, any mercy they might have been granted is forfeit! This is the Truth exposed to me through the light of the good Father's flames and the cries of these infected souls as they are cleansed!

The revelation was short lived however. Just as Miss Zuzka took a swing that sliced cleanly through what I understand now to be an apparition of the grub, a fox-like being has dared to lash out at my compatriots and I. While its foul magics cannot penetrate my soul reinforced by Iomedae's Righteous Guidance, it did nevertheless put my compatriots in a rather difficult state of affairs. Fear not, my dear friends, for this beast shall not be permitted to harm you further!

21/03/12 - Session 17 - Dominus' Journal 17: Fools, Foxes, and Foo Lions

Oathday, 17th Rova, Kantaria, Menador

Participants: Dominus (Justin)

I will confess, this fox woman was more resilient than I had initially anticipated, and it did not help things that the guardian of the chapel saw fit to stand against us as well. Clearly it was not made to be intelligent enough to see through the falsehood of those heretics that the good Father made clear for myself. Speaking of which, Father Dexsius met with a great deal of difficulty in this fight. Miss Zuzka as well. I suppose such is the plight of those who do not have the complete blessing of the full Divine Order. It is fortunate then that they are in the company of one enlightened such as I to hold the line while they regained their composure. The beast and statue could do little to put down a True Emissary, which gave my dear companions ample time to put them down for their dissent.

That said, this siege is a costly one, so once our faceless accomplice rejoined us and we had the opportunity to restore ourselves, we did not tarry in making our way to the second floor, pausing only to investigate a few rooms near the chapel. The presence of locks slowed us, but was only a minor inconvenience in the path of Justice.

Our next trial would come in the form of a pair of Foo Lions. Yet more servants that have been misled by the Erroneous Reclamation. By this point such threats are inconsequential to our might, though it is regrettable that such beasts could find themselves corrupted. With every creature slain, I add to the crimes that Oppian Nevilindor shall be made to answer for...

There was one other irritant on our path. An Archon too flies against us, seemingly for no other purpose than to harass us along our quest. The javelins it has been hurling are only a meager threat to myself, though they are nevertheless frustrating. Likewise with these soldiers firing at us from the ramparts. Would that my armour's wings granted me flight, so that I might hurry to mete out appropriate retribution for their heresy. For now, I had to make do with impressing upon the heavenly soldier the error of their ways (enough to turn it away from the battlefield for a time, at least) and using the bodies of the lions to cover miss Zuzka while she opened our next path. At least in death, these creatures serve their rightful masters.

As best I can tell, there is still work to be done, but we are well on our way to finding Oppian and making the worm answer for his failings. There is perhaps hope that in cutting

off the head of this malformed corruption, the remaining branches will wither and die. It is about time their rot be repurposed as fertiliser for the Bright Future demanded by the Divine Order!

21/03/20 - Session 18 - Dominus' Journal 18: Fall From Valor

Oathday, 17th Rova, Kantaria, Menador

Participants: Dominus (Justin)

Miss Zuzka managing to open the doors to the central access was much akin to the Gates of Heaven themselves opening up for their Masters. The minor inconveniences of those misguided soldiers desperately lashing out with their feeble arrows would be something to address in time, but not now. No, the Divine Path has been made clear. In the chambers, we found a letter written by the worm himself. It is clear that the lamb realised that it has lost its way. That it took so long for him to come to this realisation is a testament to the vileness of his corruption, but this serves only to bolster my own resolve to purify him. The man had erred, and now seeks to approach his Goddess for Guidance. Worry not, Oppian Nevilindor, for I shall aid you in seeking Iomedae's Council by sending you to her myself!

The ascent was by no means a simple task either, though once more the Blessings of Heaven and Hell secured my personal safe passage. First, we were bathed in flames. For one touched by the flames of Mephistopheles, such things are a pleasure to endure! Then, there was the matter of the apparitions. An ethereal being guiding the ancient protectors of this place, Arahian Nariopolus and Iomedae herself, further up. While their presence seemed to trouble Miss Zuzka and Mister Ezra in particular, I can only assume that this was due to their lack of Discipline. The vision was clearly an encouragement for us to Ascend and reclaim this place in the name of True Justice! This message was so rudely interrupted by the same heretical archon that sought to pester us before. Fortunately, Mister Ezra conjured enough strength to imbue me with the blessing of flight, and I was able to confront her directly! Or, I would, had she not decided in that moment to flee once more in cowardice, no doubt sensing the Strength of my Righteous Convictions.

Nevertheless, with her gone, I was able to more carefully study the Holy Visions that guided us, and came to understand their message in full. The key lay in Father Dexsius! As a man of Religious Conviction much like myself, he too was able to face the apparitions undaunted, and thus could Ascend unimpeded. In doing so, he would demonstrate the true authority of Hell over Heaven, and right the wrongs corrupting this place! I took Mister Ezra and rose to the rotunda while he took on this task, and sure enough his Perseverance rung true! The Inheritor confirmed our Justice with a blessing of speed, a worthy boon for our final confrontation...

A final confrontation that I did not quite expect to turn out as it did. I make no secret my contempt for the weakness Oppian Nevilindor has shown in the face of heresy. How easily he succumbed to their control is proof that he lacks the wherewithal to hold such a Divine

Mandate. His dereliction of duty, his failure to uphold the rightful laws, his consorting with rogue elements, his wanton lust... All were proof of his failings as a Knight of the Inheritor. I had every intention of educating him on these mistakes, and offering him the opportunity to atone by way of a Proper Cleansing. What surprised me is that by the time we had come to him, these revelations had all seeped into his mind so thoroughly that all it took was the lightest suggestion on our part that the fault was his, and he chose to atone immediately by plummeting from the tower! Perhaps the clarity that comes from such a Holy Place managed to open his eyes, or the weight of his sins became too much for him to bear. Perhaps seeing me raise the hammer of the friend he had betrayed shook him deeply enough to wedge away the doubts that remained. Whatever the case may be, I underestimated the man's resolve. In his final moments, he took the initiative to try and right his wrongs. This, if nothing else about him, I can respect.

That gesture leaves me to ponder his fate. A death such as his would not typically lead one to be judged fit for the Inheritor's Halls, though perhaps his crimes already precluded that outcome. Mayhaps by denying his redemption, he has turned to a more grueling path of Atonement. This could indeed be the Will of the Divine Order; to give him a path rigorous enough to properly cleanse his soul of the corruption it holds. If such is the case, perhaps then it holds a value I did not fully appreciate. I shall have to meditate on this in time, as I am certain the Truth will be made clear to me.

Oppian may be gone, but there remains one final corrupting influence. From the way this Legion Archon spoke, she may well have been the source of all of this. If that is so, then her crimes are even more unforgivable! This Revelation must have been correct, as the full force of my Divine Blessings struck at her with my first attack! The vile thing tried in vain to lash out at us, and her strength was certainly formidable, but her heresy could not stand when faced with the full powers of the Divine Order. In the end, a final bomb from Mister Ezra was all that was needed to purge away her vile words dressed in the guise of Iomedae's will. Her lies would be spoken no longer.

As I predicted, with the roots torn out, the rest of this infestation crumbled and was swiftly dispatched. I look forward to culling these infected lambs and restoring this beautiful Holy Place to the way it ought to be. My compatriots of course share my joy in this accomplishment, and it was clear from our reunion that my father was proud of my victory as well. He granted us his full support, as well as boons for our service. In my case, I was gifted with a blessing that would make this warhammer that has served me so well into a proper instrument of the Divine Order. At my command, it can manifest as the weapons of the Divinities I hold in such high esteem. Truly, it is a Blessing fit for my Convictions!

As we complete the liberation of Kantaria, there remain two final pressing issues that need to be resolved. One is the fate of Valor's Fastness. In truth, I did not wish to do harm to this Blessed place, though Father Dexsius provided a very compelling case. Surely, as the corruption was found to have seeped even in these hallowed grounds, it would be only appropriate to ritually cleanse it and rebuild a new and improved temple in its place. One that truly reflects the Will of the Divine Order. Iomedae would take her Rightful Place at Asmodeus' side, and demonstrate the unity that comes with the properly recognised Hierarchy! The vision is a magnificent one, and for our Righteous Convictions, we received a blessing to further aid us in combatting the forces of corruption that would struggle against Justice.

The second issue is that of the faceless stalkers. Useful as their service was in reclaiming these lands, their Purpose has expired. Though the Inheritor left these agents to serve us, we must not forget that she did still wish them exterminated, and it would simply not do to leave her work unfinished! Fortunately, Father Dexsius' plan was elegant, as befitting a man of his faith. The clause of his contract would allow it to be nullified by a proper representative, and our loyal companion given to us by Demeer was just such a creature. With the right coaxing, it was persuaded to sign for the promise of a Just Reward. True to our word, I delivered that reward post-haste, and soon sought out the leader of these vermin Linton Demeer to give him his due in turn...

I was granted the most honourable privilege to take charge of the town until its proper lords could return after all, just as Iomedae had before. As such, I shall follow in her footsteps, and will not rest until it is put to right, even if I must use every ounce of my Force to make it so!

21/03/20 - Session 18 - Kantaria's Cleansing

Starday, 19th Rova, Kantaria, Menador

Participants: Dominus (Justin)

When Longacre had fallen back into line, the stories of what happened to those foolish enough to rebel did not spread particularly far. It was a small and insignificant village, after all.

Kantaria, by comparison, was also small, but far from insignificant, and for the events to transpire as they did, on the Day of the Inheritor no less, they surely would not be forgotten.

People who witnessed the events, disturbed as they might be, could recall how those who had escaped slavery were just as quickly sent back to it, alongside those who helped them escape. They would remember as certain citizens were interrogated, rounded up, and killed, only for some of them to have their faces contort and leave behind an unnaturally deformed and featureless corpse. They would remember an imperious looking man with a menacing smile and official Chelish insignias overlooking the devastation with satisfaction, and giving words of praise to those agents who had taken the city. Agents that, for a time at least, were believed to be simple adventurers passing through.

Those in attendance might recall how Valor's Fastness, once a gleaming beacon of the city's association with Iomedae, was torn apart and desecrated, supposedly in the name of erecting a new, more magnificent temple fortress, one in which Iomedae would have a place, kneeling obediently to Lord Asmodeus. They might recall the largest of the agents, a man now clad in a twisted and dark version of the brilliant armour once donned by the freshly deceased Governor Nevilindor, preached to the onlookers the importance of observing just and honourable lives in reverence to the true hierarchy of Hell over Heaven, and asserted that the actions taken to reclaim the town were as much the divine will of the Inheritor as they were of the Dark Prince. That the holy mandate of Thrune was absolute, and that the terrorists calling themselves the Glorious Reclamation tarnished the good name of the Inheritor with their blasphemous rebellion.

These witnesses would remember the manic joy in the man's eyes as he proudly declared that the Day of the Inheritor would be properly celebrated, by offering a chance for those who lost their way to be brought back into the divine order, as reconciliation for their heresy. They would surely remember the dozens of faithful Iomedaeans and supporters of the Reclamation being tortured in groups until they denounced their crimes, then ritually slaughtered and raised as undead, at which point their animated remains coalesced into a horrifying perversion of the likeness of their former deity. They would know that these monstrosities would eventually march through the newly erected cathedral, standing guard much as they might have before the corruption of their holy charge.

They would absolutely remember the fate of Pious Pete, recognisable only by his wails of agony as his skinless body was dragged along by an eerily cheerful woman stained with blood that seemed to make her vicious-looking kukri pulsate with a palpable aura of malevolence. They would remember that his final destination was a large ceremonial pyre, the kindling composed in no small part of wooden holy symbols. They may have noticed how he was bound to the pyre

with a large amount of what seemed to be his own dried, flayed skin. Some may even have observed that there was more skin than a single man could produce, save for if it had been repeatedly regenerated and removed in what could only be a process of extremely prolonged agony. They might also have noticed the woman removing two of the tortured man's fingers with her blade as she assisted in binding him, though they could only speculate on the purpose of this action. Most of them however could recount the horrible stench that soon followed as some small devil appeared and lit the pyre, laughing gleefully as Pete begged for mercy. Everyone in attendance would remember that his cries went unanswered...

No, try as they might, those who were there for Kantaria's Day of the Inheritor would never be able to forget the terrors they witnessed that day, or shake off the feeling of dread that accompanied them...

HV3 - The Inferno Gate

21/04/16 - Session 19 - A New Path

Starday, 3rd Lamashan, Senara, The Heartlands

Participants: Dominus (Justin)

Our departure from Kantaria is bittersweet. Though I will always treasure the glorious opportunity to have taken part in its liberation and restoration to a true beacon of the Divine Order's righteousness, there is still work to be done. At the very least, I was able to see the new temple's construction consecrated in the name of Asmodeus, and participate in the pleasures of Dies Irae, before we were summoned back to meet with father in Kantaria. I sincerely hope that some time soon, I shall be able to return and witness the new holy site in all of its proper glory!

There was one other sad event in this departure. In addition to the expected parting of ways with my dear mother and Shield-Maralictor Zara, we also bid farewell to Miss Zuzka, who for personal reasons chose not to continue her adventure with us. Much as it disappoints me that she will no longer be following us on this journey, and fear that without guidance she might lose her way from the Divine Path, for her services thus far I cannot bear her any ill will. I pray that she shall continue onward towards ultimate salvation in the True Light!

Dear father made it clear that we must not tarry in our arrival, so we did not spend long in Longacre, though I confess a certain curiosity regarding the state of our former charge. As that did not turn out to be the purpose of our summons, I can only assume that our lessons have been taken to heart by the flock, and they remain obediently in their rightful place.

The first reason for our summons was quite a joyous one! Dear father has seen fit to grant us a boon for our services, in the form of advancement in Thrune's ranks! By blessing the branding upon my eye, I can feel myself bolstered by the might of Hell's mighty heralds on the material plane! As a loyal servant to the Divine Order, it is only natural that I accept such a gift from their representatives! My fellows were also given such a gift for their services, a gift I am sad Miss Zuzka did not join us to receive. Inquisitor Izinio, who granted us this boon, seemed to have even taken measure to heat the brand for Father Dexsius, which I assume to have been a means of demonstrating the Hellish power that courses through his veins. Would that he heated it for me as well, so that I might demonstrate the Infernal blessings that also course through mine! But jealousy is an ugly sentiment, so I shall not let the Father's good fortune be a cause for grief.

Aside from ourselves, two others received the blessings on my dear father's orders. These two individuals, Miss Arcatraz and Mister Kezax... They had not been mentioned to me before, though it would seem they had been working in service of his other machinations. For them to have earned the same boon as us, I must come to the conclusion that they are worthy and capable agents, so I take pleasure in finally making their acquaintance! Miss Arcatraz, or Miss Archie, as she prefers, exudes the confidence and intelligence of a learned scholar, while this servant of hers Mister Kezax, seems well-mannered and steadfast. Both also seem to possess the blood of dragons, though this has manifested more apparently in the case of Mister Kezax. Dragons are noble and powerful creatures indeed, so even while their blood is not quite as prestigious as that of those blessed by the gods, it is nevertheless an impressive pedigree. Our next mission shall see us working together, so I am eager to learn what they are capable of...

On the subject of that next mission, I am admittedly somewhat confused. My dear father has requested that we collect ingredients and conduct a ritual to seal a gate to Malebolge, Moloch's Infernal realm. But why seal a means to directly access such a blessed place!? My father's explanation is that such an act would be in accordance with the treaty forged between the Queen and Lord Asmodeus. I have no reason to doubt him, so surely this is a technical matter in the contract that I simply am not privy to. Still, that such a boon would be wasted in this manner hardly seems in accordance with the Divine Order. Perhaps my more academic companions will have wisdom to share in this matter...

This new task has led us on a journey to Senara. I remember the occasional trips to father's townhouse there well, though it has been many years since then. Such a pleasure it was to reunite with the good Miss Bliss, who cared for me as a babe! Though I am relieved to see that she and father's other servants are unharmed, the fact that once again a town has become overrun with the blasphemous heretics that claim to serve the Inheritor is enough to make my blood boil! Would that we had an army with which to root out these vermin from father's flock, but for now we have been assigned another purpose.

Nevertheless, this purpose has already found its first trouble. Some wretched thieves have stolen an amulet that was a necessary part of the ritual we are to perform! I took it upon myself to punish the one responsible for keeping the place secure for his incompetence, though I was merciful, and left him in Father Dexsius' care. Despite the plague of chaos running rampant across this town, the servants have indeed remained loyal, and for that they have my appreciation. Father has indeed trained them well!

As for the thieves, their discipline shall need to be more severe. Fortunately Mister Kezax wasted no time in hunting down the tracks of these criminals, while Miss Archie was kind

enough to accompany me in questioning the townsfolk. The proactiveness of our new allies is most welcome! The information we gathered was sadly lacking, likely because they simply do not recognise me after so many years, though they did speak of at least two points of interest. The first was that the orphanage may be the site of some unruly business, while the second was that an angel had taken a place within the local graveyard and was offering salvation to those who sought it. Mister Kezax for his part followed his trail to an aqueduct, possibly used to lead to their hidden domain.

Not wanting to waste the opportunity, we followed this trail and continued. A branching path led to a cave that smelled of death, though it's true purpose I could not say. At least, not until we excited it to find ourselves among an assortment of graves. It would seem this path may have been used by the thieves! To abuse such a sacred place so wantonly is a truly heinous thing! Yet another crime for which these scoundrels will be made to pay...

It would seem that the angel that occupied this place shared that sentiment, as it immediately accused us of villainy! Father Dexsius took action without hesitation, though in the hopes that this servant of heaven might not be tainted by the Reclamation, I asked that we might parley. In response she struck at me! Initially I thought she too might have been another lost lamb from Iomedae's flock, though I came to a blessed realisation, and with that her Divine Purpose became clear to me! Among the sacrifices needed for our ritual is the heart of an angel. She was simply offering hers to us! The Divine Path is not always direct, but in this case it was quick to bring our purpose to us! As Mister Kezax fired volleys from the shadows and Father Dexsius blessed me to join our quarry in the skies, Miss Archie performed a most impressive manoeuvre by launching herself into the air and taking hold of the angel! This gave me enough time to strike them down and liberate their much needed heart! Your presence here did indeed grant us salvation, dear angel, and for serving your purpose I thank you!

This task, though an important step in our task, is not the one we came here for however. The thieves remain at large, and for their trespass against our mandate they cannot be permitted to live with impunity!

21/04/24 - Session 20 - Den of Thieflings

Starday, 3rd Lamashan, Senara, The Heartlands

Participants: Dominus (Justin)

The sacrificial angel was a pleasant gift, but nevertheless not our true objective on this night. It would not do to leave our work incomplete at this stage, so we resumed our investigation of the tunnel. Mister Kezax had identified an alternate route, and so we continued...

This one led to what we believed to be the base of an orphanage. That these scoundrels would misuse such a place irks me tremendously, and only further proves that their souls are in need of a proper cleansing. Miscreants cannot be permitted to act against their masters, and worse yet must not be permitted to corrupt the young with their poisoned minds!

Speaking of poisoned minds, it is at this moment that the Divine Path illuminated a detail I had previously neglected. During our investigation, I had called forth my blessings to assuage the wounds inflicted by the angel. In doing so, the cavern walls did shift, though it only occurred to me moments later that this may well be a secret passageway! Mayhaps then that the orphanage was a ruse. But let it be known that no obstacle, be it deceit or brute force, shall impede the Righteous March of Justice!

We wisely judged that the magical deception was more likely to be our true target, and so we wasted no time in returning to pursue it. This did indeed seem to be the correct choice, as no sooner had we begun our efforts that we were accosted by the vanguard of these wretched thieves! Miss Archie took the brunt of the surprise attack, but held firm nonetheless, an accomplishment for which I am rather impressed! It was sufficient to strip the fools of their trickery, the sole advantage they possessed. Without it, they crumpled in the face of Divine Judgement.

I sought to offer their leader a chance to repent, despite her crime of assaulting good Father Dexsius. However the corruption seems too deeply ingrained, and she sought to flee rather than offer herself to absolution. Once Miss Archie assured that she would not escape, I in turn ensured that she would never again have the option to. It does seem a shame to crush flesh and bone blessed with the Infernal, but it is only natural that a gift that has been misused be revoked. In light of her new circumstances, I persuaded her to divulge some details about those that dared act against the Rightful Authority. She was forthcoming enough that I even entertained her requests. She did not wish to receive mercy from me, so I obliged by leaving her absolution to my companions. Our new allies harvested her flesh, so

as not to let its Hellish blessings go to waste, while Father Dexsius committed her soul so that those same blessings might be repurposed properly in the afterlife. A fitting way to reconsecrate her sacred blood! While she did not accept mercy from me, she did instead request that I grant it to her sister. Perhaps she mistakenly believed that I am limited in my ability to give Absolution. She needn't have worried, but I shall happily bestow such a blessing in honour of her divine peerage!

Our approach took some time, which was somewhat frustrating, but it did give us a chance to bolster ourselves. Our new friends seemed well-versed in preparation for such an encounter, which is a welcome thing. We must go forth with the full force of our convictions, after all! No quarter would be given to these brigands, save to fully absolve them of their crimes!

Our deliverance was swift and direct, which I must confess was ever so satisfying. It is a joy to bring forth the blessing of the Divine Order upon the lost without pretense or subterfuge. That is not to say they did not offer some resistance, mind you. Both Miss Archie and Father Dexsius sustained rather grave wounds from the sheer number of lost souls acting out. Fortunately, both endured, and upon rising again Father Dexsius passionately offered up his cleansing flames not once, but twice! The horde of misguided criminals were properly purified by his Blessed Fire, ample enough that even their inherent protections could not impede it! Such a baptism was a sight most welcome! I truly did fear that they might try to flee as the woman before them did, but my fears were assuaged! This left only a few that were easily tended to, and finally the sister for which I promised mercy. Despite her actions against my dear allies, I stayed true to my word, and her passage was swift. May the Divine Order judge her soundly.

Before his attempt to escape Justice, the one identified as the leader of these brigands was kind enough to return to me the amulet they had stolen. Miss Archie and I took a moment to examine it, and through her expertise our new comrade identified its application. It is fundamentally a tool for control. I cannot say for sure, but it would seem she suspects there are details not yet clear to us in this ritual we are to perform. Though I am not one to question a Divine Mandate, perhaps her investigations will further illuminate the exact nature of our purpose on this mission...

Father Dexsius has prepared himself to interrogate the remains of this leader of thieves. If nothing else, I would be very curious to know what folly gave him the audacity to act out against my father so brazenly...

21/05/01 - Session 21 - Won't Somebody Please Think of the Children

Sunday, 4th Lamashan, Senara, The Heartlands

Participants: Dominus (Justin)

With the wasted blood recommitted to Hell, we had ample time to more thoroughly investigate this site of vile miscreants for further information. We discovered a hatch from which items, presumably including father's talisman, were dropped. Mister Kezax even retrieved notes which I could recognise as belonging to dear father as well. They further outlined the function of this artifact. So it would seem its purpose is to bind a particular heresy devil, provided their true name is known. Perhaps one of our tasks is to determine this name? I find it strange that father did not supply us with this information himself, but he has never been one to be direct. It is quite possible that this is some sort of test on his part then...

Questioning the ringleader of these thieves did not yield much of value either, save to suggest that the theft was committed by an opportunistic child that simply saw the talisman and took it. I find the notion that a mere infant could outmanoeuvre dear father's no doubt extensive security measures to be absurd, but as of yet the Divine Path has not revealed the truth to me. For now, I can only assume that there is some truly powerful force working against him. I am certain that in good time, the grace of the Gods will make this foe clear to me.

The thief's corpse did provide us with one piece of useful knowledge, in the form of a certain woman's name. This "Ginevra" may yet lead us on to the answers we seek, or at least be a good resource for our endeavours.

Though this little investigation did take us late into the night, our work is not quite done yet. We made a return to the other passage and to the orphanage above. There we found a corpse so carelessly exhumed and left in the basement, so that its spirit could not rest. I saw to it that the wayward soul was put to sleep once more, as is proper.

Beyond was the basement of the orphanage, which contained an assortment of poor quality alcohol. To think these beasts were so depraved as to put the youth in such a place! But truly, the most heinous thing is the fact that the children's toy room contained the opening to the chute we found in the caves below. It would seem the criminal scum was not lying when he suggested these children were already corrupted by his influence. It is regrettable that I do not have the time to personally set them upon the Righteous Path worthy of their

blood, so that they might one day grow to be honourable folk like Father Dexsius. Instead, we must make haste. Let the fire and smoke burn away their sins as their souls are repurposed for more noble ends. Let daybreak show the failings of the Reclamation, to permit such corruption on their watch. These misdeeds shall not be stood for once Senara is reclaimed by its rightful owners!

Our Righteous deeds done for the night, we returned home for a brief rest before tackling our second day. I continue to be thankful that the servants remain steadfast in their obedience. It is a refreshing comfort to once more enjoy the luxuries of my station, if only for a brief time. Miss Blissy has been especially diligent, and took the effort to inform me of some rather troubling news. Not only did the Bellflower Network have the audacity to pester father's dutiful servants, but by their own account they had now made inroads in Egorian thanks to the help of some agitator named "The Barrister". Given that she supposedly has only one hand, I must assume that thieving is in her nature, and her moniker is therefore ironic. Still, this is some worrisome information. Once this mission is done, perhaps I shall request a return to Egorian so that I might assist in purging this rot.

Our work here is not yet done, however! With the Talisman and one heart in our possession, we still have more to find. Fortunately, our next place of interest was rather easy to locate. It would seem in their misguided efforts to disrupt Senara, the heretics have pushed legitimate businesses into the arms of the local black market. All it took were a few conversations and a run-in with a most charming local tanner to lead us to Ginevra. The elderly woman was no doubt a shrewd one, though she knew nothing of any competitors who might want the Talisman. She was helpful enough in selling us the agathion heart we needed for the ritual, though I daresay her lack of enthusiasm for supporting the Righteous side of this insurrection is somewhat disappointing. Perhaps with time we might make it clear to her that she needn't fear investing in the correct outcome. I shall not forget who kept their faith when this is done, after all...

So far today has been a simple day, but nevertheless a productive one. We must still find the remaining hearts and unicorn horns, not to mention the gate itself. For that, we shall no doubt have to depart into the wilderness of the Whisperwood...

21/05/09 - Session 22 - Bear-Owl Brawl

Toilday, 6th Lamashan, Senara, The Heartlands

Participants: Dominus (Justin)

This little revisit to Senara was a pleasant reminder of simpler times, but one cannot dwell on such comforts when there is work to be done. It is for this reason that we wasted no time in purchasing some horses and departing on our mission. Senara's liberation from the misguided flock will have to wait until our Divine Mandate is resolved. These people need not fear, however. I have every intention of liberating this town as we have Longacre and Kantaria before it.

The Whisperwood is a fascinating place. Though I was born near it and spent much of my childhood close to its outskirts, I have never truly examined it with any real scrutiny. It is rare that the Glorious Order I serve gives much attention to the chaos of the wilderness, after all. It is for that very same reason that I can so respect the Order of the Pike for their unenviable mission of striving for Order in such places. That same mission I am now certain will make them invaluable allies in our quest, which is why we immediately made our way to Citadel Ordeial.

For the most part, our journey was uneventful, with one small exception. Mister Kezax observed the carcass of a strange creature that seemed part owl, part bear. The bearowl (or owlbear as Miss Archie called it, though I prefer how our appellation rolls off the tongue) was apparently wounded by something of an Infernal nature. Given such a discovery, it is only natural that we would pursue the tracks that were left behind. These eventually brought us to what we believe was its den. There, three younger spawn of the same species greeted us with great hostility. One can only conclude that if one with an infernal blessing would fight such creatures, they must be our enemy as well. This is only further corroborated by their brazen strikes against us. Well, it is in the nature of savage beasts to be tamed by the might of Order, as so we subdued them thoroughly, as is proper. The tracks of the infernal being continued beyond what we could consider to be a reasonable detour, so instead we simply made do with retrieving what we could from the beasts' hides and resuming our journey.

There was one other small detail I have neglected to mention in this encounter. Among the den of these beasts, we located a ring with some measure of magical energy. It bore a curious crest that Mister Kezax identified as belonging to some sort of bandit sorcerer that styles himself a Prince. The notion is both laughable and unacceptably vain, and for this misattribution I will see to it that he is purged from these lands, if these ursine beasts did not do so already.

The one detour aside, we did finally reach our destination. The guardians were apprehensive at first, but upon my mention of our dear friend Miss Orcelani, they were gracious enough to grant us an audience with her brother, the Lictor. I look forward to seeing the beauty of a Hellknight Citadel from within! Truly, it shall be a most wondrous experience!

21/05/21 - Session 23 - The Devils You Don't Know

Wealdy, 14th Lamashan, Senara, The Heartlands

Participants: Dominus (Justin)

Citadel Ordeial was every bit the impressive bastion of Order I would expect from a Hellknight fortress, albeit a minor one. Truly, it is a rare privilege to be granted entry into such hallowed ground, and furthermore to be given an audience with a Lictor! The Divine Order rewards me for my Dedication once more!

As is to be expected, Lictor Orcelani was amply forthcoming with information to aid us in our quest. As is to be expected of course, as fellow servants of the Great Plan. Through their information, we have a much better understanding of the Whisperwood. Though they regrettably do not have exact information regarding the Inferno Gate, they have narrowed our search. Likewise, they have provided us with possible areas in which to locate the various creatures still needed for our ritual. In return, we happily accepted a list of potential bounties that we might see to on their behalf during our journeys as well.

The Lictor was even kind enough to provide us with some insight on the actions of the Reclamation heretics as well. Naturally, the Hellknights have their own responsibilities to tend to, and therefore remain ostensibly neutral, but their devotion to the True Cause nevertheless shows in the fact that they have given us critical information regarding these lost lambs. The fact that our foes are on a quest to seal the Gate as well vexes me, but no doubt their methods will not serve the Divine Path as is intended. Therefore, it is our Duty to ensure that we are the ones to fulfil the task!

Our departure saw us travelling West from the Citadel, crossing the upper region of the Iron Snarl, which we had not done previously. This was in the hopes of catching the trail we had found some days ago of Infernal creatures wandering the forest. We did eventually pick up the trail, and it led us down once more to the river. We opted to finish the quest this time, figuring that it may prove prudent to parley with these creatures. In light of that, we made a brief visit to Senara, and Father Dexsius purchased some slaves to use as offerings, before we crossed into Perdition Reach and followed the trail once more.

It would seem that as we chased these creatures, they too chased us. We found ourselves ambushed by a pair of Barbazu. They did quite a number on one of our horses and Miss Archie, though the tides were turned quickly enough. Father Dexsius did his best to reason with the creatures, but they seemed rather unwilling to cooperate. It is unfortunate, but rabid beasts that cannot obey the will of their proper masters must be put down. Father

Dexsius mercifully sent one back to Hell for proper discipline, while I dispatched the second as punishment for its misdeeds against us.

The creatures bore missives with them. We were able to retrieve the note from the rabid one I cured. By Miss Archie's estimation, the note is imbued with secretive magic that would make it difficult for us to read. As such, we have opted to keep it sealed until we have the means to properly inspect it. I must confess that my curiosity is piqued. Perhaps this note bears clues regarding this Infernal soldier's insubordinate attitude? Might there be some conspiracy plaguing those of Hellish blood, and it is for this reason that we have been sent to seal the Gate? No doubt, the Truth shall reveal itself to me in time, as it always does.

21/05/28 - Session 24 - The Last Laugh

Sunday, 18th Lamashan, Scarhurst, The Heartlands

Participants: Dominus (Justin)

Following our brief return to Senara, we continued our journey north into Hellspawn Dale. We've plotted a course that should be a sufficient sweep to thoroughly canvas the forest. It simply would not do if we were sloppy, after all. As we are acting in service not just to my dear father, but also now the prestigious Hellknights, we must put our best foot forward! To aid us in this endeavour, Dexsius has opted to repurpose the slaves he purchased to tend to our camp and comforts. Their servitude has indeed helped to alleviate some of the discomforts of the wilderness. Perhaps it is a boon that we did not give them up to those outcast barbazu after all.

Our journey through the Dale did eventually lead us to a rather disgusting thing. It would seem that in the depths of these woods, some creatures saw fit to erect a vulgar shrine to Picoperi, a miserable entity worshiped by tricksters and scoundrels. Mister Kezax was of course able to infiltrate the site with little difficulty, but no sooner had we entered the glade that the shrine's tenders aggrieved us with lightning! What's more, when I approached to confront them, the serpentine woman had the nerve to sidestep me while invisible and attack my companions! I should not expect honour from such chaotic creatures, but their willfulness to ignore me was a crime I could not allow to pass.

Order smiled upon me, and the lillend woman did not endure her punishment well. Such is to be expected when you disregard a Blessed Herald. As for the other minion that had taken flight, I was all too happy to leave him to my comrades while I cultivated the snake woman's heart. It would seem the fool took offense at my judgement of his fellow creature of chaos, but Father Dexsius saw to it that his complaints were soundly muted. There is a certain irony that followers of a figment of comedy would be so laughably feeble. With them out of the way, we were able to properly cleanse and reconsecrate these lands in the name of Order. Their hearts too will serve us well in the ritual to come, though I find their aura rather distasteful. As for what remains of the filthy azatas, perhaps Miss Archie and Mister Kezax found them appetizing, though I get the sense that their abuse of unclean substances would make their meat rather rancid.

Our continuation brought us west into Scarhurst. From previous recollections, the hound archons we seek were last seen within a location known as the Scar Thicket. We sought out this location, though were disappointed to find only a mass of vegepygmies. Father Dexsius made quick work of them, and we continued on our way. The hounds may not be here anymore, but they musn't be far...

21/06/04 - Session 25 - Don't Blink

Toilday, 20th Lamashan, The Murmurs, The Heartlands

Participants: Dominus (Justin)

Our previous assessment regarding our quarry of hounds did prove to be true after all, albeit with a small caveat. The creatures we encountered were not archons, but rather a different form of celestial beast. These canines demonstrated a rather frustrating propensity for not retaining a material form. Though ultimately the savage things were quite impotent as they attempted to lash out at us, this little quirk of theirs did make their extermination rather tedious. Fortunately, perseverance and a few liberal applications of blessed and draconic flames put an end to this feral menace. No matter what the creatures were ultimately, the Order of the Pike will surely be pleased to know that the wilderness has been tamed that much more.

As this was our primary reason for travelling through Scarhurst, we opted not to push further north, and instead made our way back to the main road. As fortune would have it, Mister Kezax once again caught wind of something a short ways from the path, and thus led us to yet another crucial find. Within a small glade, we discovered a small blessing of unicorns! As always, the Divine Path leads us true to our Holy Purpose! Unfortunately, the wild beasts were somewhat skittish and seemed uncertain of how to properly approach a Herald such as myself, but a bit of effort on the part of our group was sufficient to permanently tame their wild abandon. Their spirits will no doubt be quelled with the satisfaction that their bone will serve our Sacred Mandate. So too will the druid entombed in this grove know the joy that what remains of their equipment shall be put to good use. That they would bury such goods so that we might one day retrieve them... Every day I marvel at the wonder of the Divine Order, to orchestrate a sequence of events so elegantly!

21/06/11 - Session 26 - Felling the Feigned Prince

Sunday, 25th Lamashan, Longacre, The Heartlands

Participants: Dominus (Justin)

We've but one ingredient yet to be collected for our ritual, then there is the matter of some lingering bounties, and of course locating the Gate and routing the Reclamation vermin. It is fortunate then, that we did not need to travel far to acquire our next milestone.

It began first with Mister Kezax spotting a faint trail that would lead us to a most suspicious cave. Within, he located a camp of bandits. Naturally, such pests cannot be tolerated on Dear Father's lands. Our action was decisive and swift. Father Dexsius bravely led the charge, demonstrating the absolute resolve of a man of true faith and devotion as their arrows struck out at him. Truly, such bravery is admirable!

Of course, the audacity of these brigands to even dare test him in such a manner is simply inexcusable! Father Dexsius and I wasted no time in punishing these failed souls for their trespass. Miss Archie and Mister Kezax meanwhile tended to those foes further outside of our immediate reach. In this process, a rather large bear emerged as well, though Miss Archie utilised what I assume to be her draconic might to subdue the beast with ease. There was also a further influx of minions that arrived afterwards, though Father Dexsius conveniently incinerated them before they even had the opportunity to make a nuisance of themselves.

Then finally, there was the matter of the source of this festering wound. It would seem that while we pruned the weeds, the so-called Feign Prince was busy satisfying his baser desires with a couple more of his corrupted flock. This elf dared to attempt a bargain with us, supposing that information regarding the Inferno Gate would be sufficient to allow him an escape from Justice. I was in fact prepared to be lenient, and offered him the choice of which limbs he might desire to keep for the information, but he so rudely lashed out at me instead! All the more so, one of his wanton harlots dared to strike at me with an enchantment! Miss Archie and Father Dexsius were kind enough to deny these magics and save me the trouble of righting the affliction myself, so that I might instead put all of my effort into ensuring that this blight be properly quelled. The greed and pride of this scum is seeped deep into his every limb it would seem, therefore he was be relieved of them. As for his objects of pleasure... The one that saw fit to afflict his better was appropriately punished, while the other was disabled, but spared. Father Dexsius determined that she might have some value as a slave...

A few days journey returned us to Longacre, with bear, false prince, and repurposed consort in tow. It was a welcome return to once more visit the jailhouse and dear Gaurig. The loyal beast has served well, and it is only right that once we depart, we return him to the woods as he once requested. But there remained the matter of the vulgar deceitful bandit. As these old walls know, we are accustomed to loosening lips, and his were no different. His words were certainly more interesting when they did not come laced with expectations. We now have knowledge of the Inferno Gate's location at some forgotten fort, as well as further confirmation of the ayngavhaul that presides over it. He did have one request, that we return to him a locket he once lost in this place. Despite myself, I could not help but be impressed at the sheer amount of pain he endured so as not to reveal any further details regarding this item. If it suits us, perhaps I may grant him that favour in honour of this feat...

Soon, we will set out once more, this time into the one region of the Whisperwood we have not yet scoured. But first, we must see to our supplies. Perhaps Mister Zoags is still in town...

21/06/18 - Session 27 - Enemy at the Gate

Sunday, 1st Neth, Perdition Reach, The Heartlands

Participants: Dominus (Justin)

Our timing once more has been indicative of the favour of the Divine Order. As Abadar's blessing falls upon us in the form of Market's Door celebration, we found ourselves returned to the relatively civilised society of Longacre to make gold of our collected tithes. Without yet collecting our bounties from the Order of the Pike, we had already found our journey to be lucrative. Such is the fortune of those that do the Good Work of restoring Order and Justice to such savage lands!

Speaking of, our departure from Father's holding marked our arrival into the final region of the Whisperwood, the one known as Perdition Reach. It is there that we have been told we might find our final destination, as well as our heretic foes. My bones have ached in anticipation to cleanse these lands of the putrid filth that dare impugn Iomedae's holy name by holding her sword against the forces of Hell!

Nevertheless, there remained some final duties to attend to before my Fury might be addressed. First was ensuring that I stayed true to my promise to dear Gaurig. The loyal creature has been returned to the forest so that he might carry on in his natural duties. I hope only that he can see them through with all of the Honour he held in service to his masters. The second was the removal of one final bounty, that of the so-called Savage Mistress of Beasts. Miss Archie seemingly was familiar with this creature, a familiarity I've come to understand comes with no affection. We found the crude creature bathing in the company of an ursine. The stench of debauchery was enough to make my stomach churn. My companions and I made haste to see her perverse bestial tendencies ended. The nature she had corrupted did certainly put up some measure of resistance, but she soon learned that not even a pool is sufficient to escape the fires of a Righteous Inferno. I descended upon her and made certain her vile corruption would spread no further. It was fortunate that her bounty did not require a living soul. There was a certain satisfaction in seeing the deed done in its entirety. A partial measure as we have done with the thief wizard is most tiresome by comparison.

Our arrival at Fort Arego could not come soon enough! From Mister Kezax's inspections, the Reclamation heretics have already settled in the area, and now act with impunity upon this sacred soil! This simply would not stand! With the blessings and favours of my magically-inclined allies, we went forth to halt these villains in the midst of their trespass.

The vanguard did show some spirit, misguided as it might have been, but they lacked any conviction to back up their initial bluster. I cut a path and left the remains to Miss Archie to toy with as she pleased while the rest of us forged on.

The next group was a small contingent of lost lambs led by a blathering fool filled with more bravado than sense. Her hollow proclamations showed no sign of devotion to anything beyond her own self-interest. Her complete and utter disregard for any sense of dignity makes such a parasite unfit to breathe, much less declare herself a representative of the Inheritor! If such is the quality of the Reclamation's knights, then it is but further proof of their invalidity! I took great care to demonstrate the uselessness of her blather, then dashed forth from the sky and demonstrated to her peons her true two-faced nature. The only facet of her demise that surprised me was that her corpse was not as vacuous as her words.

The peons were completely ineffectual, as one would expect from those that spit on Iomedae's Favour. There was one knight however that almost showed a glimmer of potential. The cleric sought to tend to his troops, and no doubt in recognition of my righteousness extended his healing gifts to myself. He then requested permission to abscond with his soldiers. I had initially taken him to have perhaps seen the error of his ways. Regrettably, this was an act of deceit, as Father Dexsius so keenly observed. That being the case, his Penance would have to be completed in the Boneyard, as will be the case for those lost lambs brought astray. Redemption would not be administered to the lost on this day. No, this is a time of Cleansing...

21/07/06 - Session 28 - Rise and Fall

Sunday, 1st Neth, Perdition Reach, The Heartlands

Participants: Dominus (Justin)

There was no time for respite, as Fort Arego remained under siege! These heretics have indeed put forth a sizeable number of misguided spirits in the way of our goal. Perhaps in a manner, this is a challenge devised by the Divine Path to test me. There may be some truth to that notion. Much as Iomedae was made to undergo the test of the Starstone to prove her worthiness as a servant of the Divine Order, so too must I prove my worth. If this is the case, then it is all the more imperative that we do not fail!

Through the grace afforded to me by my companions, lesser obstacles such as the hound archons observing the bridge were inconsequential. Father Dexsius and Mister Kezax saw to these pebbles on our path with great efficiency, while I tended to the legion archons that flew above. With Miss Archie's assistance, these too fell to our authority, while also granting us the final ingredient needed for our upcoming ritual. It is truly a mark of our growth that such foes that once impeded us so are now but mere trifles. May my examiners see this proof of our progress!

The next obstacle was a pair of living trees, commanded by some advanced member of their kind. I did not tarry in charging forth against them, and drew their ire. This proved to be a nearly fatal error, and for the briefest of moments, I was felled. It may be that in my excitement, I was hasty, and in my ambitions I overstepped. Divine Providence and the patronage of House Thrune ensured that this failure was not permanent, and with Father Dexsius' aid the creature was brought to Justice. Nevertheless, the experience was humbling. I must remember in the future that tactics and cunning are just as essential as might and perseverance. The Inheritor is a goddess of strategy after all. This test has done well to teach me that there is still much for me to learn. Fear not, my Lords and Masters! I shall not take this lesson in vain!

So too shall I not discount the value of my dear companions. As I wrestled with my own mortality, the others were dealing with yet another challenge brought forth by the Reclamation heretics. Mised knights atop bird-headed horses charged forth at them. Father Dexsius bravely stood to meet their charge, but it was in this moment that Miss Archie demonstrated the truly impressive power borne of her draconic blood. The waves of acid made quick work of their mounts, and most did not survive the subsequent abrupt descent. Mister Kezax, ever the dutiful cleaner, ensured that none remained to challenge us further.

Our ascent to reach the fort has indeed been a suitable test of our abilities, but I am certain that within lies even more severe evaluations. My body has recovered, and this one stumble of mine shall only further steel my resolve to see my Duty done!

21/07/13 - Session 29 - The Reclamation of Fort Arego

Sunday, 1st Neth, Perdition Reach, The Heartlands

Participants: Dominus (Justin)

Before us lay Fort Arego, our final destination. We've come far in our mission, and surmounted many obstacles. Now that we've arrived, I am prepared to see this test of the Gods to the very end!

The Reclamation is in shambles. Only a couple stragglers and their so-called leader remain here to contest us. Father Dexsius set the stage for our adversaries' trial by fire. All things considered, I expected this woman to hold out longer against me, but it would seem that my brief encounter with the Divine Beyond has invigorated me well beyond the point where such a heretic might pose a threat. Only a few strikes of my disciplined hands were needed to end her and her tainted celestial mount. The soldier and archon that stood with her did not last long either. Only the man-headed lion creature that hid itself managed to pose any sort of challenge, and Father Dexsius ended its trickeries with a blow of grand proportions. Perhaps it is my renewed vigor that is colouring my perspective, but I found this test to be... Wanting. Perhaps this was simply a warmup, or a validation of our righteousness. Heaven is but a stepping stone to the grander power of Hell, after all, and these are not even True Disciples. Nevertheless, the stage is passed, and so begins our descent into the true challenge.

Our first encounter was with a pair of three-headed dogs blessed by the Infernal. I made a point to demonstrate my authority to them. In response, they attacked me! One even did so with a great deal of fervor! Initially, I thought that perhaps these beasts are themselves rebels against the True Order, but the pain brought with it a certain clarity. These hounds assaulted me so not in spite of who I am, but because of it! They were themselves a Trial, placed there to introduce us to the next step in our examination! It ought to have been an evident sign, as canids do seem to often be representatives of such tests for me. Clearly then, it is a Sign of the Divine Order's Will made manifest! Given this wisdom, I continued to exert my authority, and with the aid of my companions, the creatures were given irrefutable proof of our worthiness. These gates shall impede us no further!

The interior of Fort Arego is as ruined as its exterior. It is clear that decay and disrespect have harmed it greatly. Perhaps when this is done, I shall petition for its restoration. I shall have to see with dear Father what we might do to restore this Holy Site to its proper Glory. For now, we must simply contend with the fact of this decay, something Mister Kezax is managing quite well. I am continually impressed by Miss Archie's loyal servant. His ability to bend the environment to suit his mistress' will would be the envy of any dutiful agent.

Even as we encountered a bone devil intent on demonstrating an assortment of tortures to me, he dutifully took his position and delivered a most surprising blow upon the Infernal entity as it tried in vain to hold us back. Mister Kezax and Father Dexsius' initiative ensured that we could corner and conclude this test. For our efforts, we were able to scour the remnants of what was once an impressive collection of books. Among these were some that seemed compelling in their worth, first to Father Dexsius, then to Miss Archie. She seemed more than pleased with the final outcome, for which I am thankful. As for myself, I've taken the liberty of collecting the book on torture the osyluth spoke of to me. Perhaps I might have use for its techniques one day...

One final challenge remained on this floor, in the form of a pair of skeletal servants of Moloch. The flames they exuded bore the warmth of Hell, something I welcomed openly! Here, I must commend my allies, as Miss Archie, Mister Kezax, and Father Dexsius all fought valiantly to prove their worth. I am truly fortunate to be in the company of loyal and powerful servants to the Order's will, even if the Divine Truth does not whisper to them as it does to me. I suppose such understanding is not necessary, so long as I am there to guide them on the Path. I can already feel as we descend, the Infernal Energies are growing, strengthening us further. Even but a taste of the Power of Hell is intoxicating! Perhaps with the conclusion of this mandate, we shall all be brought closer to that Supreme Reality!

21/07/23 - Session 30 - The Staircase to Hell

Sunday, 1st Neth, Perdition Reach, The Heartlands

Participants: Dominus (Justin)

With our final objective within our grasp, the raging fires of Hell had ignited my own spirit. It seems only natural that the warmth would invigorate me once more with Infernal Fervor. I could feel it seep into my very soul! What a refreshing feeling!

But we had not yet reached our destination. There remained some trials before we would face the gate and complete our mission. The first of these was yet another knight of Moloch that blocked the next staircase down. It was a simple thing to pass its test and proceed, though in the cramped location, Mister Kezax appeared to have had some trouble with his aim. It is fortunate that his mistake was a harmless one.

The floor below was the residence of even more of Hell's servants. Levalochs are fascinating things, and were it not for my objective, I would relish the opportunity to appreciate the elegance of their design. However, we had a duty to attend to, and they were an impediment to us. I demonstrated my Convictions with appropriate reverence for their power. It shook my examiners profoundly, and while one fell, the other fled. A curious tactic for such a creature, but perhaps it was simply to herald my continued descent. Either way, it allowed room for Father Dexsius and Mister Kezax to attend to a series of other rather odd bird-like Hell creatures that had been hiding in an adjacent room. I believe Miss Archie referred to them as achaierai. Whatever their role here was meant to be in this place, they were ultimately of little consequence.

The next descent proved more interesting. The warmonger from before had indeed mustered up a suitable challenge with which to test me. With the accompaniment of two more burning knights, he struck out at myself and Father Dexsius. Perhaps it was a matter of the confined space, but I found that I had a great deal of difficulty striking my foes. Ironically, while I struggled, Mister Kezax's bolts struck at the knights with impressive accuracy. Perhaps these circumstances were a curse bestowed to test my endurance? To verify how well I could hold a bulwark? Well, I can attest at least that it was a true challenge, but one that we eventually overcame, like so many others before it. I would not be stopped so close to our final destination, after all! The Will of the Divine must be done!

Our final challenge on this stage came in the form of a swarm of Infernal insects and a pair of felines engulfed in the flames of Damnation. Despite all my talents, I was admittedly ill-equipped to deal with minuscule pests, so I left them to my companions, while I focused

on the cats. Ferocious things they were! One sought to claim my arm with its fangs. I claimed its head instead. The other did not remain to face me. Normally I would be irritated that my targets would flee, but as they are merely testing our worthiness, I realise that their complete eradication is unnecessary. So long as they recognise the authority I represent, their ultimate fate is irrelevant.

The Devil may well be in the details, but one must also not lose sight of the big picture. It is that same mistake which leads so many to their limited world views. It is a mistake I must not fall into as I approach the end of my mandate. This quest we have undertaken to seal the path to Hell... It still troubles me to think that this is our objective, but that uncertainty is rooted in the same error. Just as Heaven is but a fragment of the Divine Order, so too is Malebolge but a fragment of Hell. To seal this door is may seem contrary, but for this to be what is required of us, it must be a part of the greater Divine Path. I am certain it will all become clear in time. It is that certainty which allows me to push onwards!

21/08/05 - Session 31 - A Sudden But Inevitable Betrayal

Sunday, 1st Neth, Perdition Reach, The Heartlands

Participants: Dominus (Justin)

Deeper still this tower went. I do not believe I had ever travelled so far underground before. Certainly, the essence of Hell is becoming ever more apparent with each staircase. The wondrous scent of brimstone and ash was almost intoxicating! As for the musical wails of ecstasy sung by the damned... They were much louder than they ought to be.

The floor we reached appeared to be a sort of prison chamber, tapering down to a focal point below, in some ways akin to a coliseum. Within the cells, tormented souls I can only conclude to be petitioners of Maleboge. For us to see such beings, perhaps we had already descended into Hell? But that seemed wrong. The gate would not be so imperceptible. I cannot fathom what crimes these creatures undertook to be denied their rewards in Hell, but their presence here on the material plane is undoubtedly a torment fit only for those that have disgraced the gift that was offered to them. The command given by their host devil jailors to claim our heads, coupled with the suggestion that doing so would bring them salvation, seemed to confirm that these are souls in need of Redemption.

Given this, it would have been my instinct to obliterate their very existence and thus wipe away their shame, but Miss Archie presented an interesting alternative. What if, instead of slaughter, they were to be commanded? That we would command them. An interesting notion. If this tower has indeed been a test as I have surmised, then perhaps this is a trial of leadership? I decided to humour this idea, and used my talents to coerce the pitiful things into submission. Naturally, such an effort was trivial for a person as strong in their Convictions as I. Dexsius too made an impressive display of demanding submission from the fool that dared challenge his authority. As is to be expected from one touched by Hell itself, he put the depraved slave in its place handily!

That left the jailors. They were formidable foes. Remarkably so, in fact. The Divine Order clearly saw fit to handicap me in this trial, as fortune did not favour me, but my trust in my companions and my own determination ensured that this did not follow the same plot as my encounter with the tree creatures above. I was not halted for long, and the devils were made to acknowledge our authority as supreme.

Miss Archie in particular seemed to take particular delight in seizing command of these misbegotten souls. She would inform us that this was a part of a scheme to forge herself anew with the Blessings of the Infernal. A most admirable pursuit! As a herald of the

Divine Path, it is only fitting that those that fight alongside me share in such boons, so of course, I am all too happy to support her quest for Perfection! Naturally, our current mandate takes precedence, but if we might help her on the way, then I see no reason to deny her such a Righteous Destiny.

Below the prison we found one more floor, this one only sparsely occupied. Its occupant was nevertheless formidable. I do not know much about barbed devils, but I know that they are a fearsome creature to combat in close quarters. Still, Father Dexsius bravely set after the beast. It was a costly effort, but one that gave me the necessary opening to strike out against it. Curiously, it did not linger any further after tasting my hammer, though it did not flee either. A final test perhaps? Well, it was irrelevant at this point, for our objective lay at the base of the next stairs...

The journey was long and full of a great many difficult trials, but at long last, we had reached the Inferno Gate! It was every bit the magnificent Divine construct I imagined it to be! Imposing and glorious, emanating an overwhelming aura that would make lesser beings falter. But we were not lesser beings! We were agents of the Divine on a most Holy mission, and it was here that we would finally complete that very mission!

It is appropriate then that dear Father was there already, waiting for us in the company of an immense being I could only assume to be the famed Visperthul, caretaker of this gate. That both were present together assuaged my lingering concerns over this sealing being the Will of the Divine Order. We wasted no time in preparing ourselves for the ritual. That said, Miss Archie's curiosity led her to ask some questions regarding the technicalities of what we would be performing. I suppose it was ever in her nature to be curious and thorough. While I would not normally approve of questioning such important things, I could nevertheless see value in her approach. As I had learned, prudence is a valuable virtue.

However, I must confess that the line of questioning became rather troubling. I do not believe it was Miss Archie's intention, but she inadvertently suggested that there might be an oversight in the ritual, one that seemed to displease Father. Normally, I would not intervene in such matters, but then Visperthul said something that I could not allow to pass. Admittedly, my temper flared somewhat in response to a claim that the heresy devil made regarding my Father's intelligence and moral standing. No creature, even a being of Hell itself, could be permitted to impugn my Father's character as to suggest he would cavort with the vile likes of succubi!

I recognise that my speaking out of turn was ill-mannered, and Father Dexsius wisely halted me before I continued further, but for such words to be spoken with impunity... Perhaps this was the true power of a heresy devil, to speak such ugly blasphemies as a

matter of course. Perhaps I have grown too accustomed to correcting such blasphemies when I witness them, and this too was a test of my patience. In any case, the matter was halted there, and the ritual resumed.

The first step of destabilising the gate was successful, though what followed was far more unexpected. In that moment, Father struck out against us! My initial thought was that it was some sort of deception, a vision brought on by the overwhelming magics of Hell bursting forth. But as he continued to speak, accusing us of foolishness and declaring his intent to sacrifice our souls to seize control of the portal... I was struck with a strange mixture of emotions. I was fortunate then, that the heresy devil prodded me before. I understand what he was attempting, what Father was trying to do.

This was not a test, but the final examination! In bringing us here, in providing us with these tools, and in declaring such intentions of treachery, he had set us up for a most wondrous gift! Alas, dear Father, I know too well that you were not nearly so thoughtless nor cruel to do such things to me! Rather, these were clearly platitudes meant to dissuade me from feeling grief over what I must now do. Evidently, you had deemed me worthy of inheriting this power you have had us prepare! In challenging me, the herald of the Divine Path, in a fight to the death, you were offering yourself! In telling us the intent of controlling the gate, you were telling me what I must do to honour your legacy! By taking these actions, you have made it clear that you are the final ingredient to this ritual!

At long last, it was finally clear to me, dear Father! Your offering was of a magnitude far greater than any son could hope for! I appreciate your attempt to prevent me from feeling remorse or hesitation at what I would have to do, but you needn't have been concerned. I was all too aware that killing you would be a necessary step, and though it would pain me, I could never discard such a thoughtfully prepared gift! I accept the responsibility you are bestowing upon me! I shall Liberate your soul for the Glory of the Divine Order, Father!

21/08/20 - Session 32 - Sins of the Father

Sunday, 1st Neth, Perdition Reach, The Heartlands

Participants: Dominus (Justin)

Father made a tremendous show of his defiance. Naturally, he inflicted no meaningful harm to us, but he did make himself rather difficult to reach. Perhaps his choice of invisibility was to conceal his grief? Or his other various manifestations of obfuscating magic a product of his internal conflict? Naturally, to take on such a sacrifice cannot be an easy thing for a proud man like my Dear Father. Though he might have seen it as the best course of action, I know that deep down, Darellus Fex is a man of rationality that sadly lacks the spiritual connection bestowed upon his son. For all his strength, that weakness is what prevents him from attaining a place of prestige among the Divine Order as I have. No doubt, it is for this same reason that he is bestowing his gifts to me.

Well, be that as it may, no recalcitrance can be sustained for eternity. Miss Archie took away Dear Father's magical crutch, and soon enough I was able to embrace him one final time. If nothing else, I am pleased to know that he died receiving the full force of my love. It shall be my pride and honour to carry on the Fex name in his stead, and though this sacrifice may necessitate his treatment as a traitor to the crown, I shall always know him to be a man of loyalty and devotion strong enough that he would readily give his life in service to his son, and by extension the Divine Mandate!

This left the matter of his remaining legacy: the Inferno Gate. At one time, we were told that our Mandate was to seal it, but now that the truth has been made clear, we are to seize control of it. The elegance of the plan, that is to say the veiling of our intent, is such a simple yet effective ruse that I cannot help but admire it. We cannot betray the truth if we are ourselves unaware of it! Now that we had been made aware, Visperthul offered us a simple bargain, much as he did to Father. If we could offer him four souls, then we could be granted exclusive rights through the heresy devil to control the Gate and make use of its services. Generous an offer though it might be, acquiring souls of a sufficient quality would be tedious, and to use my companions for such an end would be a terrible waste of their potential. Father Dexsius' care had been invaluable, Miss Archie's knowledge of arcane matters unparalleled, and Mister Kezax's discretion and observation indispensable. Their presence is a Divine Gift I would not soon part with!

It is here that Dear Father's brilliance truly revealed itself! The phlegmatic talisman we retrieved at the start of this journey was all that was needed to induce a wanton slaving from the heresy devil. For all of his admittedly formidable power, Visperthul is himself but a tool for the Divine Order. A weapon among many in its arsenal. As the herald of the

Order, it is my place to seize such a weapon! He no doubt came to understand this as he offered his contract. A simple thing, ultimately, and reaffirmed by Father Dexsius' wise eyes. The Inferno Gate is firmly within the hold of myself and House Thrune, perfectly poised to put an end to the plague of Reclamation heretics! Furthermore, the devil has agreed to vouch for the justice of our deeds. It would not do for Dear Father's sacrifice to be misconstrued as some manner of betrayal, after all!

Upon completion of the contract, we ascended to make our return to Senara and collect our lingering bounties with the Hellknights of the Pike. As soon as we emerged, however, we were greeted by a trio of erinyes messengers. They bore the title of representative of Her Infernal Majestrix herself, so naturally Father Dexsius and I showed appropriate deference for Hell's Ordained leader on the material plane. Miss Archie was however less forthcoming. I am uncertain if her actions were the product of ignorance or some manner of draconic pride. Tempted as I might have been to remind her of her place in the hierarchy, I confess to finding her playful objections rather amusing. Should she ever go too far, I will certainly ensure that she is corrected, but as of yet it has not crossed such a line. The representatives were perhaps rather stunned at the act of defiance, but took no action against it. Mister Kezax of course was nowhere to be seen, as is his custom.

The message was a simple summons. We are to make our way to Egorian to have an audience with Her Infernal Majestrix! Perhaps then, the plans orchestrated by Dear Father have implications deeper still that we have yet to uncover. If such is indeed the case, then I truly am in awe at his foresight! Perhaps his connection to the Divine Path was greater than I had realised? Truly, the Gods work in the most wonderful ways!

HV4 - For Queen and Empire

21/08/27 - Session 33 - The Games we Play in Egorian

Starday, 14th Neth, Egorian, The Heartlands

Participants: Dominus (Justin)

It has been far too long that I have not set foot upon properly civilised lands. Much as I have enjoyed the nostalgia of revisiting my birthplace, it lacks the comforts and standards of decency I had grown accustomed to. Thus, it was with great joy that I received the request to make haste to Egorian.

Of course, that is not to say that our business was done. We had still to conclude our arrangement with the Order of the Pike, and inform my Father's loyal servants of his unfortunate demise. No doubt the estate shall see to it that they are cared for properly while I ensure that my inheritance is properly transferred. When my current mission for the Divine Order is concluded, I shall be all too happy to take proper ownership of Father's holdings. But matters of material property are second to my Higher Callings, so they shall have to wait.

What did not wait was one final interruption in our journey. A rather rude lionesque creature came upon us, declaring further misguided nonsense of righteous indignation and pronouncing us villains. I was prepared to show this creature the error of its ways, but Miss Archie did not deem it worthy of our continued attention, and simply sent the thing away. I did manage to seize its pauldrons before it could be dismissed, however. Their worth will compensate us the time it wasted with its antics. The journey to Egorian was otherwise uneventful. After the Trials of the past month, I am thankful the Divine Path was now unimpeded.

The sights, sounds, and scents of a proper city were a true blessing after so long away! There is nothing that can quite compare to the majesty of the grandest capital on Golarion! Of course, the return was made all the more appropriate, as we arrived on none other than Even-Tongued Day. It can be no coincidence that we arrived on this important day, as it can only serve to remind us of our Sacred Duty to bring Order back to these lands ordained by Hell itself!

Our first task was to present ourselves, as requested by Her Infernal Majestrix. At first the wait gave me concern, but clearly upon learning of our importance they did not dally, and

had us assigned to lodgings in the city. Father Dexsius took time to submit his reports to the Church, while Miss Archie discovered and enjoyed the luxuries of Egorian coffee. I, meanwhile, saw to it that my equipment and attire were suitably tended to in anticipation of our future tasks. I assume that Mister Kezax followed Miss Archie, ever her dutiful servant, though I did not witness him throughout.

We had the pleasure of meeting two notable figures today as well. The first was a rather worn elderly nobleman who introduced himself as Paraduke Thalgano Sethic. The second, our hostess, the Archcountess Levisvia Vasvion. Paraduke Sethic requested our aid in facilitating the purchase of the Archcountess' property, which supposedly once belonged to him. It would seem that both would desire that we help them in the destruction of the other, and in return, both have offered us their influence with none other than Queen Abrogail II herself. Such is the nature of affairs in Egorian. It would do well for us to select a patron and make use of their assets, as they will no doubt benefit us greatly in courtly matters. What is more difficult is determining which one we ought to back,

The Paraduke appeals well enough to my sensibilities, and his manner was courteous enough, if a little presumptuous. However, there is one matter that concerns me. It took some time for me to recall, as he is distinctly more broken than he once was, but I eventually recognised him as a man that was once detained by the Hellknights by order of the Queen. Now, granted, he was also released on a similar order, so perhaps my concerns are unwarranted. However, to help someone once condemned by such a righteous organisation does not entirely sit right with me. The Archcountess, on the other hand, has demonstrated great tenacity and ambition, something I can respect, though I do wonder if devotion and loyalty are among her traits... Regrettably, neither has demonstrated any particularly strong appreciation for the values of the Divine Order.

This is most certainly not an easy decision, but the Path will no doubt make things clear for us in time!

21/09/09 - Session 34 - Docking the Paraduke's Pay

Sunday, 15th Neth, Egorian, The Heartlands

Participants: Dominus (Justin)

As we contemplated our situation before the evening meal, Father Dexsius received a visitor. The man, Ser Quintus Remus Tanessen, is a soldier on retainer to the Church of Asmodeus. I recognise the name of nobility from the West, where I have heard rumblings of treacherous activity. If that is the case, then perhaps he came to Egorian in search for Righteousness. I would be all too pleased to assist Father Dexsius in guiding this soul towards the Truth. For the time being, he has pledged to assist us in our tasks. I expect that his courtly experience and skills with his fascinating ranged weapon and magic will serve us well. He has the approval of Father Dexsius, after all, and I have come to put great trust in his judgement.

We decided ultimately to support Archcountess Vasvion. Though I hold no personal malice for the Paraduke, his influence seems far less prestigious, and tainted with past misdeeds. I've come to believe that his release from the Scourge was not a matter of innocence, but rather to deliver to us a stepping stone for further ascent. Such circumstances are very much in line with the ways of the Divine Path. That this would take place on Even-Tongued Day makes it all the more clear that this is by design. Providence has delivered this ailing prisoner for a final cleansing at my hand, and in the process his sacrifice will be for our benefit, much as it was with Dear Father. Our agreement on the matter was unanimous.

With our quandary resolved, I was able to thoroughly enjoy our supper. It was a true pleasure to share the tales of our exploits with those in our company. Naturally, the sheep with weaker resolves could not remain in such a Divine Presence for long. This suits us, of course, as it leaves only those with enough fortitude to be among the Order's chosen few. Such company, the presence of those minds strong enough to perhaps one day bask in Truth and Understanding, is rare. The Archcountess remained. This gives me hope that she is indeed someone worthy of the Divine Order's support. Of my support.

Following dinner, the Archcountess invited us to her chambers for a drink. I had missed the refined liqueurs of the city, which made an excellent pairing with the woman's words. She informed us of funds she wished to be dedicated to the effort to cleanse Chelixa of its current blight. Funds that were presently being brought to the Paraduke by boat. The Archcountess recommended we appropriate these funds and bring them to her, and leave behind no witnesses. A simple enough favour to perform for a benefactor, and an opportunity to see how true she might be to her word.

Seizing the goods was a simple task. The boat was defended by a small crew and the Paraduqe's two subordinates. Mister Kezax dispatched the smaller of the two before she was even aware of our presence. I dare say that the lethality of his marksmanship seems far greater than it once was. A welcome development for a trusted ally! Father Dexsius and Ser Quintus worked well to whittle the others, and Miss Archie swiftly transported her and myself to the boat to finish the job. I set the beastly half-orc's face piercings into a more fitting arrangement, while Miss Archie bathed the remaining footmen in her draconic essence. All in all, a very efficient procedure. Once that was done, Mister Kezax so graciously ensured that the site would be made pristine once more. Egorian is a lovely city, and we would not wish its streets to be sullied, after all.

Our new associate was pleased with the results. I expect that our continued relationship will be fruitful, as it is no doubt blessed by the Order. There will be some time before our next task. Time that we may use to our liking. I have chosen to take some of that time to investigate the story told to me by Dear Bliss. If the Bellflower Network has made its way into Egorian, then that is unacceptable, and must be rectified as soon as possible! However, the city is a more complicated thing than a town. Corruption is not so easily spotted and rooted out, so we must be more prudent and deliberate in such an investigation. While admittedly subterfuge is not my strong suit, I am nevertheless still more than capable of using my influence, and one can learn a great many things if one has coaxed the right people...

That said, this time of investigation does leave me with some time for reflexion as well. Following our mission at the Inferno Gate, Miss Archie elaborated on the nature of her objective. She spoke of channelling the essence of Hell itself as a plane to infuse herself. I've come to understand that Miss Arcatriz is not an especially religious person, though she does seem to acknowledge Geryon. Father Dexsius offered his own support to her endeavour, recognising that while his spellcraft is a divine gift from Lord Asmodeus, the energy he channels is of a more planar nature as well. I could not be more pleased to hear my companions affirm their link to the Divine Order in this way!

The Truth has always been difficult for others to grasp. Though this has troubled me in the past, I've come to accept that others do not share my Blessing of Understanding. However, it is in moments like these that I am given hope that others may come to realise what I have known all along. The Divine Order is not the purview of any single deity! Lord Asmodeus is powerful indeed, and worthy of the highest respect, but even he does not encompass the entirety of this Power. Much as an Empress rules over her empire, she is not herself the empire. The Strength that Miss Archie seeks, that Father Dexsius channels, or that I am Blessed by... This Strength comes from the confluence of Hell and Heaven's might, assembled into a pure essence of Absolute Order! This Strength is the Lifeblood of the gods, and unlike those that can bear only a fragment of it secondhand from such deities, we

privileged few can draw from it directly! This is what it means to have the Blessing of the Divine Order!

Perhaps some day, my compatriots will come to truly understand the Gift they have been given, as I do. Until then, I shall do all that I can to guide them towards that Beautiful Revelation. But that is a longer Quest. Right now, there are more mundane issues we must resolve if we are to ascend to our rightful place among the Hierarchy...

21/09/17 - Session 35 - Death is the Life of the Party

Toilday, 17th Neth, Egorian, The Heartlands

Participants: Dominus (Justin)

Since I've taken over my father's title, it is necessary for me to also develop my connections among the nobility. Once our first arrangement with the Archcountess was complete, it was on this that I focused my efforts. Fortunately there are plenty of Chelaxian nobles that are able to accept the truth before them, and it is little work on my part to persuade those that are less perceptive of my true status as their better. I expect that soon enough, my reputation shall precede me. But for that to happen, I would need an event.

Fortunately, my informants and Archcountess Vasvion were all too happy to provide one in the form of a soiree hosted by one Baroness Gellintha. The Archcountess was willing to give us the required invitations, provided we use the opportunity to spread some poison upon Paraduke Sethic's name. A simple task for me to complete while spreading my own name among those people of merit. A most favourable arrangement!

Naturally, it would not do to be muted when one makes their debut, so my companions and I all took measures to be at our best for the event. No expense was spared to make our appearances and entrance as grand as possible, and grand it certainly was! It is fortunate that in addition to being capable combattants, Father Dexsius and his bodyguard are also well versed in the theatrics of Chelaxian nobility. Miss Archie and Mister Kezax for their part were no slouches either, and conducted themselves in a manner all too befitting of a proper lady and servant of the greatest nation. I confess to some concern that they might not find themselves prepared for the challenges of court, but I was pleased to learn that they took to the new environment most effectively!

I spent the bulk of my evening listening to the concerns of visiting Wiscrani nobles. Their arrogance was somewhat irritating, but behind their superfluous nature lay some interesting information regarding the Reclamation heretics and their growing efforts to take the former capital. I pledged upon my name and title that I would come to Westcrown's aid when the Divine Path decides it is my calling, just as I did with Longacre and Kantaria. When that time comes, they will do well to remember my name and the importance of my station...

While I attended to them, Miss Archie exchanged pleasantries with an assortment of diminutive academics that quickly bowed to her intellect, while Father Dexsius put his charms towards a group of adventurers, rather affecting one in the process, it seemed. There

were some entertainers present as well, though Ser Quintus made himself useful in luring them away from those more important figures.

That left us with only the hostess herself. In good time she took sufficient notice to call me over to her, and requested that I introduce myself. She took a particular liking to the tales of my prior accomplishments against those heretics of the Reclamation. I regaled her with the tale of how I brought the so-called Angel Knight to justice. The twisted nature of that beggar's corruption, and the thoroughness with which I purged it from her, delighted the Baroness. She even requested that I offer a demonstration, which I all too happily did using the slave she provided. Father Dexsius and Miss Archie offered their own grim spectacles as well, while Mister Kezax set to serving her a meal fit for the occasion. The bliss the Baroness showed at the sights of such power may well have been an indication that the woman was touched by the Divine Truth. After all, most would flinch at having their arm boiled by draconic acid, but she took immense pleasure in the touch of such magnificent force! That, or she simply has a keen eye for those willing and able to carry out acts of True Righteousness. I promised her that soon, she would witness such Righteousness again, this time brought upon the Paraduke. I do genuinely believe that she will find what is to come most entertaining...

With our departure, I believe that we have made ourselves a friend of a savvy and rather delightful woman, one that may yet prove quite useful in my ascension within the Grand Hierarchy...

21/09/25 - Session 36 - When Pigs Die

Starday, 21st Neth, Egorian, The Heartlands

Participants: Dominus (Justin)

The longer we spend in Egorian, the more I find myself acclimating to the comforts of the civilised world. Truly, there was a part of me that missed the luxuries of such a grand and orderly society! While we are still dealing with oh so many blind sheep, unaware of the Divine Truths, there are still some who appreciate these realities and their significance. I say this having enjoyed once more the hospitality of the good Baroness Gellintha, who was kind enough to commission a portrait for me. It is only appropriate that a newly ascended Archbaron have such a depiction, after all.

That is not to say that I have been neglecting my work, of course. As I've been growing my influence, I have also been collecting knowledge about the workings of the city. Through these networks, I've learned several things. Interestingly, many of these rumours are of pertinence to Miss Archie, which I assume is an indication that the Divine Path is setting the stage for her apotheosis. All the more reason to support her endeavour, I am certain.

For one, it would appear that Miss Archie has garnered the attention of an individual named Skanrak, who has taken it upon themselves to hunt down those who use magic. That this supposed assassin believes it to be an affront to the Gods tells me that they are sorely deluded by a skewed worldview. I would love nothing more than to seek out and reeducate this person, though if they have the audacity to come after a chosen elite of the Divine Path such as Miss Archie, then they will surely come to learn their lesson one way or another...

Yet another fascinating rumour is that a woman of the cloth known for her expertise in ritual magic named Nalia Melcoth has been spending more and more time with someone bearing the Alazario name, and insinuations suggest more than simple magical training. If the person in question is Nicolo, the Archcountess' groom-to-be, then this may be a point of friction we will have to resolve. Whatever the case may be, this woman may well be of use to Miss Archie's investigations, so perhaps a more delicate approach will be necessary...

This latter tale proved relevant almost immediately, as we were summoned by Archcountess Vasvion in the evening after she had failed to attend her usual supper. The woman informed us that the Paraduke was now seeking to retaliate against her by sending assassins after Mister Nicolo, and so requested that we go and persuade her fiancé to leave the city for a time, until this feud is properly resolved.

As a precaution, Mister Kezax and Miss Archie took to the backdoor while I remained at the front with Father Dexsius and Ser Quintus, ready should something happen. As it were, something did happen. A trap was triggered as Mister Kezax entered, and simultaneously Miss Archie was assaulted by none other than the assassin named Skanrak. Father Dexsius and Ser Quintus returned to assist her while I made my way through the front entrance, finding Mister Nicolo in the company of Miss Nalia Melcoth. The rumours that came to me clearly assembled themselves with this evening in mind. Fortunately, though Mister Nicolo complained, he did not resist my protection, which was useful, as moments later yet another assassin made an attempt against him. I cowed the second assailant, while Mister Nicolo himself delivered the final blow. It is a shame that he was not more aware of his environment, or our protection might not have been necessary.

While Mister Kezax saw to Mister Nicolo and his mistress, our other companions dealt with Skanrak. The fool got one lucky strike against Miss Archie, but unfortunately for him a strike like that would not kill one as fierce as her, and so he was repaid in fire, bullets, and acid. As expected, he came to learn his errors far too late.

Once the incident was over, Mister Nicolo was wise enough to accept our escort. Miss Nalia, now also a recipient of our protection, was given a different offer. Fortunately for her, the Archcountess was both aware and accepting of her fiancé's dalliance, so no punishment was necessary. Rather, we extracted from her the promise that she would provide what wisdom she could to Miss Archie regarding her research. A simple transaction that shall bring a dear companion closer to the Divine Truth. Everything comes into place, as expected in such a Grand Design!

The incident with the Mayor's son did leave us now with another issue to resolve: that of our own retribution. Needless to say, Paraduke Sethic could not be permitted to send such enemies against our patron with impunity. Fortunately, the Archcountess had a plan ready for a response. We would go to the Paraduke's farm and dispose of his prized Avernus razorback boars, the lynchpins of his business ventures. A simple mission, though still not without challenge. Avernus razorbacks are daunting creatures imbued with the might of Hell, a more primal form of the Divine Order's blessing. This makes them fearsome opponents, but also prime sacrifices for the Divine Order's will! It is with this conviction that we entered the pens.

The creatures were indeed formidable opponents, but no match for our might. Mister Kezax slew one with a single well-placed bolt, while Miss Archie promptly dismissed their devilish guardian before he could take action against us. The remaining two razorbacks made a good effort, but blade, ice, and acid silenced them permanently. Mister Kezax retrieved what he could from the creatures, ensuring that we would eat well in the days to come...

The Archcountess was naturally delighted with our service, as well she should be. There can be no greater proof of our worth as agents of the Divine Order than the brilliance and efficiency with which we have accomplished our goals. In recognition of these contributions to her vendetta, she has pledged to sing our praises to the Queen, and furthermore has secured our invitations to a party hosted by Demibaron Graithus Kavalderic. This is no small gift, as it is rumoured that the Queen herself might make an appearance at this event. Should that be the case, then it shall be the perfect opportunity for my second grand Egorian debut as the new Archbaron Fex!

21/10/22 - Session 37 - A Mindnumbing Party

Toilday, 24th Neth, Egorian, The Heartlands

Participants: Dominus (Justin)

The days leading to our next soiree of note were relatively calm. I took the time to further refine my etiquette and knowledge of my new responsibilities as an Archbaron. It would seem that Father Dexsius had also taken to his priestly duties in that time. I have yet to formally offer him the role of archpriest to the Fex holdings, though I am certain he will accept it. We are both blessed servants of the Divine Order, after all.

As though sensing my intentions of furthering our alliance, the good Father presented me with an intriguing arrangement. In exchange for signing a contract and agreeing to recognise Asmodeus as first and foremost among the gods in Order's pantheon, he will provide me with a modicum of his divine powers. The arrangement is mutually beneficial, and only requires that I recognise that which is already true. Still, I find myself amused by the clauses of this contract. Father Dexsius still clings to Lord Asmodeus' supremacy, but the fact that he acknowledged that the Dark Prince holds a place within the hierarchy of the Divine Order is already a suitable step in the right direction. That is to say nothing of his underlings, that I have on occasion conferred my wisdom to. The spread of Truth need not be an exclusively top-down affair, after all.

It seemed but a moment before Demibaron Graithus Kavalderic's party was upon us. I had heard that the event would be a place of heretical revelry and unbridled debauchery. While I cannot say that such chaotic behaviour is especially palatable, there is something to be said for the malleability of those who would attend such events. Not all who submit to Chaos are lost; some may yet be molded and brought into the Light, sometimes with even more ease than those who follow a misguided form of Order.

I spent the majority of the evening collecting lost souls, gently herding them to the Revelations of the Divine Order. As a Herald, shepherding these misguided sheep was a simple matter, and it did not take long for me to develop an entourage. Ser Quintus did an admirable job of attesting to my sermons. Perhaps in hearing them, he is coming to understand and accept the Truths I speak of more readily than even my other companions. If so, then he will be a most useful ally in my Divine Mission.

Speaking of my companions, they too took advantage of the event. While Miss Archie and Mister Kezax enjoyed the luxury coffees and tobaccos offered at this gathering, Father Dexsius spent much of the evening observing and conversing with other partygoers,

demonstrating his great talents in both capacities. He learned of insidious rumours that painted our necessary sacrifice of my dear father at the Inferno Gate as an act of treachery, a piece of misinformation he was swift to correct. As I would come to understand, others present at the event were keeping their ears open for scandals and secrets that might be released from the loosened lips of these attendees, so it was wise not to allow such falsehoods to spread.

On the subject of those in attendance, the Queen made no appearance at the party, and so Father Dexsius and Miss Archie instead sought out our host, the Demibaron. They located him inspecting a most fascinating statue depicting angels and devils at once in bitter conflict and carnal embraces. Some of these figures also bore the visages of members of the court. Miss Archie offered some interesting critiques, namely on the lack of draconic influences, and the inaccuracies of depicting Paracount Sethic without his various mutilations. It was as she was offering these corrections that I came upon the piece myself. It truly was a most wondrous thing to behold! While some might consider the implications of such a piece heretical, there is Great Truth in the depiction of Heaven and Hell at once at odds and in service to each other, with humanity functioning as the soldiers of this great duality. In fact, such a depiction is nothing less than a glimpse into the nature of the Divine Order itself!

The Demibaron seemed pleased with my analysis, and recognised our group as the agents that have gained renown of late. He warned us of the rumour Father Dexsius had heard prior, and that there was someone who sought us out. It would seem that a cousin of my father's was ignorant of his plan, and seeks vengeance for his murder. As a Hellknight, it is only natural that my cousin once removed seek Justice, so I shall have to correct his misunderstanding. As this relative was not present at this event, I satisfied myself with a simple message to the general public:

"Some of you may have heard some rumours regarding my late father. Allow me to clear the air. Yes! I did indeed kill Archbaron Darrellus Fex, but it was a necessary action! The Archbaron sought control of an Inferno Gate, but he did so for his own benefit! It was the will of the laws of Cheliax and of the gods themselves that he be struck down! Doing so was my responsibility, and I did not falter.

The blessings of Hell belong to the Thrice-Damned House of Thrune, and it is my pledge that that is where they shall remain! This mark upon my eye is proof of my devotion. It is the reason I am here! If anyone wishes to question test my loyalty, my resolve in this matter, then I invite them to approach and do so. I will be more than happy to provide the proof you might crave!"

It pains me to denounce my dear father in such a manner, but this deception was his will, and therefore it is also my duty to uphold it to the public. In any case, though the message was delivered, any potential response was interrupted by a rather worrisome event. It would seem that someone in attendance bore with them a stone of insidious nature, and it chose this moment to emerge. We later recognised the creature as a derghodaemon, though in that moment I found myself overcome with a wrathful fervor that took away any sense. So too were Mister Kezax and Ser Quintus affected, and so all three of us set to kill this foul creature as it massacred the guests of the party.

Though our faculties were impeded, Miss Archie and Father Dexsius remained sound of mind, and took measures to dispose of the swarms surrounding us and to cure our affliction of the mind while healing our wounds. It was fortunate that they did so, as this creature was by no means feeble. Nevertheless, we prevailed, and the daemon found itself blinded, smashed, terrified, struck at with harming magic, and finally shot through its weakened body. For our success in dispatching the unwelcome guest, the Demibaron rewarded us handsomely, and spread word of our accomplishment. Once more, our Might and Righteousness shone through.

Let any who still question us do so at the Hellfire Ball, so that all might see the Truth!

21/10/29 & 21/11/05 - Session 38 & 39 - Great Balls of Hellfire

Sunday, 29th Neth, Egorian, The Heartlands

Participants: Dominus (Justin)

Of all the events that would transpire in Egorian during our time there, the Hellfire Ball was quite possibly the one I most anticipated. After all, while others were comparatively middling affairs for those of lesser status, this would be an event worthy of my station! Naturally, we all took proper precautions to attire ourselves appropriately. The event called for us not to come clad in armour, even if it was glamered, so I satisfied myself with some bracers that would ensure I could call upon the Panoply should I require it. After the last event, it seems best to be prepared for perils.

All the more so with the rumour shared to me by Demibaron Kavalderic. I was rather perplexed when he first told me of my blood's oath against me. But my father was thorough in his deception to see my inheritance properly managed. Perhaps this deception extended to family as well...

I did not allow these thoughts to burden me as we went about the Ball, speaking with old acquaintances and allies. However once more the Demibaron warned me, this time that my father's cousin would seek me out at midnight. Baroness Gellintha corroborated the tale with an allusion that a great surprise was set to transpire this evening. Thus, a matter I thought would be but a mere distraction became increasingly prevalent.

Midnight came and went without incident, though some minutes later the crowds parted, leaving myself and my companions center stage. Sure enough, my familial relation emerged and attempted to ambush me with the aid of a barbed devil. The attack might have been more impressive had I not been prepared, though even so the circumstances seemed too misaligned to not be indicative of something. The man is a Hellknight, a staunch representative of Order. And yet, he was not punctual, and he utilised tactics of deception and cowardice. As Miss Archie rid us of the barbed interloper, the man spoke of Hell's Justice, and though Father Dexsius took exception to his remark, it helped me come to an understanding of exactly what this was.

This was a Test!

Once the Divine Revelation came upon me, everything seemed so evident! His actions clearly mirror those of my father, who acted uncharacteristically foolish so that the stage might be

set for my ascension. However, since that time, my rightfully inherited authority was subjected to doubt by my peers. It is for this reason that he must have taken this action. By confronting me here, he is setting a stage for me to prove my title, just as a Hellknight might duel a devil before a suitable witness for their initiation!

With my newfound understanding, I bade that Father Dexsius stand down, so that I might treat with my examiner properly. It would not do for my title to be questioned due to an improper test, after all! Once we were both healed and Miss Archie ensured that no interlopers might interrupt us, the duel began.

Maralictor Vokadus Fex fought honourably, but of course, the outcome of this battle was never in question. My hammer struck with all the Might of my Convictions, the Strength with which I will lead the name of House Fex to Glory! The Maralictor fell and with our host the Duke Raaven Melesiva's blessing, I completed the sacrifice of blood to affirm my birthright, before an audience of those distinguished members of the realm's most powerful houses. Afterwards, I spoke briefly with the esteemed Duke. As a fellow son of a supposed traitor, I am certain he could understand my circumstances well. No doubt, it is why he agreed to this arrangement. It is for that same reason that I trusted his words as he offered the confirmation I sought: that my title would be questioned no more.

My only regret of the evening is that despite the rumours, the Queen was not in attendance. Once again, we find ourselves unable to meet. However, Archcountess Vasvion offered a most convenient suggestion. The Bellflower Network remains a thorn lodged in Egorian's underbelly, and should we remove it, we would certainly earn the direct attention of Her Infernal Majestrix.

In truth, I had never ceased to keep my ear to the ground for further information regarding this particular pest, and had every intention of uprooting them at the earliest opportunity. However, their elusive nature makes their complete eradication a rather involved affair, and I had matters of my authority to see finished. But with that accomplished, I would be all too pleased to cure this infestation of miscreants and bandits once and for all.

We already possessed a name and a place. A one-handed woman by the name of "the Barrister" is said to be involved in these dealings, and she can be reached through some covert method at the Clerk's Cloister, a tavern located in the Sorrowside district. We sent in Mister Kezax first to investigate the location. It seemed a popular place for discreet meetings of legal matters.

No doubt, these agents of Chaos would take great pains to be subtle, as prey would when within a den of wolves. As such, Father Dexsius and I set foot in the establishment not as

our true selves, but instead under the guise of wandering adventurers. I suspected the barkeep may have a better understanding of the secrets transpiring within his establishment, so I simply played the part of a righteous Hero of Justice, as I very well am. A few easy words, and the flighty barkeep confirmed my suspicions. The Bellflower operated here, and though he would not take us to them, they may well seek us out. All that is left is to wait for that moment to come...

As we conducted our operation, Mister Kezax continued his own investigation. It would seem that throughout the day, the establishment was crossed by some curious halfling individuals. Our trusty sleuth tracked the vermin to a storage facility, where he acquired another halfling hidden within a barrel. This one he brought to Miss Archie. As I would come to learn later, Miss Archie interrogated the runaway and learned some information about the organisation's methods. With that addressed, she disposed of the rotten goods.

Our first steps are now taken. Next, we must find this woman who seeks to undermine the Order of my fair city while obnoxiously using such a Lawful title. If she is missing a hand, I would suspect it is from prior misdeeds. If that is the case, then perhaps once more it is an incomplete punishment we are now set to bring to a suitable conclusion. If the loss of one hand was insufficient to instil the lesson, then she will have no need for the other.

22/01/11 - Session 40 - Disbarring the Barrister

Moonday, 30th Neth, Egorian, The Heartlands

Participants: Dominus (Justin)

If I've learned one thing from my tenure as the Sheriff of Longacre, it is that while the truly corrupt will do their best to hide their crimes, their inherently chaotic nature prevents them from being thorough enough to conduct such clandestine operations properly. Sooner or later, a provocation of their baser desires will overcome their weak will, or their lack of discipline will cause them to overlook a crucial rigour. With that in mind, the Bellflower Network would invariably expose themselves to us. Such was the Truth given to me by the Divine Path.

Our approach was three-pronged. While Father Dexsius and I maintained our cover as would-be rebels in the hopes that the Bellflower might seek us out, Father Dexsius sent the good Sir Quintus along with another of his clergymen to prod the local barrister market in the guise of a particularly audacious servant of Asmodeus seeking some sacrificial bodies. As I heard it told, he did a remarkable job of making the weak-stomached clerk he hired uncomfortable with his treatment of his legally purchased property. All the while as we made our provocations, Mister Kezax continued to monitor the warehouse he had previously located.

Ultimately, it was Mister Kezax's disciplined observation that found our quarry. The one-handed woman we have been seeking brazenly appeared at the site to inspect it, not even taking care to inspect the barrel which contained the ill-gotten goods we had already seized. Mister Kezax followed her, and took care to intercept the message she was to deliver regarding what would have been their next smuggling operation. Ever the exceptional agent, he even went as far as to track the "Barrister" to her home and identified from the scent upon her clothes the likely site of her contact, a manor outside of the city belonging to a man known to cavort openly with halfling servants.

Needless to say, with such information, we are adequately equipped to proceed with proper disciplinary actions. I for one am all too eager to see this vulgar insult to good Chelish trade practice snuffed out. However, unlike our foes, we have the presence of mind to be diligent in our pursuits. The Barrister presents both a weakness and an opportunity that we must not neglect!

Of course, Mister Kezax was thorough enough to ensure that we would not be met with any undue surprises when we sought out the Barrister once more at her home. She resisted,

of course, but she was unprepared, and as such a few well placed strikes were enough to put her back to sleep. In a delicious twist of irony, the warehouse Mister Kezax located and secured will function well as a place to acquire the thief's testimony. I have every intention to see to it that she is made to answer for her heresies to the god of commerce she purports to follow...

22/01/24 - Session 41 - The Bell Tolls for the Bellflower

Toilday, 1st Kuthona, Egorian, The Heartlands

Participants: Dominus (Justin)

For most of my life, I had dismissed the Bellflower Network as being an annoying yet ultimately insignificant band of brigands. It is only once I saw the woman claiming to be an Abadaran while willfully aiding their efforts that I've come to appreciate just how vile their influence has become. It sickens me that such filth has been allowed to fester in this beautiful city for so long.

The "Barrister" already lacked a hand, which I could only assume was due to a prior incident of theft. She all but confirmed as much when she spoke ill of the righteous agents of the Order of the Scourge. That said, much as I respect the work of the Hellknights and their adherence to classic punishments, I could not help but feel that this particular one was insufficient. Amputation is usually a quick and clean thing, far too much so to get the point across. The woman's repeat offence and continued defiance suggested that the lesson of the consequences of theft was not adequately learned.

Some would say that theft is a petty crime. However, it is far a more heinous act than most realise! It goes well beyond the simple removal of property from a lawful owner. It also erodes society by damaging trust. To steal is to make the world less trustworthy, and thus more discordant. It is through such erosions of institutions such as lawful ownership that a nation succumbs to deeper corruptions. One could say that such institutions are the skin which protect us from infection. Therefore, to break the law is much like flaying the skin, exposing it to the vile influences of Chaos. A follower of the Master of the First Vault ought to appreciate this better than anyone!

With that in mind, I conducted my lesson thoroughly, ensuring that our captive thief fully understood the severity of her crime. She was recalcitrant, but with Father Dexsius' support and my own meticulous application of a sharpened coin, she was persuaded to atone by confirming the location and identities of her co-conspirators. Of course, a crime still requires punishment, and she committed multiple. For the crime of theft, the payment would be her hand, as is customary. For sidestepping the laws of Chelixa, her feet would suffice. Finally, for the most terrible crime of heresy and false devotion to a God of Justice, I extracted payment in the form of her false face. Once the tributes were made, Father Dexsius ensured that her soul would be properly cleansed in Hellfire.

We had confirmed twice over the location of the Bellflower blight, or at least, the nearest of their operations. The manor belonging to a half-elf named Helthondous was simple enough to locate with the information we had collected. From there, Mister Kezax was kind enough to take the vanguard and ensure that the vermin would not find themselves able to flee or destroy the evidence of their crimes. Once he had installed himself comfortably, the rest of our group were informed and made our way in with suitable force.

Helthondous himself greeted us in his courtyard. While he did attempt to impede our approach, Sir Quintus was kind enough to provide me with the means to proceed. I made short work of the frail rat, then removed the golem he had activated in vain for further protection. The outsider that aided him abandoned its post immediately, unsurprisingly.

That being said, Mister Kezax and the remainder of our prey lay somewhere deeper still...

22/01/31 & 22/02/07 - Session 42 & Session 43 - Bellflower Plucked

Toilday, 1st Kuthona, Egorian, The Heartlands

Participants: Dominus (Justin)

Miss Archie joined us just in time for our continuation into the depths of the Bellflower vermins' nest. With Mister Kezax's guidance, it was an easy thing to trace our way to the hidden passage. Some of the pests did attempt to hinder us, but rats are easily stomped underfoot when they become too fat and complacent. Even their attempt to flood their nest was swiftly denied thanks to Father Dexsius' resourceful application of stone shaping magic. The water and last remaining trap did admittedly slow our pursuit, but at this point, it was nothing more than delaying the inevitable.

The Bellflower cesspool consisted of a dock for a single boat, but even a small wound can become viciously infected if not tended to properly. I pushed forward to cleanse the offending bacteria, while my companions offered support from the rear. The scum dared to strike out at us with spells of fire and lightning, clearly unaware of the nature of the medicine that came for them. Father Dexsius' protection magic rendered the attacks against me impotent, giving me ample time to remove the source.

The Bellflower remained ever insidious however. Through the use of invisibility, they sought to ambush my dear allies. Sir Quintus even found himself momentarily overwhelmed by their harassment. It was fortunate that Father Dexsius was there to ensure that no true damage could be done. While an infection may fight ferociously for its continued existence, Cheliox is a healthy body, and our cure would win the day. Mister Kezax swiftly eliminated the prime offender with a well-placed shot. I flattened the magical snake that slithered among the wound, revealed thanks to Miss Archie's magical talents. Finally, Sir Quintus and Father Dexsius disposed of the final vestiges of the infection by showing them the power of lightning and fire when harnessed by the Righteous.

The blast of flame ignited the boat upon which the merchandise had been stowed. Mister Kezax's placement of alchemist's fire upon the vessel ensured that it would never again be used to harm our nation. As for the slaves it contained, they were given a simple choice: return to their stations, or seek their supposed freedom in the flames. Those that still could chose wisely.

Among the remaining merchandise was one slave that I happened to recognise from an ownership bill I've kept since my first return to Longacre. As such, I have appropriated the

slave Magnus into my service. Father Dexsius was kind enough to implement a suitably thorough compulsion to ensure that this beast would never again be led astray. I had always found the paper strangely compelling, as this slave bore the same name as the affable but ultimately doomed companion that accompanied me in the earliest stages of this quest. Naturally, I can only conclude that it is a Sign that we walk the Divine Path. The additional fact that these events have occurred on the day of The Shadowchaining reaffirms this. Just as the Kuthites are thankful for the Midnight Lord's gift of shadow beasts, I too shall be thankful for the beast I have been blessed with. Magnus will serve me well, I am certain.

With the Bellflower infection treated, we had time to investigate and locate written evidence of their corruption, including other places where the wound may yet fester. The Empire will do well to heed this knowledge and rid itself of the pestilence these vermin bring before it grows any further. Much as I would wish to attend to such a task personally, I must answer to a Higher Calling. Disruption of Lawful trade is a grave sin, but the heresies of the Reclamation present a far greater existential threat.

Fortunately, I am confident that Her Infernal Majestrix, wise as she is, will see from our deeds that I am the perfect answer to such a threat. Such is my Divine Purpose, after all.

22/02/15 - Session 44 - The Soured Wine Incident

Toilday, 1st Kuthona, Egorian, The Heartlands

Participants: Dominus (Justin)

Though horrible misfortunes befalling individuals of dubious character are a common occurrence in Egorian, talk of the events that have come to be known as “The Soured Wine Incident” have grown since Her Infernal Majestrix officially acknowledged the agents supposedly responsible for it.

The incident, as it has been recorded by numerous eyewitnesses, transpired thusly: on the late afternoon of the 1st of Kuthona, five individuals, three humans (later reports would amend this, as one of these individuals was in fact a green dragon), one tiefling, and one kobold, bearing clear markings of official Chelish agents, appeared at the Clerk’s Cloister tavern. The tavern proprietor, a man by the name of Belnost, appeared to recognise one of the humans and the tiefling, and was visibly shaken by the group’s arrival. He did however serve them promptly. The agents declared that they were celebrating, and requested that a cask of wine be served to the entire tavern. While this initially elicited some joy among the patrons, it was snuffed once the wine was poured. From the rancid aroma and disturbingly thick texture, the wine was clearly not fit for consumption. At once, the agents demanded that the tavern owner retrieve the wine casks from his stock and open them.

The scent that permeated the tavern was described as being unimaginably horrid, and the sight of the contents equally so, to the point that several of the guests were reported as having expelled the contents of their recent meals. Within each of the casks lay a mutilated corpse, floating in a mixture of wine, blood, and assorted filth. In the majority of the cases these were the corpses of halflings, though one cask in particular bore the corpse of a human. While the body was near unrecognisable, having been burned to a crisp and with both hands removed and the face skinned off, there remained enough physical detail to identify the individual as one Maisil Juluth, an Abadaran barrister that had once been detained by the Order of the Scourge due to suspicions regarding her uncle, a known Bellflower Network sympathiser. Documents revealed at a later date would identify all of the bodies to have been members of the Bellflower Network. No one was able to confirm how the casks came to be found in the Clerk’s Cloister, though it is commonly believed that this was the work of the agents.

Following the grisly revelation, Belnost was detained, and subsequently tried and publicly executed for the crimes of sedition, conspiracy, and a violation of the Food Quality Act. The Clerk’s Cloister would soon after come into the possession of Archcountess Levisvia Vasvion, and be renamed the Bubbling Barrister. Since its rechristening, the tavern has seen great popularity with Thrune loyalists, and it is noted for its thematic decor of gibbeted slaves and the popular novelty drink of “Bellflower Wine”, which is thickened and garnished with a bellflower and a polished bone to emulate the considerably less savory liquid that was once poured there.

22/02/15 - Session 44 - A First Audience With Her Infernal Majestrix

Wealday, 2nd Kuthona, Egorian, The Heartlands

Participants: Dominus (Justin)

After our glorious triumph over the Bellflower vermin infestation, we celebrated at the Clerk's Cloister. It was a true joy to see the proprietor become enlightened to the error of his ways in assisting such scum. We had engineered the lesson to be thorough and impactful, and I truly feel that it is a reminder that shall resonate in Egorian for years to come! Archcountess Vasvion was kind enough to take on the task of cementing the achievement by rechristening the establishment. As our patron, it seemed only natural to secure the property for her use, but it is wonderful to see that she has used the gift for not only our benefit, but that of the citizens as well. Proper education is the first step to a Righteous society, after all.

Our dear patron's service did not stop there. At long last, we would be granted our audience with Her Infernal Majestrix! As the highest representative of the Divine Order's Will on this plane, it truly is an honour to receive her recognition for all of our dutiful service! We made haste to prepare ourselves appropriately for the encounter.

As one might expect, meeting the Queen required a certain measure of delicacy. Fortunately, I am sufficiently well versed in matters of nobility that this did not prove a trial for me. Our dear Majestrix requested that I proclaim our deeds, which I did so earnestly and completely. I did not neglect to present the gift of the Inferno Gate. Though it remains within my lands, those lands are themselves within the Queen's territories, and therefore by rule of hierarchy it is hers to control. After all, my dear father made it abundantly clear that attempting to claim such a treasure for one's self would be considered a great betrayal. Saddened as I am that I must see his name tarnished for the lesson, respecting that teaching is the least I can do to honour his sacrifice.

On the subject of family, those in service to the Queen saw fit to question my lineage and birthright. While it is true the nature of my birth might seem scandalous to those with only a surface understanding, these are the misunderstandings of those who do not appreciate the manner in which the Divine Order operates. If I am to be judged, the only acceptable metric is by my adherence to the Divine Order's dictums, something in which I know myself to be absolutely unwavering. I can dismiss such tests of my honour as the necessary diligence of clerks. I took great care to make my role as Herald clear before the highest court of the land. As I gazed into the eyes of the dear Majestrix, I sensed that she understood me perfectly. Henceforth, none should dare question it further.

In turn, my companions were questioned as well. Each affirmed my testimony, and answered the questions of their own birth and loyalty splendidly. I have been thoroughly satisfied with their service to the Order, and I do believe that the Queen shared in that satisfaction. This much was proven when we were subsequently given a task of the highest priority.

At Her Infernal Majestrix Queen Abrogail of the Twice-Damned House of Thrune's behest, we had been given the task of performing a pilgrimage to the Winter Grove in order to perform a sacrifice and renew the Infernal Contract that binds the forces of Chelixa to the Supreme Might of Hell. Such an important task cannot be completed by just anyone, so it is a show of the highest faith that we would be given the privilege! Naturally, I am overjoyed with this opportunity to take part in such an important ritual, as any who understands its significance would be.

On the subject of sacrifice, the one to be given over to Hell must be an individual that is of personal value to the Queen. As it happens, Paraduke Sethic holds such an honour, and has been chosen to be the Blessed Sacrifice. After his fall from grace at our hands, it seems only natural that he be permitted vindication in such a manner. I would think a withered husk, such as him would be pleased to learn that he still has worth. Unfortunately, his mind was too frail to appreciate this. He put up just enough resistance when we came to collect him that it caused Mister Kezax some trouble, but fortunately we had the means to undo the old man's mistake. After that incident, he was subdued and made more than sufficiently pliable for our journey.

By our estimation, the pilgrimage will take roughly two days to complete, as it demands that we travel on foot (much to Miss Archie's dismay, given her recent acquisition of even more draconic power). While I have faith that we shall complete the task without trouble, Miss Archie was blessed with a divine message to be wary of an attempted betrayal against us. Armed with the knowledge that there are some who intend to interfere with this pilgrimage, my conviction is steeled that much more. NONE shall come in the way of our Divine Duty!

22/02/15 - Session 44 - Dexsius' Journal

Wealday, 2nd Kuthona, Egorian, The Heartlands

Participants: Dexsius [DC]

To say that my new promotion has kept me busy would be an understatement. I find myself more and more embroiled in the minutia and squabbles of lesser priests all vying for power. Perhaps I should simply send them to hell so they may know what it means to serve the Lord of Hell more directly. It brings me no small amount of joy to know that there are those amongst the court and within the church who would scoff at my rise to power merely for the nature of my birth. It was a gift given me by the Lord of Hell and I have used it as a boon to reach where I am today. If any of them are foolish enough to move against me I will show them the power I wield and why I have risen to where I am today. That being said, my rise to power is far from complete.

The ordeal with the Bellflower was trying. Vile thieves who would attempt to subvert the rule of law and grant 'freedom' to those undeserving of it. The position of slave is a noble thing as they are the backbone upon which the most holy law of Cheliox is built. Kintargo is a living example of what comes from the freeing of slaves and the breakdown of order. Word has reached the church that the "Silver Ravens" are now operating openly there once again. Would that the church sends me there that I might quash this rebellion and put order to the city once more. Though it would seem the God-Fiend has other plans for me.

Her Royal Magestrix Queen Abrogail II has summoned Dominus and I, as well as Arcatraz and for some reason her servant Kezax, to appear before her and the High Court of Egorian. WE were called upon to recount our deeds and of course Dominus was more than happy to do so. I will admit I was happy to learn that Dominus will inherit the title of Arch-Baron from his late father. Though he is a fool, he is a good friend and moreover, easily manipulated. Having him as an ally will surely help further my rise to power. I simply need to name someone as an enemy of his "Divine Order" and then let him loose upon them. I am sure I can use him to remove anyone who would stand in my way with little difficulty.

As for why we were called, it would seem we have been chosen to serve as the Queen's most trusted agents and fulfil the contract between The Prince of Law and House Throne. The church does not speak much on the nature of the contract, and it wasn't until my ascension to the rank of Infernal Bishop that I even learned of its existence. I am not surprised though as any deal with the God-Fiend could only be signed by blood into a contract. Still, I am excited to have the chance to stand in the presence of my Lord and, even without looking upon him, to bathe his divine and terrible glory.

In order to fulfil the contract, we must travel on foot between several obelisks and spill the blood of a sacrifice upon them. The one chosen to play the role of sacrifice was our good friend Sethic. He did not seem to approve of his new role though and tried in vain to resist. I'm impressed however that he managed to get the drop on Kezax. It is the first time I have seen anyone get the better of the kobold. I showed him the true power of hell and ... convinced... him to co-operate and accept his fate. The exact amount of blood to be spilled was not specified so I

will simply let the entirety of his lifeblood drain out and then force him back to life that we may continue our mission.

Through Tyapket's ability to commune directly with the powers of hell, we have learned that there are those who would stand against us and oppose the Queen's mission. We will be on guard and they will not set us off our track, nor we will allow them to alter the delicate balance that has been established between the Prince of Darkness and Her Royal Magestrix. We know one threat comes from the Iomedaeans. They continue to be a thorn in our side, though perhaps I think for not much longer. Eventually even the dumbest of animals learn to avoid sticking its nose where it is likely to get beat. It is the others who concern me more. We know it is someone of significance to the queen but not much else. It matters not. None will stand between me and my meeting with Lord Asmodeus. Afterall, one cannot keep his god waiting.

22/02/22 & 22/03/01 - Session 45 & 46 - The Pilgrimage

Sunday, 6th Kuthona, Winter Grove, The Heartlands

Participants: Dominus (Justin)

The pilgrimage to the Winter Grove is perhaps one of the most sacred duties to exist. It is through this act that Chelixa retains its Divine Arrangement with Hell, maintaining the Hierarchy that is the basis for the Divine Order's manifestation on the material plane. As such, it is only natural that there be heathens that wish to see it stopped, just as it is only natural that we be given the task of seeing it through at all costs.

The task itself was simple enough: we were to travel by foot to a series of stones, and offer a blood sacrifice upon each one. As atonement for his prior infractions, we slew Paraduqe Sethic at each instance, then Father Dexsius restored him once the altar was satisfactorily infused. With each death, our sacrifice would come to better understand the nature of his role.

This alone would have been an easy mission, but as I well know, no true pilgrimage is without its trials. Our first would come in the form of the Duke Raaven Melesiva. The man invited us to surrender the sacrifice to him, and aid him in usurping the throne from Her Infernal Majestrix. Initially, we identified him to have been under the influence of an aquatic temptress known as a rusalka. We eradicated the vile creature, though it did cause us no small amount of trouble with its antics. Regrettably, releasing the veil of manipulation from the Duke did not rid him of his misguided ambitions. The message of the Divine Order was clear: a man that could so easily be manipulated by malevolent seductive forces must not in turn be permitted to manipulate us. I took this lesson to heart, as we took his. Never again would the Duke fall prey to greed.

Our next trial was one of great personal importance. In the time when the Inheritor walked among mortals, she slew the false King of the Barrowood with the aid of a mighty griffon, a feat which came to be known as her Third Act. That same griffon was still said to protect the Barrowood, under Iomedae's guidance. Upon reaching the eighth stone, the Inheritor's legendary steed appeared to test us. The beast known as Ironwing Kazi did indeed pose a formidable challenge, but my Faith helped me stand true. Once Mister Kezax had dispatched the irrelevant rider, Miss Archie subdued the beast long enough for Father Dexsius to conduct the appropriate rituals to bestow upon the griffon its new purpose. I walk the Divine Path, just as Iomedae once did. Thus, it is all too fitting that I call upon her steed to join my service!

As the trials of loyalty and divine right were passed, then would come the trial of true faith. We were accosted by heretical knights of the Reclamation. Their leader would espouse some

proclamations of righteousness, clearly unaware of her audience. They brought along with them a pair of angels that knew not their place and disturbed the magic around them with their blasphemy. We humoured their pitiful attempts for a time, but none could stand against my invocations to our supposedly shared goddess. As my blade cut down the apostates, the Inheritor made clear who she favoured. The “Knight Banneret” would see in full the weight of her sins as one last revelation before the weight of Miss Archie’s jaws pressed against her neck. No false followers would impede this most sacred of rituals.

That statement would be true regardless of what faith the heretic belonged to. As we approached the Winter Grove, we would find one final trial before us. Just as the previous trial had been against false Iomadaeans, our last trial would be against a false Asmodaean. Initially, it seemed strange that Father Malix would come before us with a small army of Ice Devils. His true nature was made clear to me the moment Father Dexsius referred to him as “demon-tongued” and Miss Archie immediately set upon him. I would later come to learn that his intent was to rewrite the Infernal Contract as one between Asmodeus and his church, bypassing House Thrune entirely. On the surface, this may seem sound, but this is of course only true to the basest of small-minded Asmodaeans. It is the height of Pride to assume that one would know the intentions of the Dark Prince, and all the more so to believe that these assumptions would take precedence over his preexisting machinations! Whatever delusions Luthon Malix held in his mind, they were dashed away in an instant by Miss Archie’s ferocity. After that, the matter of removing his misguided devil minions was a simple matter.

Miss Arcatraz was not quite done, however. Before we could proceed further, she took hold of the disgraced priest and obliterated him upon the grand altar. This was not the ritual we had been sent to complete. However, once I saw the fiery purpose in my dear companion’s eyes, I understood completely. Her actions were unquestionably those of one following the guidance of the Divine Order! It was thus with great joy that I witnessed her take yet another step towards achieving her truest purpose...

Thus ended both the trials and the tangents. All that remained was the final ritual itself. Over the course of our journey, Paraduke Sethic came to better understand the nature of his Destiny and its importance. In our pilgrimage together, he grew more appreciative of the Gift the Divine Order had granted him with this significant Purpose, and I could finally converse with him openly as a fellow member of the True Faith. By the time we had come to this final step, the Sacrifice welcomed his death with open arms and an open heart. I took the utmost care in conducting the ritual, and Paraduke Sethic closed his eyes to the mortal realm and opened them to the Grandest Miracle of all.

For the briefest of moments following the ritual, we were all Blessed with a glimpse of that same Miracle. A voice of Divine Providence echoed to us to affirm our success. The sensation was nearly overwhelming in its beauty! In that moment, I knew that we had received the rarest of gifts!

As students of the clergy, Father Dexsius and I understood the impact of such a moment immediately. However, Miss Archie is of a more secular nature, and as such the reward for her piety would come in a more material form. From the altar, she would discover a most amazing bequeathal in the form of an infant blue dragon. I am by no means an expert in the draconic, but I know that historically blue dragons have often been tied to the domains of those that follow Law and Order. It seems apparent then that Miss Archie's new child, Timaeus, was a symbol of that same pact. I look forward to witnessing the evolution of this Apotheosis, just as I anticipate all of our Gloriously Shining futures!

22/03/01 - Session 46 - The Voice of the Order

Sunday, 6th Kuthona, Egorian, The Heartlands

Participants: Dominus (Justin), Vipostix (Justin)

Dominus often had visions in his sleep, though they were often vague, cryptic visions of things, as though seen out of the corner of one's eye. This time however, the scene was clear and vibrant. He stood within a chamber segmented into five wings, converging upon an immense dais, with an altar in the centre. Each wing contained towering bookshelves and display cases, all neatly aligned, and bearing the colours and symbols of a different deity. From the central dais a glowing series of patterns carved into the floor were visible. From the mirrored ceiling above, Dominus could recognise at once the holy symbol of Asmodeus as well as the symbol of the Hellknight Order of the Godclaw, both merged in a way that at once twisted the mind and made perfect rational sense. The entire room at once felt unfathomably hot and unbearably cold. The scent of soot and ash melded with sweet perfumes. Soothing music blended with thousands of unending bloody screams. Everything seemed a contradiction, and yet, perfectly consistent, as though decreed as such through an omniscient force.

There was no mistaking a place at once filled with such turmoil and beauty beyond mortal comprehension. It was Hell.

Under any other circumstances, Dominus would be overjoyed. However, something was amiss. For all of his life, Dominus followed the signs laid out to him by the divine voices that compelled him, though here they were utterly silent. It was a silence that Dominus had never experienced before. The feeling was so unnatural that it was almost maddening. It was all Dominus could do not to fall to his knees and scream his lungs out.

Then, a voice. A single, magnificent voice. No softer than a whisper, yet somehow unimaginably loud. It did not carry in the room, but echoed in Dominus' mind.

"WELCOME, DOMINUS FEX. I HAVE BEEN EVER SO EAGER TO FINALLY MEET WITH YOU."

The words enveloped him like a soft velvet. All at once comfort returned to Dominus, and he knew that the voice he heard could only be of the most divine of sources. As though on instinct, he fell to one knee and bowed in reverence.

"EXCELLENT ETIQUETTE, DOMINUS, BUT YOU NEEDN'T KNEEL HERE. WE ARE BOTH TOOLS OF THE DIVINE ORDER. SO LET US CONVERSE WITHOUT FORMALITY."

Dominus arose, finding himself looking up at a figure at the top of the dais. The entity was familiar to him, though he had never seen it before. It bore long shimmering violet robes that shifted in appearance with every movement. At its belt hung a wide assortment of keys. From its shoulders sprouted several jagged crystalline spikes. It did not have a neck. Instead, a jewel-encrusted skull floated above, while more crystals floated around it as though a crown. Dominus knew enough through his Infernal studies to recognise the entity as a very powerful

devil. Though it had no mouth to speak of, Dominus had the distinct sense that it was smiling at him.

"YOU MAY CALL ME VÍPOSTIX, SPEAKER FOR THE DIVINE ORDER. IT IS I THAT HAS BEEN IMPARTING THEIR DIVINE WILL TO YOU, MY DEAR DOMINUS. IT IS THROUGH MY WORDS THAT YOUR BLADE AND HAMMER HAVE BEEN DIRECTED TO SERVE THEIR PURPOSE. TIME AND AGAIN, YOU HAVE DONE SPLENDID WORK, AND HAVE BEEN RECOGNISED FOR YOUR SERVICE. YOU HAVE PROVEN YOURSELF MORE THAN WORTHY OF THE TASK YOU HAVE BEEN GIVEN."

The words of praise pierced deep into Dominus' soul. The man had never doubted his faith, but to have it so directly acknowledged filled him with a sense of conviction unlike any he had felt before. It was as though the gods themselves were in attendance and applauding him. He did not forget himself however, and quickly resumed his composure.

"I am truly honoured by your words, Great Vipostix. If I might be so bold as to ask then, what is my role to be in the service of the Divine Order?"

"A WISE QUESTION INDEED. YOUR SERVICE HAS BEEN EXEMPLARY, BUT IT IS FAR FROM DONE. NOW THAT CHELIAX HAS REAFFIRMED ITS TIES WITH HELL, IT MUST CLEANSE ITSELF OF THE CHAOS THAT EMBROILS IT. YOU KNOW THIS CHAOS WELL."

"Yes, the heretics that call themselves the Glorious Reclamation."

"CORRECT. THESE SERVANTS OF THE INHERITOR DO NOT UNDERSTAND THE STRIFE THEY HAVE CREATED WITHIN THE ORDER. SOON IT SHALL GROW EVEN WORSE. CHELIAX BELONGS IN SERVICE TO HELL, AND YOU SHALL BE INSTRUMENTAL IN RETURNING IT TO THAT SERVICE. THE ROOT OF THIS CORRUPTION IS SIMPLE: THE THEFT OF HEART'S EDGE. FOR A RELIC OF SUCH IMPORTANCE TO BE THE SUBJECT OF MERE BRIGANDRY IS A SIGN THAT CHAOS RESIDES WITHIN THEIR SOULS. CORRECT THAT CHAOS, THEN RETURN HEART'S EDGE TO ME. I SHALL SEE TO IT THAT THE INHERITOR'S SACRED TREASURE IS HANDLED APPROPRIATELY. DIVINE RELICS ARE A SPECIALTY OF MINE..." The devil pauses, as though silently laughing at his own joke, before resuming, "FROM THERE, BALANCE SHALL BE RESTORED."

"If this is what is required, then of course, I will do it."

The devil raises a hand, "I KNOW YOU WILL, IN DUE TIME. YOU SHALL HAVE OTHER STEPS TO COMPLETE FIRST, HOWEVER. TWO DAYS FROM NOW, YOU WILL BE GIVEN A BOON AND A MISSION. YOU MUST ACCEPT BOTH. THE DIVINE ORDER SHALL SPEAK THROUGH THE HIGHEST AUTHORITY IN YOUR MORTAL PLANE, AND YOU SHOULD CONTINUE TO TREAT HER AS SUCH. SHE WILL SPEAK OF A POWERFUL WEAPON, AND THE MEANS TO CONSTRUCT IT. YOU ALREADY KNOW OF ONE COMPONENT. DO YOU REMEMBER ST. ILNEA'S FOUNTAIN? I SPOKE OF IT TO YOU ONCE BEFORE."

"Yes, the site where Iomedae's first saint was transformed into a sacred pool."

"NOW IS THE TIME FOR THAT KNOWLEDGE TO BEAR FRUIT. THE INHERITOR SHALL HERSELF PROVIDE HER MOST SACRED ASSETS TO YOU IN YOUR QUEST TO RESTORE ORDER. ANY

WHO STAND IN YOUR WAY ARE EITHER TESTING YOUR RESOLVE, OR HAVE THEMSELVES SUCCUMBED TO CORRUPTION. DO NOT FORGET THIS."

"Of course. I would never doubt the workings of the Divine Order!"

"NO... NO YOU WOULD NOT. YOU HAVE REMAINED STEADFAST IN YOUR FAITH, EVEN WHEN YOUR FLESH WOULD FAIL, YOUR SPIRIT NEVER WAVERS. YOU TRULY ARE A MAN OF UNSHAKEABLE CONVICTION, AND IT IS FOR THAT REASON THAT YOU WERE CHOSEN."

Once more, Dominus is filled with pride. Another thought emerges however, *"What of my companions? What plans does the Divine Order have for them?"*

"THESE ALLIES THAT WALK THE PATH ALONGSIDE YOU HAVE BEEN CHOSEN IN THEIR OWN RIGHTS TO SERVE THE ORDER. THEY DO NOT HAVE THE SAME CLARITY OF CONVICTION, BUT THEIR SERVICE IS STILL OF VALUE. EACH IS BEING PREPARED FOR THEIR DESTINY, AS YOU ARE. IN TIME, THEY WILL BE SURE OF THEIR PURPOSE, AS YOU ARE. SO LONG AS THEY SERVE YOU AND FOLLOW THE WILL OF THE ORDER, YOU SHOULD CONSIDER THEM VALUABLE ASSETS IN YOUR QUEST. USE THEM ACCORDINGLY."

"Very well."

"OUR TIME TOGETHER GROWS SHORT, BUT KNOW THAT HENCEFORTH, I WILL TAKE A MORE PROACTIVE ROLE IN ASSISTING YOU. AS YOUR POWER GROWS, SO TOO SHALL MY ABILITY TO OFFER AID. ULTIMATELY HOWEVER, IT SHALL BE YOUR HANDS THAT EXECUTE THE DIVINE ORDER'S WILL. CARRY THAT BURDEN AS YOU HAVE, AND ALL SHALL BE SET TO ITS RIGHTFUL PLACE."

"I thank you for all the guidance you have given me thus far, Great Vipostix. I look forward to our continued service to the Divine Order."

"AS DO I, DEAR DOMINUS. I HAVE ONE FINAL GUIDANCE FOR YOU BEFORE YOU AWAKEN. THE GRIFFON YOU HAVE ACQUIRED, IRONWING KAZI. I HAVE RECEIVED ITS SOUL PLEDGE FROM FATHER DEXSIUS, AND SHALL BE PLEASED TO RECEIVE IT. SACRIFICE THE BEAST TO THE ORDER, AND I SHALL ENSURE THAT ITS LOYAL SPIRIT IS RIGHTFULLY HONOURED. IN RETURN, YOU SHALL BE GRANTED A REWARD SUITABLE FOR THE DEED."

"Understood."

"WELL MET, DEAR DOMINUS. MAY THE DIVINE ORDER WATCH OVER YOU."

Dominus opened his eyes. The morning light had just begun to peek through the shutters of his room in Lawgiver's Rest.

The man smiled and greeted the day with vigour.

Never before had he rested so comfortably.

HV5 - Scourge of the Godclaw

22/03/08 - Session 47 - Into Citadel Dinyar

Wealday, 9th Kuthona, Citadel Dinyar, Aspodell Mountains, Isger

Participants: Dominus (Justin)

As predicted, the aftermath of our renewal of the Infernal Contract brought with it all the wondrous recognition that befitted our Accomplishment. Our names were hailed throughout the streets of Egorian as the Queen's scourges. Her Infernal Majestrix herself took the time to personally reward us with contracts that would grant us additional Infernal power for our continued service! Naturally, so long as she remains the mortal emissary of the Divine Will, I will serve dutifully. The contract was therefore an easy one to sign. At this very moment, I can feel the energies of Hell bolstering my Divinely Bestowed Might as a result!

Our achievements manifested in more ways than this, however. Miss Archie quickly took to her newly inherited child, Timaeus, as though a maternal instinct had suddenly awakened within her. I believe that with this new Blessing, she is finding herself more and more attuned to her ultimate purpose for the Divine Order. I am truly privileged to witness such a Grand Apotheosis in the making!

Mister Kezax brought into our service the aid of his own troupe of allies, including a very affable kobold woman by the name of Zylstra. As I came to understand, Madam Zylstra is a former servant of the same observatory from which Miss Archie and Mister Kezax hail, but had to depart until such a time that she would be called for. Mister Kezax considers the arrival of young Timaeus a sign that such a time has come. Considering the Immaculate circumstances in which this wondrous creature was produced, I concur wholeheartedly with his assessment. If Mister Kezax is any indication of the pedigree of service one might expect from Miss Archie's retinue, then I have high hopes for Madam Zylstra indeed!

Father Dexsius took pains to ensure that Father Malix' heresies were brought to the attention of both the Queen and Grand High Priestess Rugatonn. My loyal friend has come to the conclusion that both parties are in need of stronger, more reliable ties, and that he is well poised to take on such a responsibility. In the tumultuous realities of politics, I can think of no better anchor to serve in such a capacity. Just as he has aided me in my pursuit of my righteous inheritance, so too I have pledged to do all that I can to secure his future as the bridge between church and state!

Then, there was the matter of my own Blessing. On the night following our mission, I was granted a Vision, one far more vivid and clear than any I had received before! In it, I was graced by Vipostix, a messenger of the Divine Order! From the power exuded and the state of the domain we shared, his Status was unquestionable! In my Vision, he declared himself my patron and guide in service to the Order, both in past and future. Until now, the whispers of the Divine were obscure and at times vague. Fortunately I was capable enough to interpret them correctly thus far. Clearly, that deep understanding had proven me worthy of even greater trust and responsibility! No news could have excited me more than the promise of the Grand Destiny of restoring Iomedae's faith to proper Purity! In celebration and to honour Great 'Vipostix' counsel, I enlisted Father Dexsius and Miss Archie's aid in converting Ironwing Kazi into a form more suitable to my continued missions. May the beast's mythical energy serve me well in the challenges to come!

Upon receiving our boons from the Queen, we received some upsetting news. The ancient city of Westcrown, once a beacon of progress and nobility, had fallen to the Reclamation heretics. Much as it pained me to hear of such a loss, in truth it may yet be a Blessing in disguise. Westcrown had long been a shadow of its former glory, but lacked the motivation for a more thorough rebirth. Its fall to heresy is proof of the chaos that had weakened it. In exposing this corruption, we find ourselves with an opportunity to purge the city not only of its illegal occupants, but also of its more ancient illnesses... I pray that I shall be permitted to take part in such a Glorious Restoration!

Such a task would have to wait, however. As the Messenger had warned me, in addition to the boon would come a mission, though it would be one that would take us in another direction. Though Westcrown was the latest victim of heretical conquest, Citadel Dinyar was its first. By consolidating its forces in the west, the Reclamation has weakened its hold on the east, giving us an opportunity to recapture it and restore the honourable Order of the Godclaw in the process! No doubt, such a victory would devastate the twisted convictions of the misguided sheep that roam our fair country.

Not to be satisfied with such a simple goal, there was another facet to the Her Infernal Majstrix's plan. Citadel Dinyar remains guarded by a golden dragon named Parnoneryx. By the Queen's decree, the corrupted creature is to be executed and repurposed as a tool of righteousness, a weapon called the Tathlum. Miss Archie recognised this device as being a mechanism of immense power, but that it would require a complex ritual to create. Such a device requires sacred waters, a sacrifice of blood, and the ashes of history. Fortunately, the Honourable Vipostix reminded me of a place where we might find at least one of these elements. My companions had ideas of their own to aid with the remaining components, though these ideas could wait for the first step in our mission: retaking the Citadel.

We were fortunate enough that a Godclaw armiger had been sent by the Order with the information needed to begin Citadel Dinyar's recapture. He told us of a secret passageway that led into the fortress' dungeons. With this, we had no trouble moving forward, met only by a malebolgian cerberi loyal to its true masters. I had no trouble in convincing the beast of our righteous nature, and thus secured our passage.

Our first true opponents would come in the form of an elven woman and some Reclamation soldiers. They could offer little resistance as we exterminated them. In doing so, we acquired not only their keys to the Citadel, but also the appreciation of an invisible stalker that had been indentured by the mage. So grateful was he for his liberation, that he has promised to serve us for one week. As such, we have tasked him with locating the key figures holding the Citadel, so that we might properly recompense their trespass.

For the time being however, we have some captives to liberate...

22/03/22 - Session 48 - Lictor Unlocked

Wealdy, 9th Kuthona, Citadel Dinyar, Aspodell Mountains, Isger

Participants: Dominus (Justin)

Within the prison chambers, we discovered the Hellknights of the Order of the Godclaw. It is evident that their time imprisoned has left them weakened to the point of being unable to properly fight off the corruption that now taints this sacred establishment. It is fortunate then, that we have come to deliver their salvation. I announced as much to the soldiers as we liberated them and proceeded deeper into the dungeons. They were apprehensive, but ultimately appreciative. In time, I am certain, I shall restore their morale by demonstrating to them that the Divine Order still looks kindly upon its faithful.

Below, we found a closed chamber. Though Mister Kezax was prudent in his approach, we were ambushed by a belligerent azata. The foul agent of chaos struck at us with a blinding force. Given the circumstances preventing me from seeing my foe, I lent my power to Miss Archie, who was uniquely blessed with the ability to sense the creature. She made use of the power of the Divine Order to seize the wretch. I do not know the exact details of what transpired afterwards, as I instead called upon the Godclaw's teachings as I waited for my sight to be restored. However, once it had returned, Miss Archie had opened the passage from the cell, liberating its captive.

I found myself shocked and disgusted that these vile creatures would not only imprison the honourable Lictor Resarc Ountor, but also deprive the man of his hands! For such a heinous act to have befallen him is truly a sign of the depths of depravity the Reclamation heretics have fallen to. Father Dexsius was gracious enough to undo the damage, and soon after banish the still lingering azata for its misdeeds. However, though the damage here is repaired, the ringing of alarm bells is indication enough that there is work yet to be done to fully treat the festering wound that rots this Citadel.

Lictor Ountor was most helpful in providing us with guidance for the continuation of our mission. As Mister Kezax and the others saw to it that the unprepared heretics resting in the barracks were swiftly dispatched before they could ready themselves, he provided us with a map of Citadel Dinyar, as well as several key tasks that would aid us further.

The first was the suggestion of locating Paravicar Dominita Clara, who had gone on a mission to summon additional aid. Given her lack of appearances, it is reasonable to assume that the summoning did not function as intended, or she is otherwise biding her time.

The next name of interest was Knight Banneret Jelena Asteren, an officer within the Reclamation. By the Lictor's account, the woman had lost a son to an Infernal ritual, and though she wished for his return, the Reclamation refused her. Lictor Ountor has since been persuading her that the boy's salvation is indeed possible, should she be willing to take a final plunge. I would expect no less than for the Lictor of the Godclaw to understand the true nature of one's faith, and how easily it can be shaken. Certainly, under such circumstances, it is natural for a woman of conscience to acknowledge the flaws in the Reclamation's supposed doctrine. Iomedae is a goddess of Order, Justice, and Virtue. What Order is there in making unprovoked attacks against fellow followers of one's faith and instigating civil unrest? What Justice is there in seizing that which is not theirs? What Virtue is there in offering no solace to a woman that grieves a precious loss brought on by such acts? I know all too well the pain of losing family, but to cause suffering in such a heinous manner would not be the Inheritor's Will.

The final counsel offered to us by the Lictor was the location of the citadel's armoury. There, we would certainly find sufficient supplies to restore the remaining Hellknights to a proper fighting state. This, we would find in the tower between Bastion Devotio and Bastion Fanaticus.

By the time the Lictor had presented us with this information, the dungeons of Citadel Dinyar had been cleared of their lingering rot. All that remained to address below was the passageway to the summoning chapel, which lay behind a large mechanical circle depicting astral and arcane patterns of immaculate detail. Miss Archie, being a foremost expert on matters of astronomy and magical incantations, recognised the device as being a representation of Infernal summoning. However, it lacked several key components necessary to use the device in order to gain passage into the secret rooms beyond. We will have to locate these missing elements ourselves before we can proceed with that particular route.

With the Hellknights armed (albeit suboptimally) and the dungeon secured, we were free to proceed to the upper floor. Expecting a battle soon to come, we took the necessary preparations...

22/03/29 - Session 49 - Good as Gold and a Silver Tongue

Wealday, 9th Kuthona, Citadel Dinyar, Aspodell Mountains, Isger

Participants: Dominus (Justin)

We were wise to prepare for a battle before we entered the courtyard. There, we would find ourselves facing a host of heretic knights. Father Dexsius used Asmodeus' blessings to emerge as a large being of flame, and took control of the battlefield handily with his enlarged form. Meanwhile Miss Archie and myself took the flanks, while our other companions supported us from the rear. The soldiers themselves were of little consequence, though our skirmish prompted the appearance of a more significant foe...

The gold dragon Parmoneryx was at one time an ally of the Inheritor, prior to her ascension. Though he had not been seen for many years, he emerged in service to the heretics of the Reclamation. Thus, I can only come to the conclusion that as they have sullied so many other elements of Iomedae's legacy, so too have they corrupted him. It is regrettable that we find ourselves faced with such a task as ending the life of such an important creature, but there is at the same time great honour in knowing that we do so for the purpose of rendering him into an even greater tool of Divine Justice. It is with these thoughts that I called upon the might of the Divine Order to bestow its blessing upon myself and my allies.

The strength of our faith was glorious to behold! While Parmoneryx resisted, we made short work of his defences. Once Sir Quintus launched a pair of divinely inspired shots, crippling him, he could do nothing against Miss Arcatraz's final death blows. It is only recently that I have seen Miss Archie demonstrate the sheer destructive force of her draconic form, but I find myself in awe. A dragon is powerful yes, but one that has the benedictions of the Order is a Wonder of its own. I find myself appreciative that the Gods have graced me with such a compatriot.

Though the alarms still ring, we did not find ourselves facing much more resistance. While my companions saw to the corpses, I paid a visit to the castellan's chambers. Just as Lictor Ountor had informed us, I found Jelena Asteren, the woman of shaken faith. I offered her my sincere words of comfort and consolation for the wrongs done to her by those she thought to be her allies. Though she had strayed from the True Path, the punishment she suffered opened her eyes to the Truth. Her supposed friends had used and abused her, and did not deserve her loyalty. We offered her a chance at Redemption, and she accepted it, offering us ample information regarding the Citadel's occupants and traps. It will take time for her to fully comprehend her mistakes, and to truly heal from her corruption, but I have sworn upon my name that I will help her along this Path...

We find ourselves now in control of a large portion of Bastion Fanaticus, though there remain still some rooms to secure before we can rest...

22/04/19 - Session 50 - Chapel to Charnel

Wealday, 9th Kuthona, Citadel Dinyar, Aspodell Mountains, Isger

Participants: Dominus (Justin)

While Miss Archie tended to the corpse of our soon-to-be divine weapon, the rest of us continued to clear Bastion Fanaticus. Given the layout of the Citadel, it seemed a sound strategy that we secure everything up to the Spire of Abadar, which sits between the bastions. This would give us enough of a foothold to rest before dealing with the other Bastion Devotio.

At least, that was our initial plan. The most recent developments left us with some interesting alternative courses of action.

To provide some context, the next location to cleanse was the audience chamber. The heretics redecorated the site to instead make it serve as an Iomedaeen chapel. In and of itself, I do not dislike the aesthetic, though the clear favouritism for one deity is clearly not in keeping with the spirit of the Godclaw. Within, we found more of the heretic soldiers, as well as a belligerent dwarf. He was a formidable foe, but thankfully Iomedae's blessings were mine to claim. My allies also provided me with excellent support. Though I have not known her for long, Miss Zylstra proved herself most useful with her benevolent casting. Her fortuitously-timed addition to our group is yet more proof of our Divine Favour.

While I concluded the purge of the chapel, Father Dexsius and Mister Kezax found themselves accosted by a new wave of heretic soldiers. Of all people, Knight Commander Graxus Phand saw fit to confront us himself! That the leader of these unlawful occupants would deliver himself to us is truly a gift from the Divine Order! Either the man saw the error of his ways and sacrificed himself to atone, or he truly lacks a basic understanding of battle tactics, which proves him to be a false follower of the Inheritor.

Nevertheless, the man and some of his soldiers attempted to funnel their way into the chapel, where they were met with myself and Ser Quintus. The fools attempted what they could against me, but only the commander had any hope of posing a challenge. In response, I demonstrated how one must conduct themselves as an Iomedaeen. As my blade shone with the Inheritor's light, I cowed them into submission. Phand did nothing but cower and watch as I put down his feral underlings.

Father Dexsius secured the exit with his flaming form, which means that the man responsible for holding this holy site from its true masters is entirely at my mercy...

22/05/03 - Session 51 - Breakdowns and Reinforcements

Wealday, 9th Kuthona, Citadel Dinyar, Aspodell Mountains, Isger

Participants: Dominus (Justin)

For a supposed Knight Commander, Graxus Phand put up little resistance to his punishment. In the hopes of finding a better use for the man, I did not kill him, but rather broke him down into a far more manageable and portable form. If this is the state of the opposition's leadership, then I have supreme confidence that we will soon be making quick work of the remaining Reclamation heretics.

While glancing around the chapel for any further heresies of interest, I did observe a satchel containing what appeared to be the missing pieces of the contraption that blocked our path to the conjuration chambers. I promptly provided these to Miss Archie, who wasted no time in reconstructing the device and opening to us the path to the missing Paravicar.

The chambers were a marvel to behold! The well-furnished and organised rooms demonstrated clearly the magnificence of the Order prior to its defacing. Naturally, impressive as it was, our goal was to find someone capable of conducting the necessary rituals, so we did not linger overlong with the empty rooms.

It was in the library that we found the Paravicar, though not in the state that we had initially anticipated. Though the lone woman in the room had presented herself as the Paravicar initially, Miss Archie and Father Dexsius saw through the deception. It would seem that in her effort to secure a horned devil to aid the Hellknights, the Paravicar committed a blunder, and in doing so perished while trapping a handmaiden devil upon this plane. So as not to let the Paravicar's death be in vain, we made an agreement with the trapped devil, Lilanna: she would assist us in retaking the Citadel, and in return we provided her with the location of the Inferno Gate, to assist in her return to Hell once her contract with us was done. A simple yet elegant solution that will see both parties benefit.

Of course, a single new ally was an ill-fitting accomplishment given our pedigree, especially when we had access to an entirely refurbished summoning chamber. Father Dexsius made use of some scrolls to further bolster our forces, first with a barbed devil, and then with a horned devil, as the late Paravicar once intended. These soldiers of the inferno easily recognised the Righteousness of the task we presented to them. Far be it from such creatures to deny the compulsions of the Divine Order, after all.

We were still not done, however. While Phand was made to bear witness to the assembly of our forces against his lost flock, he was also being prepared to be a participant in the correction himself. With my and Father Dexsius' assistance, the "Knight Commander" was prepared for Miss Archie, who skillfully demonstrated Order's Authority upon his corrupted mind. It was thus that I found myself pleased to reequip the born-again loyalist of the Inheritor to join the trio of devils. Miss Archie has assured us that he shall be committing his life to undoing the grave errors the Reclamation has made here, though I took the liberty of keeping his pitiful rotted holy symbol until such a time that he has earned the right to be absolved of his crimes.

Such a poetic outcome one could hardly hope for! Once more, the Divine Order shines upon us!

22/06/28 & 22/07/29 - Sessions 52 & 53 - Clawing Back the Citadel

Oathday, 10th Kuthona, Egorian, The Heartlands

Participants: Dominus (Justin)

By cutting the head of the heretic snake that holds the Citadel in its clutches and using their leader against them, we had all but secured our glorious triumph. What enemy forces remained were scattered and broken, giving us an easy route to secure the last of our requirements.

Reclaiming the armoury was a simple affair. Within the base of the central spire of Abadar, that which connects Bastions Fanaticus and Devotio, we found a golem made in the image of the recently slain dragon Parnoneryx. The imitation was even paler than the real thing, further proof of the corruption this once noble creature had suffered at the hands of these heretics. We dispatched the wretched impression with haste, then descended further to the Godclaw storeroom. There, we found yet another misled emissary of heaven, a fiery archon. This creature was somewhat more fierce than the golem, and sought to use the treacherous tactic of luring us into the room, now imbued with blasphemous sorceries against us. What these lost souls fail to realise is that such efforts will never be sufficient to weight down the supremely ordained servitors of the Divine Order. The defiled excinder's fiery form was cornered and purged in a truly blessed Hellflame.

Regrettably, the Reclamation heretics committed the grave sin of destroying the Godclaw's most precious arms and armour. This alone would be unforgivable, but so too had they seen fit to repurpose the place for their own disgraceful equipment. At the very least, it would serve to give the Hellknight soldiers a modicum of protection, though the notion that the Reclamation would defile sacred tools belonging to those who serve the Divine Order is yet another sickening reason for the necessity of their eradication.

My disgust was mitigated, however, by the presence of one most valuable find. There remained a single artefact in the armoury still unblemished by the heretics: a pair of gauntlets bearing the masterful design of the Godclaw Order and a fearsome amount of magical power. I recognised that these were not tools to be taken lightly, and so I bore them with all the care and attention due to holy weapons of the Godclaw.

With the force of the rearmed Hellknights and our infernal minions at the vanguard, we made short work, clearing the remainder of the Citadel's unlawful occupants. To honour our bargain with the handmaiden devil, Miss Archie transported her to the Inferno Gate

personally once our victory was made inevitable. We would later learn that the dragon heiress had further business in the Whisperwood which would keep her occupied for the foreseeable future, but she was kind enough to leave Mister Kezax and Miss Zylstra with us to see the remainder of our mission to its conclusion. It is regrettable that she will not bear direct witness to our final glory, but she will no doubt come to learn of it in due time.

By the day's end, only a small contingent of heretics remained. This consisted of an angel, a giant monk, a pair of dragon horses, and a small squadron of footsoldiers. They consolidated themselves into the Ardant Fist, the citadel's chapel-keep. A fitting name for their last stand, as we would soon be prying this fortress from their cold, dead hands.

Curiously, it is also here that we would come across another figure: that of the elven Paraduqe Temoni Kennari. This was none other than one of Her Infernal Majestrix' most trusted advisors in matters of magic, and the one who so conveniently transported us to Citadel Dinyar from Egorian. His own business in the Citadel was completed, and he now waited for us to complete its recapture. In order to expedite the process, the Paraduqe graciously joined us in the final battle.

The initial strike came in the form of the two dragon horses jointly using their frozen breath against us as we made our entrance. For the most part we endured this, though Zylstra was unfortunate in her placement and so suffered a lethal injury. By the Grace of the Divine Order, we possess the means to deny even death in the name of our objective, so this was but a temporary affliction, but it was nonetheless enough motivation for Mister Kezax to retaliate by striking the powerful monadic deva that commanded the troops. The strike hit true, and fueled by the kobold's vengeance, tore into the angel's very celestial nature, stripping it of its ill-deserved protections. This made it easy prey for the Paraduqe and Ser Quintus, who bore down upon it with enough force to end its command permanently. Father Dexsius meanwhile restored Zylstra, then advanced to serve as the bulwark against the bestial frontline.

Lacking a more fitting adversary, I attended to the giant who proclaimed herself as the "Fist of Iomedae". For a vile traitor to use such a title was enough of an insult to necessitate her demise, though her repeated attempts to hamper my mobility made her a most frustrating opponent. Ultimately, I decided that it would be better to break her spirit before her body, and with a swift demonstration of the Divine Order's fury, I crushed her will to fight. She made an almost impressive effort to flee, and in that moment of disgrace unbecoming of one that would use the Inheritor's name, Father Dexsius reduced her form to cinders.

The humiliating loss of their final leader destroyed any lingering sense of rebellion among the remaining forces. The beasts fled with magic, leaving the exhausted knights to surrender, still in the clutches of Paraduke Kennari's magical tendrils. To satiate my righteous indignation over the pathetic display, I personally saw to the execution of these cowards. Their frail souls devoid of conviction would serve to refuel the Paraduke's energy as we debriefed him on our mission.

It was my utmost pleasure to make the formal declaration of our victory to Lictor Ountor. The damage done to the Citadel by the heretics was great, but far from unsalvageable. With time and resources, they will find themselves able to restore the Godclaw to its full glory, of that I am certain. As a representative of the Queen of Chelixa, a patriarch of a Chelish noble house, and most importantly as a loyal servant of the Divine Order, that same force which the Godclaw revere in their own form, I offered our full support to the Lictor. Our remaining minions would be given over to the Hellknights to aid in the restoration efforts. Furthermore, should they ever find themselves in my lands, I have promised them my house's hospitality. The Lictor was humble in accepting my offer of friendship and the temporary support of our servants, though declined any more formal offers of aid. It would of course be unbecoming for the Order to be any further beholden to non-affiliated entities, after all.

The Lictor did however offer in turn to repay our kindness. First, we were offered lodgings for the evening. This, we declined, as we would be returning with Paraduke Kennari to Egorian shortly to report our success to the Queen and make use of the city's mercantile facilities. His second gift however, was to loan me the Godclaw Gauntlets. It was with great joy that I accepted this boon. These precious gloves are not only a powerful weapon against the forces of chaos, but also proof of my faithful service to those who walk the Sacred Path of the Divine Order. I shall wear them with pride, and use them dutifully to exterminate the Order's enemies!

22/08/02 - Sessions 54 - Burning Barleybridges

Fireday, 11th Kuthona, Egorian, The Heartlands

Participants: Dominus (Justin)

Having successfully removed the festering wound from Citadel Dinyar, we found ourselves with both good tidings and a surplus of spoils, so we opted to return to Egorian to deliver both and receive our due recognition and compensation. Though Iomedae's lost sheep are of little value, their steel still fetches a high price. I have taken the liberty of repurposing that value for enhancements to my own equipment, so as to better present the might of a True Devotee.

As for Paraduqe Kennari, his business was sufficiently concluded, leaving him free to join us in the continuation of our creation of the Tathlum. Seeing as Miss Archie will not be returning to us in the foreseeable future, his arcane expertise will no doubt be of great value. As a long-term confidant to House Thrune, I have confidence in both his pedigree and his devotion to the principles of Order. Our time together will no doubt grant me opportunities to further advance my political standing, so that it might better reflect my divinely ordained role. I look forward to it immensely!

While we had been completing our task, Father Dexasius' loyal servitors had been dutifully investigating the potential site for one of the requirements of the Tathlum's creation: a place where we might harvest the "blood of the innocent". The exact nature of this requirement is somewhat misleading however, though I would attribute this to a limitation in the translation. What is truly required is the blood of the meek. That is to say those who, while potentially corrupt in soul, have not manifested this corruption in a direct offence against the Divine Order. It is a technical distinction of innocence that must be adequately recognised for the process to be successful. Fortunately for us, the village of Barleybridge suits our needs perfectly.

On the surface, Barleybridge appears to be an unassuming and law-abiding settlement. However, Father Dexasius' investigators determined that the village has of late developed a leaning for the drunken "god" Cayden Cailean. Such a chaotic fool of an accidental deity is an outright mockery of the values of the Divine Order, and his followers are a blight upon existence that is best eradicated. The fact that the town's annual celebration of "Barleyfest" coincides with the Caydenite holiday of Ascension Day strikes me as far too suspicious to be a coincidence. Much like mould upon a surface might indicate a deeper putrifaction, the telltale signs that mark Barleybridge tell me clearly that the Divine Order requires it be cleansed. It is fortunate that these lost lambs will not be wasted, but rather repurposed.

After all, what is rot, if not another word for fermentation? A fitting analogy, given the village's namesake.

The specific requirements of the ritual necessitated that we be somewhat particular in our approach. The required blood needed to be extracted from at least 100 "innocents" within a day's timeframe, and the blood must be extracted close to the time of their death. As such, a methodical approach was required so as to avoid panicking the livestock. This would also be complicated by the presence of a small band of so-called adventurers that styled themselves as the "Fearless Crows", led by a professed Caydenite. I cannot help but compare their arrogance to that of the disgusting Silver Ravens that wreak havoc in the Archduchy of Ravounel. Given that the carrion birds of Kintargo lay outside the scope of our mission, I shall have to content myself with showing their Crow cousins that fear is very much in Order.

Fortunately, we had excellent tools to serve us in this endeavour. First, Paraduqe Kennari arranged to acquire us a Circle of Teleportation, so that we may transport ourselves as well as Father Dexsius' congregation and Mister Kezax's kobold aides for this mission. He was also kind enough to use his magic to construct a comfortable lodging for the night, giving us the means to make our move from the crack of dawn, maximising our time. Such luxurious and efficient solutions are very befitting of a proper Paraduqe, so in this respect the good Temoni most certainly does not disappoint.

Come the start of the day, Mister Kezax made his way into the village, his agents at the ready further out. We have learned over our months together not to underestimate just how lethal and discreet Mister Kezax can be. His talents allowed him to silently disable any boats or wagons that might serve as an escape. Then, he methodically eliminated and harvested over half of the required souls before noon had struck! Would that all servants were so diligent in their labours!

At some point during his mission, our kobold associate did come across a rather interesting find. Mister Kezax would inform us by animal messenger that the village, much like Kantaria before, had a population of faceless stalkers. Seeing as their blood would not meet the criteria for harvesting, Mister Kezax suggested that they flee, which they did. What these deceivers did not realise was that the rest of our group, including Father Dexsius' clergymen, had already blockaded the only remaining village exit. They came directly to us.

Given Mister Kezax's message, I was not surprised to find that the stalkers were none other than those who had fled from Kantaria when we cleansed it nearly three months back. The fact that the cowardly Linton Demeer would flee from our Righteous Judgement never sat right with me, so it was with great satisfaction that I, with the aid of Father

Dexsius, Ser Quintus, and Paraduqe Kennari, finally eradicated the ugothols once and for all. Iomedae may take solace in knowing that her Tenth Act has now truly been fulfilled!

Come noon, we deemed it a suitable time to expedite the conclusion of our mission. Myself and my companions crossed into Barleybridge and awaited the arrival of the Fearless Crows in front of the Inn of the Friendly Traveller, where they were said to be lodged. Given that the inn was also the site of a shrine to the false god Cayden, Mister Kezax started a fire upon its back exit. It is an all too normal occurrence for Caydenite places of worship to go up in flames, so it is a situation his followers ought to be well-acquainted with. As for the devotees within the inn, they would have a simple choice: exit and confront our judgement, or burn along with their putrid mockery of Faith.

When the Fearless Crows did finally arrive, they did so with an audience. This was exactly what we desired. On our authority, a warrant for the arrest of one Nedowyn, leader of the Crows and alleged cleric of Cayden Cailean, was proclaimed on the grounds of heresy. No doubt, such an announcement would draw the attention of the citizens, much like the misguided flocks in Longacre once amassed to protest the rule of Law. Once enough of them had amassed in a comfortable proximity, we could proceed.

All things considered, the confrontation was anticlimactic. The Crows did as we expected and sought to resist us. Before they would even begin to take action, Mister Kezax had pierced their mage's skull with a bolt, killing him instantly. Father Dexsius and Ser Quintus unleashed powerful magical volleys at their priest and rogue, severely weakening the first and killing the latter. Paraduqe Kennari denied the priest his attempt to resurrect the rogue, while I used the Godclaw Gauntlets to weaken the remaining belligerents further through the force of Order before moving in to confront the bard. Neither the bard nor the cleric survived more than a few seconds after that, and could muster no resistance worthy of mention. In a sense, the Fearless Crows were aptly named; they did not live long enough to dread their demise.

As for the remainder of the harvest, the lingering crowds were easily tended to. I set up a perimeter of flame blockading much of the centre of the village, while Paraduqe Kennari set about exhausting the panicked lambs. With neither energy nor an escape route, they submitted easily to the harvest.

While our task required only a hundred souls, roughly half of the village's population, we razed what little was left of Barleybridge as a precautionary measure. If even a single seed of the corruption remains, there is a chance of reinfection. Better that this serve as an example to others of the importance of maintaining proper spiritual hygiene, lest they too require the inquisition's treatment.

Personally, I think the final Barleyfest bonfire was truly the greatest one the village ever had the privilege of creating. It made for a soothing sight as we concluded yet another successful day in service to the Divine Order, an excellent cause for celebration.

22/08/16 - Sessions 55 - Water Falls

Starday, 12th Kuthona, St. Ilnea's Fountain, Menador

Participants: Dominus (Justin)

With our first component secured, it was time for us to move on to the second. Though we had our choice, I insisted that we make the journey to St. Ilnea's Fountain next. It has been over four months since my holy pilgrimage through Cheliax was interrupted by the vile Reclamation, and it has remained one of my great fears that more sacred sites might become defiled by their hands before I would have the opportunity to bear witness to them. Besides, I wished to return to Kantaria and spread the good news of our final definitive eradication of the ugothols, and by extension the proper fulfilment of Iomedae's tenth act.

The stop through Kantaria was brief, but nevertheless satisfying. Mother did well in maintaining order since our departure, and the citizenry have largely moved on from the follies that Nevilindor and his band of heretics infected them with. The reconsecration of Valor's Fastness seems to have held as well. The sight of that majestic fortification brought into the modern age of the Divine Order fills me with satisfaction.

Father Dexsius continues to insist that it is now an Asmodaeian temple. At this point, I have come to accept that his ardent refusal to fully embrace the Divine Order is merely a facet of his deeply focused nature. As a pure devotee of Lord Asmodeus, he is much like a scalpel, precise and perfectly suited to one specific function, to the exclusion of others. His narrow-mindedness favours sharpness over versatility. It is in many ways similar to Mister Kezax's devotion to his mistress. Each is a tool made with a singular vision and purpose. I need not enlighten them, merely direct them.

This does however leave me with the question of our new companion. I have not yet had the pleasure to properly converse with Paraduke Kennari on matters of faith and loyalty. His devotion to Thrune is evident, but I do wonder if there is room in his heart to embrace the grander picture, or if he too, like Father Dexsius or Mister Kezax, is an instrument of precision. He has at least expressed an interest in learning more about the Divine Order, and I look forward to expressing its beauty to him.

From Kantaria, the journey to the site of the sacred fountain was an easy one. I was relieved to find that the fabled spring remained unsullied and well-kept, despite the turmoil currently surrounding the Iomedaeian faith. I took some time to contemplate the waters and offer a prayer to St. Ilnea before we proceeded. Mister Kezax needed to attend to some matters, so Paraduke Kennari and Ser Quintus took on the task of investigating the site.

The legends I recall tell of a passageway hidden near the spring, leading to the true fountain which we seek. Interestingly, we confirmed that the nature of the water was most unusual. I for one, detected great spiritual strength from the waters, enough to recognise that they held the spark not just of the divine, but of the sentient. It would not take long for us to realise the implications of this discovery...

Ser Quintus' vigilance was rewarded, as he observed an opening among the rocks that led to the tunnel we sought. However, as Tyapket approached the entrance, he found himself bound up by webs, and soon after, the living waters themselves were upon us. It was clear in that moment that Iomedae would not permit her first saint's resting place to be visited by any who lacked the vigour of Ilnea herself. Much like that legendary hero once bravely fought a fearsome creature of the Abyss, we would be tested against a blessed elemental.

Naturally, a Herald of the Divine Order would not be halted by such a challenge, and so it was that I demonstrated my resolve and proved myself to Iomedae's chosen guardian. With its swift defeat, we proceeded into the cavern. The wards did pose some light inconvenience, but nothing of consequence. It was evident that such protections were meant to keep all but the most worthy from approaching the sacred waters, so a light injury to test our faith was an easy compromise to accept.

As we entered the cavern, I sensed that we would likely be tested once more, so I took the time to engage myself properly for what would come. This proved a wise choice, as we would find ourselves challenged by a woman riding atop a lion, and several shield-bearing archons. It was clear that they would require yet another demonstration of worthiness. We were, of course, more than willing to accept.

While Father Dexasius ensured that Paradukey Kennari and Ser Quintus were adequately protected, I faced the woman who had seen fit to challenge me directly. At first, I thought her methods deceitful. She absorbed my strikes arrogantly, proclaiming the Inheritor's Divine Protection, and declaring me a heretic. I might have dismissed her as yet another lost lamb, had I not come to understand the nature of her tactics. Her shielding was a product of a bond with the archons, a magic I recognised from Father Dexasius. To overcome it, I needed only to strike with enough persistence and conviction that the archons would fall. As for her taunts, it was obvious that they were the mere bluster of psychological warfare, meant to test my spirit. Needless to say, I would not succumb to something as ridiculous as doubt. Ultimately, the test was easily passed, and the woman retreated for the next trial.

Upon initial inspection, the next test seemed like one of endurance. The guardian who presided over the tunnel made liberal use of teleportation magic to reposition herself, evading direct strikes. While this did preoccupy my companions for a time, I came to

understand the true nature of this test rather quickly. It is at moments like this where the difference in our roles is made evident. A specialist might obsess over her challenge and pursue her endlessly. It takes a grander vision to realise that her actions were meant as a diversion, to distract us from our true objective of reaching the fountain. Once this truth became evident to me, the answer was clear: I disregarded her and proceeded forward. My Convictions lie in achieving the ultimate goal of my Mission, and no mere taunts will distract me from my Purpose. I located the next stage, an illusion meant once more to dissuade those that lack faith. It did not halt me for even a moment.

As for the others, they eventually fell into line and joined me. Sure enough, as they did so, our evaluator exposed herself, just long enough for Ser Quintus to conclusively end the test. I had him bring me the body, as the guardian of such a sacred site deserves to be present for what is to come...

22/08/23 - Sessions 56 - Astral Devastation

Starday, 12th Kuthona, St. Ilnea's Fountain, Menador

Participants: Dominus (Justin)

After what seemed a brief eternity, the astral deva Ambrihama felt a sudden shock as the unholy knight's blade plunged into her. All at once, the little strength she had left vanished, and the once proud servant of Iomedae fell to her knees.

She prepared herself for death, but was surprised when the knight did not immediately finish her. Instead, he leaned in, and with a softness that sent chills through her broken spine, whispered, *"Now, stay there if you please. I have need of you for a demonstration."*

Confused and terrified by the words, yet too frail to act, the angel remained in place, her blood slowly staining the polished floors. The knight stepped away for a moment, then returned, this time with the Asmodaeen cleric, elven mage, and human soldier that had been accompanying him. She thought she had noticed a pair of kobolds as well, but she did not see them now.

Once more, the knight approached her. He seemed to be explaining something to his companions. *"You wished for an explanation of the Divine Order, Paraduke. Well, this is a perfect opportunity to explain."* Now that she had a chance to observe him properly, she noticed that the man bore several religious symbols upon his chest, including one of Iomedae. *"You see, mortal races, angels, devils, and even gods, are all part of one grand interconnected design. This system is what brings order and structure to the universe. It is through this system that all things are given their place in the grander whole. In many ways, it is much like the noble hierarchies you are already well acquainted with."* The angel wondered if the blood loss was making her hallucinate. Was this man truly so audacious as to give a blasphemous sermon within Iomedae's own temple?

Ambrihama barely had time to register the folly of the situation, as the knight grasped her by the neck with his clawed gauntlet and lifted her into the air. Being able to do little else, she looked at him in defiance, only to find his eyes unnaturally devoid of life, and his mouth twisted into a bastardised depiction of jubilation. The man was clearly more than simply unhinged.

"Within this structure, every lawfully ordained being has its place, a purpose within this scheme to serve the greater whole, much like every limb and organ serves a role in the body," he continued, *"for example, some exist to support the foundations of our world, and maintain stability."* As the man spoke, the angel felt the stinging sensation of metal cutting flesh, as her legs were sliced from her body. The limbs fell to the floor, producing a wet thud that echoed through the chamber. He deva attempted to scream, but found that the knight's gloved hand was firmly restricting her windpipe, permitting little more than a pained wheeze to escape.

"Then, there are those that serve by being the means of action. They exert influence, guide the flocks, and wield arms against chaos and corruption. Iomedae is one such entity, just as she was as a mortal, and it is for this reason that I hold her in such esteem." The heresies uttered by her

torturer outraged Ambrihama to the point that she nearly did not notice that as he spoke, the man had removed both of her arms.

“Of course, there are many other components to the Divine Order, each vital to the whole in their own way. To reject any one component creates an imperfect whole. This is why each must be respected in its own right. But of course, it remains a hierarchy, and some elements are more fundamental than others.” By this point, the angel teetered on the edge of death, her divine nature being the only thing keeping her alive. She no longer had the energy to even consider the ravings of the lunatic that was slowly tearing her apart.

“Simple mortals lie near the bottom of this hierarchy, save for those ordained by a higher power to enact the Divine Order’s will, such as us. Heaven serves as a mirror and foil to Hell, a balance to ensure that Order is represented in all capacities, though it is naturally subservient to that which is Infernal.” The deva was too far gone to notice that her wings had joined the pile of limbs beneath her. With what small fragment of consciousness she had left, she begged the Inheritor for forgiveness.

“Then, above all else, lies Lord Asmodeus, the brilliant mind that guides the consciousness of the Divine Order. He is, in essence, the embodiment of the Divine Order’s will. It is for this reason that he is recognised as supreme above all other beings, and why even though Father Dexsius does not share my appreciation for the greater schema, I do not disagree with his philosophies.”

At some point during his final explanation, the knight had decapitated Ambrihama, though she had long since lost any semblance of consciousness. What remained of her divine spark however, erupted in an unnatural dark flame. The absolute heresy of the deva’s death, accompanied by the knight’s deranged proclamations, was enough to corrupt what was left of the angel’s spiritual energy. In a flash of unholy light, the angel’s halo was wreathed in flame and fell from her head, only to be caught by the knight before it could hit the ground.

Gently, the man observes the halo, and smiled as he showed it to his allies. *“There is your proof, Paraduke. It is the fundamental nature of Heaven to serve Hell, for it too is a part of the Divine Order. Once our conviction was tested and proven, it could not help but submit. As was here, so too shall it be with St. Ilnea’s waters.”*

Ambrihama’s lifeless skull was placed delicately beneath the statue of St. Ilnea. Had she still been conscious, she might have seen that her dismembered limbs, seemingly littered upon the temple floor, had found themselves positioned in a pentagram, depicting the Dark Prince’s Archstar. Perhaps it was the unholy energy produced by the knight’s actions, or the blood coating the floor that now stretched across the room, but the shimmering blue radiance that once illuminated the chamber had taken on a darker, more crimson hue...

22/09/27 & 22/11/12 - Sessions 57 & 58 - Water Is Purest When Boiled

Moonday, 14th Kuthona, St. Ilnea's Fountain, Menador

Participants: Dominus (Justin)

I am pleased to have found that St. Ilnea's Fountain was very much worth the pilgrimage. Following the passing of our trial against the Astral Deva, I took the opportunity to give Paraduķe Temoni a sermon on the nature of the Divine Order. The Gods saw fit to punctuate my proselytising with a demonstration of its power, converting the Deva's halo to a fiery tool worthy of our purpose. The Paraduķe took well to my explanation, and I granted the halo to Father Dexsius as a show of trust in his devotion, despite his reservations towards the Truest Faith.

Our next trial would take place at the very chasm created by the battle between Saint Ilnea and the demon Karash'e'tor. There, we were accosted by a swarming mass of belligerent lantern archons and multiple flying serpents. They attempted to obscure our vision and utilise trickery to take us by surprise, but their techniques were wanting. Many times now we have come across creatures that would use tactics of obfuscation against us, and we are not so easily diverted. Sir Quintus seemed especially motivated. Perhaps something about these trials has awoken something within him, or it is a sign of the Divine Order rewarding him for his efforts. Either way, my companions and I had little trouble disposing of these obstacles, though their tactics left the battle feeling far more time consuming than it had any right to be.

During our wait for the couatls to reemerge during the trial, Father Dexsius and I took the liberty of searching for the famed demon's blade, Karash'e'tor's Razor. We did ultimately uncover it, and brought it with us following our victory over the flying guardians. I was all too happy to leave the wretched thing in Father Dexsius' care, as the stench of chaotic energy emanating from the blade was rather sickening. Perhaps in time, Father Dexsius will be able to rectify that particular blemish on an otherwise fine weapon...

At long last, the doors ahead of us would be the final ones. The marvel of St. Ilnea's fountain was a true joy and honour to finally witness. Such a splendid site to commemorate such a valiant hero of Justice and Order! I would have renewed my pledge to uphold the Divine Order's will then and there, but there remained still a trial for us to overcome. Once myself, Father Dexsius, and Mister Kezax had entered, the doors began to close upon us. Sir Quintus rapidly acted to enter the chamber as well before the doors would seal us from our other compatriots. Once sealed in, the fountain's water quickly began to submerge the

room, and the sting of holy water would burn any who did not give proper homage to the Inheritor. As such, I was naturally spared from the need for any cleansing.

Father Dexsius was clever enough to grant us all the means to avoid drowning within the submerged chamber, which gave us enough time to consider the trial. I recalled the details of Saint Ilnea's legend, how she stood her ground against Karashi'e'tor, and how her body subsequently transformed into the source of this sacred spring. From this, I could conclude that her very body would be what produces these waters. Inferring from this knowledge and Mister Kezax's swift investigation of one of the room's many decanters, we were able to determine that fragments of the saint's corpse lay in each of these receptacles, and their seizure would be necessary to conclude the trial. I wasted no time in shattering the decanters on either side of us, then moved to open the others. My companions used their own talents to liberate several of the other fragments, thus swiftly completing the trial and bringing the room back to a calmed state.

I was in no way surprised by our success, for just as Saint Ilnea holds the honour of being Iomedae's first saint, I walk the path to become the first saint of the Divine Order as a whole. I am not so arrogant as to ignore those who came before me as I humbly stand upon their shoulders. It is for this same reason that our next task of enhancing these waters would be so essential. St. Ilnea's waters, sacred though they may be, remain limited in their divine influence. Iomedae's gift alone is great, but does not encompass the Splendour of the entire Divine Order.

Once we reunited with Paraduqe Temoni and Miss Zylstra, we initiated the ritual to empower the waters. Through the guardian's body and the deva's heart, imbued with Miss Zylstra's magic, Father Dexsius spoke the incantations needed to merge the blessings of Hell with the water, not once, but twice. These hallowed grounds that serve as the resting place for this fountain will forever be cleansed through Infernal heat, just as water is boiled to remove its impurities. So as to ensure that this place would also not be lacking for a protector, Father Dexsius also rased the guardian as a fiery spirit. The woman had power, but ultimately was mortal, so she would surely be overjoyed with such a gift, to be able to oversee her mistress' resting place for eternity!

The waters, once enhanced, were quick to imbue the dragon's skull with their blessing. With that, our tasks in this holy place were done, and we might continue our mission. I am truly thankful that the Queen, in all of her wisdom, gave us this task. Never in my pilgrimage had I been given the privilege to undergo such a marvellous trial. I move on now with a fresh new reassurance of my Ultimate Purpose. May our next quest be so fulfilling!

23/06/03 - Sessions 59 - A Conflict of Interests

Toilday, 15th Kuthona, Archive of Redacted Histories, Warlock Island

Participants: Dominus (Justin)

Much as I might have enjoyed continuing to bask in the radiance of St. Ilnea's waters, there remains work to be done. Justice and Order cannot be permitted respite when corruption is ever present, after all. Even now, I hear the cries of those poor souls in Westcrown, imprisoned by the heresy of the Reclamation...

We had hoped, especially Father Dexsius, that we might take the time to purify Karash'e'tor's Razor, and divest it of its abyssal taint. Its grotesquely chaotic attunement aside, it has the potential to be a fearsome weapon. Personally, I would love nothing more than to complete St. Ilnea's trial and bring an end to that foul demon's lingering essence. However, the complexities inherent in such a task make it a time consuming process. As such, we will simply hold onto the blade for now, with the intent of addressing it at a later date. I shall keep it secure, but away from my person until such a time that we are ready, as the energies it exudes are offensive to my senses.

Instead, I must focus my thoughts to the acquisition of our final ingredient for the Tathlum: the ashes of history. To this end, Paraduke Kennari was kind enough to supply us with a destination. Prior to this, I had not been aware of the Archive of Redacted Histories, nor of the esoteric Hellknight order that guards it. I've come to learn that this shelter of forbidden knowledge existed as a contingency, established by the very first Majestrix to serve the True Infernal Masters. While it might have unsettled me that the existence of the Order of the Glyph was unknown to me, there is no fault in this. If it is their mandate to be unknown, then this is merely proof of their diligence. It is that same diligence I will expect when we encounter them.

I am keenly aware of the implications of our next mission. We are to enter the Archive, secure a few tomes of particular import, and conflagrate the remainder of the knowledge stored within. Such a task is simple, but puts us in direct opposition to the Hellknights of the Glyph. While some of my companions have a desire to avoid unnecessary bloodshed, and I commend them for this altruistic sensibility, I also recognise it to be futile. It is our divinely ordained mission to destroy the knowledge they have been ordained to protect. For them to permit us entry would be a dereliction of their duty! No, it is clear that only death will satisfy the honour of all parties. It is regrettable, but I take solace in the fact that Lord Geryon of the Fifth will certainly accept its loyal servitors, and they in turn will bolster their Master with the secrets they have so diligently kept. They shall be proud to know that the words they guarded will burn, exposed to none save the Flames of Order.

23/06/27 & 23/07/10 - Sessions 60 & 61 - Scoldings, Scholars, Snakes, and Snares

Toilday, 15th Kuthona, Archive of Redacted Histories, Warlock Island

Participants: Dominus (Justin)

As might be expected of a vault of carefully guarded secrets, the Archive of Redacted Histories was not without its protections. The Hellknights at the gate sought to repel us. I saw to it that they ended their watch with all of the honour befitting their station, and therefore offered no mercy. They may rest knowing that they stood without hesitation in the face of their properly ordained oblivion.

Next were the magical traps. Mister Kezax and Paraduqe Kennari were kind enough to ensure that they would not impede our progress, though I confess that I did incur one of them of my own volition. Truth be told, the impact was not especially noteworthy, but this too is not surprising, when I am blessed with the Divine Order's protection.

Our first infiltration was to the western archive, a small wing with which Paraduqe Kennari was familiar from a previous visitation. The cultists that maintained this wing were quick to oppose us, though as might be expected they lacked the wherewithal to hold back our Righteous Purpose. I impressed upon a single remaining clerk our goals, and though he was recalcitrant at first, we restored his tongue and persuaded him that offering the information was the best course of action. He eventually understood that our mandate superceded his, and kindly informed us that we might find the tomes we sought within the "Library of Baal".

Truth be told, the restoration of his tongue was not perfect, so this may have been misspoken, as I cannot imagine to what ends a temple in service to the Lord of the Fifth would so honour the Seventh. Then again, such mysteries are at the very core of Geryon's faith, so perhaps there is a truth there to which I have not yet become privy.

In any case, once we had seen to the ashing of the western wing and its caretakers, we focused our attentions on the central structure. After bypassing some additional magical disincentivisers, we were met by a troupe of osyluths. Their tactic was a combination of frozen walls and illusions thereof to separate us. A clever tactic, to be sure, but a futile one in light of their adversaries, as none of my companions is anything less than a fearsome entity of Justice even on their own.

As it happened, this proved to be a useful opportunity for me to test the gauntlets granted to me by Lictor Ountor. The right gauntlet's dismissal magic proved a useful tool with which to send away one of the guardians. In doing so, I received the distinct impression that the devil was sent to the steps of Heaven, which seemed to me a fitting recognition of the relationship between the Outer Planes as pieces of the Grand Order. Perhaps this particular manifestation was a form of acknowledgement that the Godclaw's philosophies and my understanding of the Truth are indeed aligned. If so, it is a wonderful affirmation!

Bone devils are mighty and respectable entities, but just as the guardians of these secrets must, they succumbed to our combined will. While investigating the many parchments in the room, we acquired some tools that may be repurposed, and incinerated what remained, as is our task. I confess that I found myself wondering for the briefest of moments if the defences of the Archive were lacking. Of course, I quickly disabused myself of the notion. If this task is easy, it is because the Divine Order wills it so. After all, it would not do for our resources to be needlessly depleted while tending to our fellow followers of the Path.

The next two chambers were of note for the defences they presented to us. The first was insidious, and would only become evident later. The second was considerably more overt.

To my recollection, I had not encountered an asura before this journey. As we honour devils for their proximity to the Greatest Lord of the Divine Order, we would do well not to neglect the service of those beneath them. This pair was particularly eager to render service unto their Lord Geryon, as they enveloped us in toxic fumes as soon as we had made our presence known. It may have been a true hindrance, were it not for Paraduqe Kennari's resourcefulness. Once their obfuscation was removed, actually combatting the defenders was made trivial thanks to Mister Kezax's particularly effective marksmanship.

Would that I could praise Mister Kezax's skills more often, as they have indeed been invaluable in removing obstacles from our path. In this respect, he and his companion Lady Zylstra have been most useful servants in the cause of the Divine Order. No more did this become apparent as when they revealed their failure to withstand the compulsions set upon them by some trap within the Archives. I merely spoke of resuming our purpose, and they swiftly objected, encouraging that I depart. For a moment, I had believed that they may well have uncovered some concealed mystery that required my departure for it to be revealed. Thankfully, Father Dexsius and the Paraduqe were keen enough to identify the manipulations at play.

As I was the sole one to trigger this particular obstacle, I took a moment to wait in contemplation as the others made use of their magical abilities to resolve the situation. I consider this to be a profound message from the Order on the importance of not taking our

Robold associates for granted. In time, we have collectively come to rely on Mister Kezax's talents to open the way, but if we are careless, they may become an obstacle, or worse yet, we may grow complacent. Miss Archie, for all her acute perceptiveness, was often blind to the most obvious of Truths. I must be prudent not to make the same mistake.

To be humbled is not a bad thing from time to time. Though I am the foremost servitor of the Grandest of Designs, a servitor I ultimately remain, a tool meant to execute its purpose. Even the sharpest of swords may grow dull, if not properly maintained. Likewise, the soul and mind cannot be allowed to grow so comfortable with what is, that it can no longer conceive of what could be.

23/07/24 - Session 62 - Lingering Heresies

Toilday, 15th Kuthona, Archive of Redacted Histories, Warlock Island

Participants: Dominus (Justin)

The Archive of Redacted Histories has two guardians of note. The first is the Hellknight Order of the Glyph. While their existence was previously unknown to me, their purpose, philosophies, and methods do not differ significantly from that of their brethren. They serve to preserve Order and do so unerringly, even when this requires their sacrifice.

The second is the Cult of Geryon. They are a more complex group to measure. The Lord of the Fifth is indeed loyal to Lord Asmodeus, and by extension the Divine Order, but the services it provides are necessarily obscured. Their role in preserving the Empire's forbidden records may seem a contradiction, as one might conclude that it would be better to erase these histories entirely lest they be used for nefarious ends. Under other circumstances, I might have thought as much myself.

It is fortunate then that the Path has made clear to me their True Purpose. This culmination of secrets, much like a delicate crop, has been tended to so that it might one day be cultivated for our ritual. The Archive is a farm from which the final ingredients of the Tathlum shall be harvested. This is the ultimate reason for the cult's existence.

Following our encounter with the pair of asuras, we first investigated the western wing. There, we found a grand library, occupied by a few more worshippers of Geryon and a flying serpent. It is also here that we encountered the man we would come to learn was the grandmaster of the cult. The lessers did as was demanded of them and died for their cause, but the one known as the Master of Heresy was more elusive. Though he was brought close to his end, a magical contingency of some sort allowed him to escape from our grasp before we could end his service. I took this to mean that his task, and therefore ours as well, was not yet complete. It would not do to conclude his guardianship until he was no longer necessary. Father Dexius made use of his Infernal connections to validate this, as we were told with certainty that the Master did not flee the Archives entirely. Paraduķ Kennari remained behind to scour the library for what he required and to purge what remained, while the rest of us proceeded to the other wing...

23/09/13 - Session 63 - Leaving a Mark

Toilday, 15th Kuthona, Archive of Redacted Histories, Warlock Island

Participants: Dominus (Justin)

I have often been asked why I hold the Hellknights in such high esteem, even those I find myself in direct conflict with. This has always struck me as something of a foolish question, but one should not waste an opportunity to educate the ignorant whenever possible. Quite simply, I admire their devotion to the principles of Order. Without explicitly allying themselves to persons or states or even a single god, the Hellknights display the purest form of loyalty, as it is to the Greatest Principle there is. They abide by the Dictums of the Divine Order in a manner that even the most devout cleric does not. I believe the fact that the Hellknights of the Godclaw most closely approach the true understanding of the universe's Grand Design is a sign of the righteousness of their commitment.

That being said, this respect would never cause me to hesitate to combat a member of these noble orders. The Divine Order is a complex network of interconnected machinations, the final goal of which is beyond all but its highest of servitors. Sometimes, these machinations encounter each other, and conflict occurs. On the most surface of levels, this may seem self-defeating, but to think so is to ignore the grander schema. By the same logic, the creation of fire is destructive, but this too serves a purpose. Reactions sometimes require one thing to be sacrificed for something of greater value to be produced.

In the case of the Order of the Glyph, they were given the divine task of protecting the Archives of Redacted Histories from all intruders, whereas I was tasked with their destruction. Both of our missions were Supremely ordained, and if they enter into conflict, it is only because the result of this conflict will ultimately serve the Divine Order in some manner. It is not my place to question how, merely to carry out this process to the best of my ability.

It is for this reason I made no effort to dissuade the Order's Lictor from fighting me, and instead challenged him directly. He was an admirable fighter, and even managed to land a couple blows upon me, an impressive feat given my considerable blessings. In honour of this, I did my best to ensure that his death would properly reflect his pledge. After all, what greater honour would it be for the Lictor of the Glyph to be made into a glyph himself? I pray that his blood's markings seal themselves into the stone as proof of his eternal commitment. Though few will ever know his sacrifice, there may yet be power in such a demonstration of faith. Saints need not be the only ones to leave such legacies.

While I had focused my attentions on the Lictor, my companions had tended to the remaining Hellknights. Only the Master of Heresy remained, hidden from view and having sealed himself with me in the chamber, while the others were held without by way of a barrier of force. He did attempt to strike me with destructive magic on multiple occasions during my duel, but as is to be expected, I would not crack under such pressure. Instead, I kept the Master preoccupied long enough for Temoni to return and bring my allies to our side of the wall. There, Father Dexius removed the concealment, allowing Mister Kezax and Ser Quintus to finish the job. There is some poetic irony that they did so from concealment themselves. It seems appropriate that a man of secrets would be felled by hidden assassins.

Save its sacrificial guardians, the chamber's sole element of note was a magical gateway to an opulent residence. In here, we found what may have been a collection of the most significant secrets of the Chelioxian Royal House of Throne.

Needless to say, we burned them all immediately without giving them a glance. Their secrets would remain eternal, and we would rest soundly.

24/01/05 - Session 64 - Revelation and Return

Wealdy, 16th Kuthona, Archive of Redacted Histories, Warlock Island

Participants: Vipostix (Justin)

FOR TOO LONG, THIS TALE LIES DORMANT, AWAITING ITS REAWAKENING.
CONSIDER THIS THE WAKE-UP CALL. HELL IS WAITING.

You are perhaps wondering who I am, and what has become of that lovable psychopath Dominus Fex? True, my dearest and most successful project is normally tasked with reciting the exploits of Cheliax's reconquering through his magnificently twisted perspective. For now however, he is taking a well deserved rest, and I, his humble handler, will graciously take on the task. I go by Vipostix, Deimavigga Principale and Arch Adjudicator of Celestial Acquisitions, though just Vipostix is sufficient here. You needn't concern yourself with any further details. Just relax and enjoy the story.

When last we left them, the Queen's chosen agents had felled the Cult of Geryon and the Order of the Glyph in order to burn the contents of the Archive of Redacted Histories. They did so in order to secure the "ashes of history", a key ingredient in a rather potent weapon.

Incidentally if you're curious, no, Lord Geryon cares little for this transgression against his worshippers. The preservation of Cheliax's long and convoluted historical revisionism is an interesting curio, but of little importance in the grand scheme of things. Ah pardon, in the "Divine Order", I should say. I do confess to being rather proud of myself for that particular fabrication. What better way to pervert the teachings of Heaven than to integrate them into our grander design?

In any case, this left our heroes with the task of actually conducting the ritual to create the dreaded "Tathlum". How fortunate it was then that upon emerging from their rest, they were greeted by the waiting form of one familiar to them: Atcatraz of the Whisperwood, daughter of Athervox, granddaughter of Gartheris the Wise.

It's been quite some time since her departure, so an explanation may be in order. You see, when Archie returned to the Whisperwood to return one of our flock, she was greeted with a vision. A simple image of her grandfather making a bargain with none other than Lord Geryon. To what end? Might it be that the discoveries of Triaxus and Apostae were not solely of his own doing, or perhaps it was to seek vengeance upon those that stole his naming rights? Is her bloodline's pride built on academic greatness, or submission to an even higher being? Archie is free to ruminate and squirm on the subject. Can't have her being too comfortable, after all.

The more immediately pertinent detail however, was the price paid for this ambiguous service. Gartheris was given a "gift". Something he had to keep within himself for safekeeping. In time, he passed it on to his firstborn daughter, and she in turn passed it on to Arcatraz, where it resides to this day. The nature of this thing is to obfuscate and destroy, as is Lord Geryon's nature, and a part of the wards placed to contain it is to blame for Archie's noticeable lack of draconic features. So long as she remains the unwitting vessel of Geryon's gift, her true nature will be alien to her.

As you can imagine, little miss Archie did try to unravel the mystery of this gift. Unfortunately for her, it is not so easily grasped by those that have not embraced it of their own volition, so it is quite impossible for her to know unless The Serpent wills it. That being said, Archie is a very smart girl, and she tried ever so hard. It was a truly admirable effort, worthy of some reward. Thus, she was granted a small epiphany. For Archie to have found the worship of her Lord independently of his deal with her family was too convenient to be a coincidence. Therefore, it stood to reason that other

“coincidences” may also be suspect. Why does her family reside so close to a gate to Hell? Why too is the region so rich in ley lines and why did she take such an interest in them? The Lord of the Fifth keeps many inscrutable secrets and has made many enemies, so perhaps there is a reason that he would leave something in the guardianship of powerful beings nestled in a place of planar and occult significance?

Naturally, she'll never uncover the real answer on her own, though it is ever so fun to watch a brilliant mind struggle against its own fundamental limitations, is it not?

But I digress. There remains the ever so critical question of what the dragon scion will do with this information. She could follow the family trend and cure herself of her frail prison of flesh by passing the gift on to the next member of her bloodline. Typically that would require finding a mate, but as fortune would have it, Archie was blessed with a suitable vessel quite recently in the form of young Timaeus, the infant dragon age found at the Winter Grove. The specimen is perfectly suited to take on the blessing, more so even than Archie. Ask me not why we went with the immaculate conception route. That particular mandate was outsourced to another department of Dis.

Surely, any reasonable soul would understand that Hell's desire is that she pass her gift to this custom vessel, delivered by Lord Asmodeus himself, then that she nurture it into a being befitting of the power it holds...

But since when have we expected mortals to be reasonable?

Why should Arcatraz devote herself to the betterment (or damnation) of another, when she can take that power for herself? Can a dragon deny her own greed, even when it might obliterate her? As a ritualist, she knows that she now has the means to accept the gift earnestly. She need only deliver it into a fresh vessel, then consume it once more, this time of her own volition. Lord Geryon is ever so fond of devouring as a means of gaining power. Surely such an act would be to his liking.

To spare yourself in the name of damning another to greatness, or to seize that greatness for yourself, no matter its cost.

Decisions, decisions.

We will soon see the conclusions Miss Archie has reached, and some of their consequences. But first, she needs to hijack a certain ritual, and for that to happen the Agents of Thrune must secure the necessary materials. To that end, there is still one room of the Archive that has not been plundered...

24/01/12 - Session 65 - Dragon's Descent

Wealdy, 16th Kuthona, Archive of Redacted Histories, Warlock Island

Participants: Dominus (Justin)

The creation of the tathlum would require certain resources we did not possess, but we ascertained that they could still be found in the last wing of the Archives we had not yet examined. My companions went forth to seek them out, while I chose to remain and see to it that the Hellknights of the Glyph were given a proper ceremony for the death of their order. It was decreed that they must be sacrificed for the greater Path, and they took to their end nobly. That at least was worthy of proper acknowledgement. I pray that their souls will be of further service to the Divine Order in death, as they were in life.

As I was later told, the others found the last wing of the archive to be populated by two "spellgorgers", sentient floating orbs of congealed magical energy. These beings were debating the merits of preparing magical contingencies. An interesting discussion, to be sure. A contingency is, in essence, a preparation made for a potential outcome one may not foresee. Personally, I have little need for them, for I know that my path is guided by the Divine Order. At any given moment, Order has already determined what must happen.

That being said, what if a preparation is itself part of that plan? Perhaps then, a contingency is a representation of the gap in our awareness when compared to forces beyond us. The Divine Order is all-knowing, while lesser beings are not. Then, we could understand contingencies as blindly acting in accordance with the Divine Order's will before we can see that will's manifestation. This would make a contingency not an act of doubt, but rather, of trust. Of faith that an anticipatory action will eventually bear fruit.

I suspect Father Dexsius understands this, given his large collection of scrolls to anticipate any circumstance that might arise. This is why I was not surprised to hear that he used his magic to obliterate one of the oozes, specifically the one that argued against contingencies, while permitting the other to depart. There is value in purging those that do not see the value of trust. Those that sow doubt are corrupting influences, and an affront to the harmony of the Divine Order.

For their troubles, my companions were greeted with the last remnants of the Archive of Redacted Histories. The last wing contained some scholarly tomes of magic, as well as a few remaining records of Cheliox's history that no longer served the purposes of Order. The Ashes of History we had accumulated were sufficient, so there was no need to destroy what remained. Paraduke Kennari opted to retain these for personal reasons. He is someone who

had the privilege of witnessing first hand Chelixa's ascension as a nation in service to the Divine Order, so his nostalgia for such records is understandable, albeit a little eccentric.

The ritual materials lay within a secret chamber that was easily found with Mister Kezax's keen perception. In there they also found a font that bolstered memory. An interesting magical tool, but not one for which we had need. Perhaps it, along with the Archives, might be restored one day to serve a new purpose. I doubt Lord Geryon would see his gifts wasted.

Speaking of Lord Geryon's gifts, the Archives held one more for us. According to Miss Arcatraz, a short ways from the main structure lay an ancient ritual circle, ideal for the creation of the tathlum. The site was somewhat damaged, but still very serviceable. An interesting feature was that a "watcher" could stand guard over the ritual to create a containment barrier of sorts. It was a helpful mechanism to prevent anything from escaping the ritual area. Much as I might have wished to participate in the ritual, I took on the role of observer to maintain the barrier, while Mister Kezax kept a closer guard where he might be more mobile. The others, each gifted with magical ability, conducted the ritual. In a sense, I played the part of a contingency. Amusing, given the earlier thoughts.

The tathlum ritual was long, but essentially simple. Between prolonged chants and incantations, each participant took a turn dipping the dragon's skull into the Infernal quicklime solution, coating it in a new layer while imbuing their own will into the concoction. Each participant was to offer up something personal, a desire or strong destructive emotional force with which to bolster the effect.

Miss Zylstra was first. She invoked a desire to inflict pain and misery. I did not know her to be particularly sadistic by nature, though it came as no surprise. Her words rang true, and the solution was all the more vicious for it.

Next was Father Dexsius. Ever the devout Asmodean, he called upon the Lord of Hell, and infused his own divine magic into the ritual. The effect was potent, causing the solution to emanate the gloriously oppressive heat of the Pit.

After him was Paraduke Kennari. The words he spoke were subtle at first, though I was blessed with the awareness to decipher them. He spoke of General Gorthoklek of Her Infernal Majestrix's service, imbuing the skull with hatred and resentment for him. To invoke the name of a Pit Fiend is no small thing, and the solution seemed to respond well to the ambition to outshine such a powerful being.

Ser Quintus spoke of his family in Kintargo. Regrettably, the city has fallen to misguided vermin, and to this day, the poor man remains unaware of what became of his kin. At best, they fell honourably in defence of their home, but even so, there has been no message of closure, only the frustration of uncertainty. This frustration now fuelled the tathlum.

The last stage of the ritual was left to Miss Arcatraz. Throughout the ritual, she conducted herself with great skill, as one might expect from a specialist in ritual magic. She contained the energies each participant offered to the tathlum with unmatched discipline and focus, but when she finally made her approach, her demeanour changed. She offered not only the skull, but also the young dragon Tīmaeus, to the magical concoction. That she would so readily use the child as a component of the ritual was unexpected, though upon reflection, made perfect sense. The creature was a gift offered miraculously by Lord Asmodeus himself through an Infernal ritual, so it was perfectly appropriate that to complete the cycle of his existence, he must be offered back through yet another ritual.

The result was wondrous to behold! In a reaction befitting a weapon of extraordinary power, the solution sent out a wave of energy so immense that even I, well distanced from the centre of the ritual, was struck by its pressure. Then, two very interesting events occurred. The first was that a phantasmal figure of the gold dragon Parmoneryx emerged. Had it not been for the barrier I was maintaining, it might have shot out to the very heavens! The second was that the small Tīmaeus, imbued with the blessed energies of the tathlum solution, was transformed into a full fledged Infernal dragon!

For the ritual to be complete, both dragons needed to be subdued. To that end, my companions acted swiftly. Miss Archie took on her dragon form and immediately set upon Parmoneryx above, while the others focused their attentions on Tīmaeus below. Each beast made for a fearsome challenge, but clever applications of debilitating magic kept them from unleashing their full potential. Mister Kezax's bolt disrupted Tīmaeus' Infernal energies quite effectively, whereas Ser Quintus anchored Parmoneryx's spectral form so that its mobility would be further restricted, forcing him to contend with Miss Archie's aggressions. Each member in turn did their part in weakening and tearing away at the dragons, with every strike taming the power that would give the tathlum its strength.

Ultimately, Tīmaeus would fall first, weakened significantly by Paraduke Kennari, Father Dexsius, and Ser Quintus. Mister Kezax would strike the final blow upon his former charge, a ritual infanticide on behalf of the young dragon's mother. With the Infernal dragon suppressed, all turned their attention to Parmoneryx's ghost. Each strike of magic and projectile lessened the spiritual being, but ultimately, it was Miss Archie that thrust herself upon the spirit. By dispersing the magical essences that formed the phantom, the energies could once more reform into the tathlum, the gold dragon's glorious essence, once

used to serve Lady Iomedae, would be given new life! Miss Archie was wise not to hold back against such strength. So great was her exertion that it sent her and the phantom plummeting to the swamplands below, near where Timaeus' remains lay.

It had not been the first time I had seen Miss Archie consume a sapient being. I have long accepted that it is a facet of her nature to do so. Given her worship of Lord Geryon, it seemed as much a matter of spirituality as it was of convenience or personal taste. This time however... It was immediately clear that the consumption of her adoptive son bore a significance beyond that of familial sacrifice. In that moment, the Divine Order whispered the truth to me. The ritual Miss Archie conducted served a second purpose, not only to concentrate and redistribute power into the tathlum, but also to concentrate and redistribute power into herself. More accurately, it was to unlock a power that had always resided within her. One she has long sought, that I could always sense within her.

The spark of Divine Order within Arcatraz would finally be unshackled in that moment.

This power... Was beautiful to behold. Miss Arcatraz had always spoken in no uncertain terms of her draconic heritage, despite her humanoid appearance. Now at last, her true nature, not merely as a dragon, but as a draconid blessed by Infernal might, was on display for all to see. The strength and elegance of her apotheosis could not be a better representation of the Divine Order's supreme grace, manifested in physical form.

Truly, it was an honour and privilege to witness such a grand evolution.

As for the tathlum, its creation was supremely successful. The weapon exudes glorious force that causes one to shudder with its mere existence. To look into the skull's eyes is to glimpse into the righteous cleansing it will bring.

So strong was the ritual's potency that even the residual energies of the quicklime solution still held power as a catalyst. Father Dexsius saw an opportunity to make use of the materials and placed a unicorn horn within. What emerged was an excellent conduit tool for life energy. Mister Kezax also thought to dip a crossbow bolt into the solution, a wise method of increasing the strength of his weapon.

In conclusion, the ritual had been a success befitting the Divine Order's design, far grander than anything that those ignorant of such a mandate could fathom. We shall soon make our return to Egorian with news of our achievement. Then, perhaps, we shall be graced with the privilege of finally ending the infection that plagues our blessed lands...

HV6 - Hell Comes to Westcrown

24/01/19 - Session 66 - The Crown's Contingency

Fireday, 18th Kuthona, Egorian, The Heartlands

Participants: Queen Abrogail II (Justin)

Though we do not acknowledge it openly, we find ourselves in a dire predicament. One that requires measures we have thus far avoided, but that can no longer be neglected.

In but a few short months, enemies and incompetent fools have repeatedly tried our patience. Dissident zealots have ravaged our nation over a paltry magic blade, an unpleasant relation bungled his exile so extraordinarily that it cost us an entire Archduchy, and those sycophants of the Church of Asmodeus openly attempted to subvert our authority. Alone, each of these problems could be addressed with little cause for concern. For them to all happen simultaneously is either misfortune of the highest order, or a conspiracy so grand that it surpasses the means of even our greatest competitors. We suspect that our Infernal benefactors have a hand in these machinations, but this, we cannot prove. Naturally, our own aides remain stoic when presented with the notion.

Though we find ourselves inconvenienced, we are nevertheless far from incapable of addressing the issue. The loss of Ravounel by means of the Kintargo Contract was disappointing to say the least, but it did present an intriguing opportunity. The contract defines a manner in which an individual can secure a stronghold which cannot be infringed upon by anyone that wishes to continue to receive the support of Hell. This impedes us as a nation, as we cannot directly interfere with Ravounel without nullifying our Infernal Contract. For us personally however, it can serve as a template for a similar contingency. As our great-grandmother once secured herself a backdoor to escape, should she find herself betrayed, we might do so ourselves. The difference is that we can iterate and improve upon our ancestor's legacy. It would not be the first time that we have done so. Abrogail I damned herself and her family, but we damned the nation. The Kintargo Contract is flawed, in that it offers little means for the exiled in question to retake Chelias thereafter. We will ensure that if the time comes, such a feat is not only possible, but assured.

Conveniently, the Glorious Reclamation insurrectionists provided us with the second ingredient for this project. When we offered the soul of Chelias to Lord Asmodeus, our definition was very carefully worded. Key technicalities ensured that Westcrown would be permitted a certain degree of freedom from Infernal influence. At the time, this was owing to limitations relating to its dedication to Aroden. Though deceased, the god and his successor held enough sway to make Westcrown's damnation a challenging prospect. We were content to let the city rot in obscurity until such a time that we could find a purpose for it. Unbeknownst to the Reclamation, they gave us just that. Their seizure of the territory within Chelias's borders broke the tenuous balance of power over that forsaken city, giving us legitimate means to seize and reconsecrate it. The documents we had Temoni retrieve confirmed as much.

When we called upon the contract devil Odexidie, the very same architect of great-grandmother's gambit, he seemed amused, but not surprised, by our proposal. Evidently Hell recognised the situation just as we had. Even more interesting was the intercession of a third party, an apostate devil named Vipostix. We recognised this to be the one to which Dominus Fex was bound. His offer of support was well worth the comparatively meagre cost he requested. We would have little use for the upstart Cansellarion or the Iomedaeon artefact.

In accordance with our agreement, the drafting of the Westcrown Contract will commence, and will be completed pending a few key tasks.

First, the siege on Citadel Rivad would be lifted. This is not a stipulation of the contract, but rather a tactical choice to simplify future tasks. Our informants confirmed that the crusaders foolishly dedicated the bulk their military strength to this endeavour, meaning a well placed strike would devastate our enemy's numbers while indebting the Hellknights of the Rack to us. The tathlum our agents have recently procured for us will serve as a useful tool for this purpose.

Second, our agents will perform the necessary rituals to rededicate Westcrown to Asmodeus, setting the groundwork for the contract's stipulations, and guaranteeing the city a steady influx of Infernal forces to support its seizure in our name.

Third, eliminate the Glorious Reclamation, and secure Heart's Edge and Alexeara Cansellarion, living soul and mind intact. Once secured, the weapon and woman may be left in the care of Dominus Fex, as Vipostix's intermediary. May whatever horrors they inflict upon her reflect the punishment she deserves at our hand for the trouble she has caused.

Once these tasks are complete, we shall see to it that Westcrown's power structure is rebuilt in accordance with our needs, and populated by those we know to be trustworthy. To that end, we shall begin with the bound agents we have sent to complete these labours.

When we sent Paraduke Temoni Kennari to assist our agents at Citadel Dinyar, we thought little of it. That choice has returned dividends, as he is a better field agent than anticipated. He has served our family diligently since the time of my great-grandmother, and we believe him to hold a long standing unrequited love for her. We suspect that same feeling has extended to us, as he sometimes fails to recognise the difference between ancestor and descendant. That sentimentality blinds him at times, but does ensure that his loyalty is unimpeachable. Despite his attachment, his judgement is sound and his skills ample, and we will not deny a certain comfort in the familiarity. We need merely recognise him for his worth, and he shall do what we require.

Archpriest Dexsius Oscellus, by Temoni's account, is a capable and ambitious priest. We know from his records within the Church of Asmodeus that he has often been denied positions of higher power, owing in no small part to his Infernal taint. His actions to denounce Luthon Malix in our court, in direct defiance of the Grand High Priestess, suggest that he may well be a useful means to redefine the Church of Asmodeus. The religious authority of Egorian has long used Westcrown to exile its undesirables. Let our city then become the training ground for a new, more amenable clergy. If Dexsius can recognise the opportunity, then perhaps he is worthy of our patronage.

We did not think it worth our time to consider Ser Quintus Tanessen, but recent events in Ravounel have reframed his potential. The Tanessens are not only a Ravounese family, but one of the houses capable of ratifying a Lord-Mayor in Kintargo. As such, he may yet hold a key to reclaiming our rebel Archduchy. At the very least, he might allow us to subvert the Kintargan branch. Presently, the boy is clearly inept at courtly matters, but with Temoni's instruction, he may yet prove a useful asset. The boldness with which the boy made the request to retain his noble title, awkward as it was, showed some promise at least.

Having now met with the voice of his "Divine Order", Archbaron Dominus Fex's nature has become abundantly clear to us. We commend Vipostix for his work; we have not encountered a mind so thoroughly twisted in its fundamental understanding of the world. Temoni asserted that Dominus views me as the rightful claimant to the mandate of Hell on Golarion, which assures his complete loyalty, contingent on us not losing that mandate. We recognise therefore that he is to be treated, first and foremost, as an agent of Vipostix. For now, that is sufficient to make use of him, but it remains to be seen if that is an alliance that can endure. We shall take precautionary measures nonetheless, though in truth the puppet is little more than a psychotic brute masquerading as a sophisticate. He is easy to subvert when one understands this. His patron is the far greater threat.

This leaves the last and greatest variable among our bound agents. Arcatraz, daughter of Athervox, and her entourage are an unexpected ally. Naturally, our nation's previous conflicts with her mother and grandfather lead us to be sceptical of her intentions, and her irreverence makes clear that she does not view her role as subservient. However, she has shown no trace of deceit, save her modifications to the tathlum ritual, which she disclosed and which ultimately served our ends as well as hers. During our briefing of the Westcrown mission, she spoke of spoils. We doubt that greed is her sole motivation, so we have tasked Temoni with investigating further.

The dragon alone is a threat, but her entourage of kobolds are themselves not insignificant. The one they call Kezax is not one to draw attention to himself, quite the contrary in fact, but his cunning and skill were made evident on more than one occasion, as were Zylstra's. Our understanding is that these agents are unwavering in their support of their mistress, so subverting their loyalty is unlikely. They will need to be accounted for, should the need for action arise. We shall also require our espionage countermeasures to be significantly bolstered. To have our private conversation eavesdropped upon within a secured chamber is simply unacceptable.

While perhaps not ideal in their specifications, these agents have proven on multiple occasions their value to us, and their pledges mean that direct opposition to us is all but impossible. We've already gone to great lengths to ensure Temoni's loyalty. As for the others, we expect that the Paraduke's guidance and the boons we can offer them will be sufficient.

If not, then so be it. Finding suitable replacements would be tedious, but far from impossible.

24/01/19 - Session 66 - Claims of Caina

Fireday, 18th Kuthona, Caina, Hell

Participants: Vipostix (Justin)

Mortals are such pitiful creatures. They always seem so sure that they are in control of their own destinies, that their choices are their own. They rarely even stop to consider all of the pieces at play, all the little nudges and influences that truly shift the world one way or another. They are incapable of understanding that they are all pawns, from the lowest peasant to the grandest empress.

In fact, the higher one thinks themselves on the ladder, the more amusing it is when the reality of their fragile little lives comes crashing down.

In spite of his arrogance, or rather, because of it, Vice Barrister Odexidie was an ideal engineer for the chastisement of House Thrune. The impetuous phistophilus has been looking for an excuse to expose his work on the Kintargo Contract for a century. Barzillai's ridiculous ambitions offered him the perfect opportunity to do so. How inconvenient that this subversion would come at a time when Cheliax was embroiled in another rebellion, and would be unable to respond appropriately. For so many things to happen at a time when Abrogail thought herself at the height of her power... When she thought herself above even Hell itself.

For their kind to think this a coincidence is proof of their utter foolishness. Infernals do not deal in chance. Only the certainty that comes with the predictability of the ignorant. In this, even a Queen is no different than a pauper.

Our design was elegant. A small group of outcasts and deviants, born of Cheliax's rotting bosom, but shunned by the establishments they cling to. We gave these outcasts gifts, the talents they would need to seize power for themselves, but linked these gifts to service they will not and cannot object to. A little nudge here. A whisper there... The right words in the wrong place. These are all the ingredients needed to create people who will alter the world to suit our needs, be it the "heroes" that will save Cheliax, or the overstepping officials that will fragment it.

Some of you less versed in our mechanisms may be confused by our intentions. I do not begrudge your limited minds. For you, I will keep it simple. It is not our wish for our favoured nation to fall. Rather, we must remind the mortals of their place in our arrangement. House Thrune and the Church have grown so bloated with self-importance that they have forgotten who they serve and where their value lies. Their pride grew excessive, even for our purposes, and so they needed a dose of humility. Barzillai Thrune, Darellus Fex, and Luthon Malix were weeds that grew from such an environment, where arrogance leads one to believe a mortal can know better than us our designs. These were weeds that we cultivated, until they could not be ignored. When faced with a clear and present danger, House Thrune thought themselves capable of trusting such weeds to aid them, as though they were immune to the follies of mortal ambition. In this, they have received an awakening.

This is merely the first step, however. Aware of the problem, our vassals must then be reeducated. They must know where to put their trust. This is when an opportunity must present itself. A solution not previously known, with proof of its success. If Abrogail the First could secure a pocket of safety from those that would stab her in the back, why not the Second? All it would take is the cost of a city.

Westcrown has eluded us for far longer than I care for. I've made much of my career on the systematic seizure and corruption of the Inheritor's "gifts". The emergence of Heart's Edge is what brought this conflict into my sphere of interest, after all. When it became known that the leader of the so called

“Glorious Reclamation” supposedly receives the words of Iomedae in her ears, that the mortal pretender god would have the AUDACITY to use MY methods to craft a champion?! Cheliah’s bonds to us should make such an incursion impossible, in all save a few places. Those final bastions not yet under the full control of Hell.

The City of Twilight clings to Aroden like an orphaned child clings to a dead parent, unwilling to acknowledge that it seeks comfort in a corpse. It is pathetic, but that desperation does grant his herald some sway. Just enough for Heaven to engineer such a pitiful scheme against us. What they do not realise is that this has given us a wonderful opportunity. Our vassals, alone and desperate, will seize Westcrown, and rededicate this bastion of Man to something more tasteful. We grant our beneficiaries the privilege to give this to us, and in return, we will receive the mortal god’s favoured pawn as well as her blade. We gain a city, a chosen one, an artefact, and the deepened subservience of our vassal, while Heaven loses what little hold it had on our chosen territory.

To think, Abrogail believes it is her idea. Such is the folly of mortals.

24/01/26 & 24/02/02 - Session 67 & 68 - A Broken Siege

Starday, 19th Kuthona, Citadel Rivad, Longmarch

Participants: Dominus (Justin)

Prior to embarking on my quest, my experience with the Hellknights was that of a distant admirer of their philosophy. Their commitment to preserving Justice and Order against the unending tides of chaos and heresy is an ideal I've always held in high regard. That is to say nothing of my appreciation for the Godclaw's keen understanding of the greater religious realities that form the Divine Order, a reality few others truly grasp.

It is, therefore, a true sign of my favour and the righteousness of our mission that we've found ourselves aiding no less than four of these Orders, two lesser and two greater. Our assistance to the Order of the Pike established the union between these noble hunters and my family's holdings. Liberating the Order of the Glyph from their watch was instrumental in setting the groundwork for Chelixa's glorious new future. Though lesser Orders, these contributions were still significant in their own right, and personally gratifying.

Our deeds in service to the greater Orders however, speak to the more fundamental pillars of our struggle against corruption. To retake Citadel Dinyar from the lost sheep was a pivotal step in restoring the proper hierarchy of the faiths, and in doing so purging the false narratives of the Reclamation heretics from the sacred lands of Chelixa. That blow effectively isolated these wayward souls to a single pocket, the city of Westcrown.

The wise choice for the heretics would have been to realise their falsehood and disperse, but in their deluded pride, they instead sought to try their hand at yet another citadel, this time Rivad. In my understanding of the Divine Order, I cannot help but see the symbolism here: if the restoration of the Godclaw represented a spiritual salvation, then the restoration of the Rack shall represent mental salvation. The Reclamation heretics, in all their delusion, must grasp with their minds the futility of their rebellion, and what better way to do that than to eradicate their standing army?

Our arrival in the outskirts of the citadel was marked with overcast skies, a perfect shroud for us to approach unseen and judge our adversary. Paraduke Kennari was gracious enough to supply us with a suitable magic abode to shelter us, while Mister Kezax undertook the valuable task of gathering intelligence on the sieging force.

Mister Kezax's cunning infiltration is a feat very few could accomplish. The army clearly had some measure of discipline in its methods, and no doubt anticipated our appearance. To

sneak in from a supply wagon, distract the sentries with a broken wheel, and then navigate each of the camps... Were it not for the sheer duration of the infiltration and the attentiveness of the more seasoned soldiers, Mister Kezax may well have sabotaged the entire camp by himself! However, to identify the specialities and supplies of each camp and to escape without drawing significant alert was more than impressive enough. It gave us ample information with which to make our next move.

Given the placement of the camps, we chose the deployment location for the tathlum carefully. Our sacred weapon would strike at the heart of the most seasoned and crucial support troops, leaving only the remnants of the inexperienced soldiers and devil hunters to reckon with the aftermath. Given their lack of anti-air defences, the actual deployment could be left to Miss Arcatraz with little concern.

The detonation was a sight to behold! To witness the righteous fury invoked by our ritual unleashed... Never before have I seen such immense concentrated power! Were one not aware of the true source, it would be easy to assume it a smite from the gods themselves. In some capacity, that is not far from the truth, as few can claim to be so closely representative of the Divine Order's will on this plane. Nevertheless, the bulk of the forces were instantly cleansed. Given the specific blessings bestowed upon the device, I have confidence that their souls have been sent to Hell for proper rehabilitation. An expedient solution, to be sure! As for the remainder, the spirits of divine retribution that emerged from the tathlum's fallout made short work assimilating them. Although I recognised these creatures to not be inherently Orderly by nature, the tathlum's Infernal energies no doubt ensured that these manifestations served the Divine Order in their own right. Thus, they could be safely left to their own devices.

This suited us well, for as the body of the lost lamb lay shorn and butchered, the rest of us attended to the head, that being the command tent perched a distance away from the fighting force.

These leaders of heresy had the foresight to prepare for our arrival upon witnessing the tathlum's brilliance, but they could not in their foolishness anticipate our strength. Miss Archie's acid interrupted their dwarven rider, while Mister Kezax severed and stripped the celestial protections of the commander's sworn shield archon. This granted Father Dexsius the means to attempt something rather ambitious: he would steal the heart of the archon, and use this theft and his most powerful scroll to pledge the creature to Asmodeus. I've heard of a similar act once before, in a rather infamous event during the Fifth Mendevian Crusade. In truth, even I did not expect such a thing to be possible by mortal hands, but a soul blessed by the pinnacle representative of the Divine Order and infused with the very fabric of the Infernal can hardly be considered a typical mortal.

So it was that the archon Othiel ascended to a higher being, dedicated to the Divine Order in a manner his fragile soul could never accomplish before. Such a marvellous gift! The other leaders were not so fortunate. The dwarven knight would ride his last in a futile attempt at a charge, and Miss Archie would pluck the commander from the battle entirely, a prisoner for us to interrogate at a later time. The remaining soldiers fell in short order, unable to do more than lash out in desperation at Father Dexsius. Of the three that remained after this folly, two saw the error of their ways and surrendered themselves, while one last fool clung to his delusions. Paraduke Kennari's summoned erinyes saw to the two seeking salvation, while he personally obliterated the last.

Thus, in one night, we have eliminated all but the final grasping remnants of the Reclamation heresy. We need but complete the ritual to dedicate Westcrown to its true masters and remove the last remaining fragments of pestilence, and then finally, Chelixa may heal in earnest.

But first, we should pay a visit to the Citadel...

24/04/06 - Session 69 - The Rack Extracted

Starday, 19th Kuthona, Citadel Rivad, Longmarch

Participants: Dominus (Justin)

Citadel Rivad is undoubtedly an impressive structure befitting the Order that holds it. The Hellknights of the Rack bear the unenviable burden of combatting dissenting thought and belligerence within Avistan. Among their enemies lie not only those who commit heresy, but those that may unknowingly be walking towards that path. As one who understands all too well the fickleness of the mind and the dangerous appeal of curiosity, it is an understandably difficult mandate to maintain. It is for that reason that I've always held a great respect for the Order of the Rack, second only perhaps to the Godclaw.

Some might think there is an irony that the new Lictor of the Rack is of the Signifiers, an uncommon occurrence among most Orders. However, this strikes me as an eminently logical approach. Magic can hold immense sway over the thoughts of the unsuspecting, so it is only natural that an Order based on the cleansing of ideas have a profound understanding of that facet. This aside, Lictor Darcyne Wrens comports herself with all of the authority and poise one ought to for such an important role.

Her wisdom was apparent when she welcomed our group to the Citadel readily, swift to secure the captured Knight Commander for further interrogation as she briefed us on the situation in the region. Regrettably, the siege limited what intel they could provide, though Lictor Wrens at least supplied us with the names of those most important foes we must vanquish to eliminate the false power structure in Westcrown.

By the Lictor's account, the Reclamation's heretical leader, Alexeara Cansellarion, has surrounded herself with powerful and noteworthy followers. She spoke of the woefully corrupted priestess of Iomedae, Bellinia Dorjana. To think that a descendent of pious royalty would fall so low emphasises the depths of this festering wound in the Divine Order. Another was the dwarven oracle Gardel Vargrinnar. He is an old friend of the Cansellarion family, and thus was likely led astray well before the Reclamation took shape. Vors Kyniar, the Taldan ambassador to Chelixa, was also implicated as a heretic sympathiser, which explains Our Highness' desire to see him returned to the capital before he might inflict further damage through his diplomatic channels.

The corrupted consisted not only of mortals, however. Aveshiel and Maraya, a planetar and brijidine azata respectively, count among the ranks of the Reclamation heretics. Azatas, being the pests that they are, are an understandable presence among the corrupt, but to hear

that such a significant warrior of justice also stood among them was disheartening. For this folly to reach so high into Heaven's ranks, I can only fathom the depths of the surgery we must complete to remove this infection...

Fortunately, not all of the names spoken were foes. Lictor Wrens provided us with some valuable information regarding potential allies. The High Priest of Asmodeus, Jarvaxus Garectic, was among the first to be proposed. Our Queen also spoke of him, and it would seem Father Dexsius knows of his name as well, so perhaps there is some merit in rescuing this priest. She also indicated that several major houses remain intact in Westcrown to her knowledge, some of which may simply be biding their time to support an initiative against their captors. Last among the list, the Lictor spoke of one of her own, Paralictor Gonville Chard. When last they communicated a few days ago, Taranik House, the Rack base of operations in the city proper, was under assault, and though the Lictor feared the worst, she suspected the Paralictor would be shrewd enough to evade capture and execution. Being an agent within the city, Paralictor Chard may indeed be a valuable source of information on the Reclamation's workings.

This being said, all of this knowledge paled in comparison to the rumour Lictor Wrens shared with us. A detail that if true, completely alters the nature of this inquisition and my very role in this service of the Divine Order: it is said that Alexeara Cansellarion is spoken to by Iomedae directly.

This rumour bears similarities with one I had previously heard of Queen Galfrey of Mendev, an admirable figure that worked tirelessly to combat the wretched demons of the Abyss in the far North. These stories are often dismissed as absurdities, but I know them to be true, for it is a gift I share in as well. To be blessed with the voice of the divine is something very few can fathom, even among the learned and the wise.

If this is what Lady Cansellarion is experiencing, perhaps her misguided crusade is simply indicative of some flaw in her understanding? Or perhaps it is not, and this rebellion bears a greater significance? The machinations of the Divine Order are often complex, far too complex for mortal comprehension. In such circumstances, faith must guide us, and my spirit tells me that there is a Truth here that I Must uncover.

My contemplations would have to wait for after more material objectives were resolved though, as we had set our sights on our next objective: the rescue of Paralictor Chard and the first sacrifice in the rededication of Westcrown. Father Dexsius remained in the Citadel, preoccupied with stabilising the purification magic he had performed upon the shield archon Othiel, while the rest of us set off.

It is too infrequent that I praise our dear Paraduke Kennari. His magical acumen has been endlessly convenient in ensuring us both swift and comfortable travel, allowing us to focus our efforts on the tasks at hand with neither distraction nor delay. It is for this reason we permitted him a brief moment to lament the state of the city that was once his residence. The Paraduke had not returned to Westcrown in decades, and could only remark that the once beautiful jewel of the Chelaxian Empire was but a pitiful shadow of its former self. It is fortunate then that we have arrived, heralds of its rebirth and rejuvenation!

Mistr Kezax, ever the capable scout, took point in investigating Taranik House. The office had been struck fiercely. No doubt the Reclamation heretics feared what the Rack might do in response to their crimes, and launched an unprovoked attack with disproportionate force. These are the only circumstances in which a righteous Hellknight can be felled, as we have seen. Nothing of note remained in the mistreated building, so Mister Kezax continued his search. This led us to the Adeletti, a former warehouse that had been repurposed as the guildhall for the ferrymen who navigate the city's many channels. It is there that we would need to make our first sacrifice, and there that we would encounter a situation.

The Adeletti was surrounded by dottari guards attempting to control what was apparently an active hostage situation. Mister Kezax was able to slip past the security barricade and enter the building to learn more. There, he found two iron golems standing guard, and beyond them the sounds of hurried construction and agitated pacing.

A well-placed spell to displace us to Kezax's location brought us within the Adeletti, and face to face with the metallic guardians. We recognised these golems to be of Hellknight make, which made my presence ideal. My gauntlets made clear my place within the Orders, and thus I commanded the guardians to allow us passage into the adjoining room.

Days without food or bath left Paralictor Chard in a less than ideal state, but even then, there was no mistaking his identity as a proper Hellknight. Our mutual recognition made the ensuing discussion very efficient. The man had been instructing one of the ferrymen to repair one of the damaged barges, a means to secure his escape from the city to regroup with his allies in Citadel Rivad. We offered him an alternative: we would transport him directly to the Citadel, and in return, we would use his worker for a greater purpose. The other captives would regrettably be eliminated, so as not to disseminate any information to our foes. Paralictor Chard, sensible as he was, immediately agreed to our proposition.

The ritual was simple enough to conduct, remarkably so, given its potency. Though it was but a small fraction of the true effect, the Infernal energy I felt diffusing itself into the structure of the historic building marked our ritual as powerful magic indeed. The first step towards a truly magnificent reconstitution!

In part bolstered by the ritual, and desiring some measure of righteous retribution for the crimes committed against the Order of the Rack, we opted to confront the dottari directly, rather than flee without incident. By my own estimation, it would not do to leave such corrupt individuals unpunished, lest we give the lost flock a false impression of Justice.

The soldiers sent to capture Paralictor Chard were formidable for their ilk. If nothing else, I can appreciate that the Reclamation heretics have enough sense still to hold the Hellknights in such esteem. However, this was far from enough to prepare them for our presence. Mister Kezax's well-placed bolts, Paraduke Kennari's devastating fire and lightning, Miss Archie's splendid draconic form, and my righteous blade would not be halted by their meagre protections, and their strikes could barely scratch the magnificently clad golems of the Rack. Paralictor Chard, even in his weakened state, joined us long enough to deliver the finishing blow on the last remaining soldier. His blade was not dull as it struck its mark with all the precision I might expect of a disciplined protector of Order.

So it was that we departed, most of us teleporting while Miss Arcatraz carried off the golems in her draconic form. The heretics would know that they could no longer touch the Hellknight Order of the Rack. In time, these paragons of True Law will surely return in full force to repay the debt these lowly criminals have incurred...

24/04/12 - Session 70 - Mortal Marina

Sunday, 20th Kuthona, Citadel Rivad, Longmarch

Participants: Vipostix (Justin)

My dear puppet elected not to join the second sortie for the Pentagram Ritual. Hearing the rumour that Alexeara Cansellarion is a recipient of a god's words piqued his interest enough to merit further conversation with the Knight Commander. All the better that he take some time away from his companions; it will give me more time to refine my control. One of the downsides of creating such a suggestible mind is that it remains susceptible from any source, and I am not fond of sharing. I may well need to keep a close eye until his purpose is served, lest someone try to take him from me.

But fear not, lovely audience. This "splitting of the party" will not deprive you your voyeurism. I'll even grant you the privilege of seeing both perspectives. On that note, let's see what little adventure the Agents of Thrune have embarked on...

With the first point of the ritual complete at the Adeletti, the Agents decided to continue the ritual in a clockwise pattern. It was amusing watching them try to reconcile the fact that they would not be following the order of a pentagram. Ultimately, they decided that a pentacle would be the next best thing, as though this had import. They try so desperately to cling to patterns, like ants unfailingly following the trail set for them. Naturally, we've ample contingencies to ensure that the ritual would succeed regardless of order, but their adherence to known structures is quaintly charming.

What does matter is the significance of these sites. Each tied to a founder of Aroden's faith in Westcrown, and thus, a cornerstone of the dead god's lingering hold on the city. The Adeletti honoured Founder Crucisal, spirit of water travel and patron of the adeliers. The Agents' next destination was the Condottari Marina, where Founder Dotara, the spirit of guardians and patron of dottari, defined the structures of the city watch. Why she chose such a small secluded rock in the middle of the channel, I've never bothered to research, but it serves our purposes well. The Marina was guarded, but hardly by anyone capable of putting up a real fight.

As expected, it was a slaughter, and an entertaining one at that. The elven paraduke appeared before the halfling major and her three condottari in training with all the dramatic flair I would expect from one of Thrune's beloved peons. He lacks the presence of a proper servant of Hell, but his ability to punctuate his taunts with sufficiently powerful magic validates his authority, perhaps even enough to consider him as a future project. Disintegrating the diminutive guardwoman's firearm was a particularly nice touch, though personally I would have used it against her instead and preserved it. The weapon's design was interesting enough to merit inspection. That said, I can hardly complain about the method of execution. The half-blood priest has taken quite a liking to his death clutch magic, and to date the spectacle has not worn out its welcome.

As for the trainees... There are times where I wonder what it must be like for a mortal with such limited vision, to find themselves fired upon by projectiles emanating from invisible forces. These deaths seem so pitiful when one sees as much as I do. From my perspective, the lizard and the would-be noble unleashed volley after volley upon those men with impunity, while all they could do was bob their heads in confusion and make futile attempts to swim to shore in the hopes of not being picked off one by one (which, as one might expect, is exactly what happened).

My favourite part of this charade of a defence was the attempt at an aquatic counter-ambush. That a cetaceal would think she could do anything of value against my agents was as laughable as seeing her be sent right back to her plane as soon as she emerged to confront them. Her summoned elemental soon after met a similar fate and now finds itself wallowing in so much dirt.

The triton servant to the celestial beast fared only marginally better before meeting his demise. In some ways, I could see some parallels between the aquatic sniper and the kobold butler. Their unflinching service to a greater being of planar power, their preference for crossbows... Would that he shared in the ability to be subtle, and perhaps he might not have died so pitifully. An ambush is only worthwhile if the follow through is successful.

So it was, the dockworkers hiding in the marina lost what little protection they had. One was taken for the sacrifice, and the others were made wonderfully awful prey to a swarm of insects. Not the most efficient use of manpower, perhaps, but it certainly punctuated the point. Only servants of Hell will be spared in Westcrown's rebirth.

Now then, shall we see what my dear Dominus was up to?

24/04/12 - Session 70 - Where Only Statues Hear

Sunday, 20th Kuthona, Citadel Rivad, Longmarch

Participants: Dominus (Justin)

As his companions preoccupied themselves with the continuation of their mission in Westcrown, Dominus remained at the Citadel, eager to sate his curiosity.

Endranni Malesk, Knight Commander of the Glorious Reclamation, one of Alexeara Cansellarion's most capable tacticians, and the one tasked with the capture of Citadel Rivad, hung limply in his cell, the chains on his wrists keeping him upright. His body was covered in bruises and welts from prior interrogations, but between his mable skin and the heavenly chorus that seemed to supernaturally surround him, he appeared almost as though some religious monument.

That thought crossed Dominus' mind as he entered the room, chair in hand. There may even be merit to it, in some capacity. He had come seeking spiritual clarity, after all.

Endranni woke when the cell opened, though he did not raise his head to speak.

"Have you come to end this charade, or do you still believe you can draw blood from this stone? You will learn nothing from me."

"I beg to differ. I think there is a great deal I will learn from you."

The new voice was enough to make the prisoner look up, seeing the smiling face of the knight sitting in front of him.

"Ah, the false paladin. The madman who believes himself some kind of chosen one."

"Do you think it wise to taunt those whose mercy you depend on, heretic?"

Endranni spat on the floor. *"Your mercy is as much a mockery as your faith, Fex. I've read enough reports of your deeds to know the kinds of atrocities you commit to those in your 'care'. I'm under no illusions as to my fate. I fear neither death nor damnation. I've done my part to serve our Lady's will. No torture will undo what we've achieved. Hurting me does nothing save validate my accomplishments. So do your worst. I'll take it as a compliment."*

Dominus' smile never wavered, nor did his eyes turn away. It was the unnerving stare that frightened countless people, and for many, was the last sight they had ever seen. *"You misunderstand. I have no intention of harming you. I merely wish to converse. However, you've touched on a subject I am rather interested in. Tell me, just what is it you believe you have accomplished? Your army is eradicated. Any influence your corruption has had on the land has been cleansed. Save for Westcrown, the 'Reclamation', as you call it, is a failure. So, what accomplishments do you speak of?"*

A weak smirk adorned the general's pale lips, though his missing teeth made it somewhat more crooked than it used to be. *"The accomplishment of exposing the Chelish 'Empire' for a poorly supported house of cards. Even if I was not victorious, even if you manage to retake Westcrown... That damage is done. Thrune's empire has been crumbling for decades, but now everyone knows how fragile you truly are."* Spurred by his own words, the prisoner continued with even more vigour, *"Our movement will be the first of many. You've already lost Ravounel. You will surely lose more. Even if there isn't another organised force, the vultures have already begun picking the carcass apart. It's only a matter of time before your nobles and your church turn on each other, before citizens realise that they need not suffer your tyranny and call once more for justice... You've done nothing but delay the inevitable."*

For the briefest of moments, a twinge flicked across Dominus' eerily still smile, though it vanished just as quickly as it came. *"Amusing. I see what you are trying to do. You wish for me to lose my temper and strike at you, to justify to yourself that I am some base creature fuelled by hatred, as you are. But I do not hate you. Your ignorance is repulsive, but it cannot be helped, because you do not understand the world as I do. You do not know the Truth that I know."*

It was faint, but Endranni was clever enough to know when his words struck a chord. Arrogance inserted itself into his disdainful tone. *"Is this where you espouse a sermon your psychotic faith, that you utter your nonsense that the Lady of Valor is somehow the Dark Prince's servitor?"*

A sigh escaped from the servant of the Divine Order, *"No, I would not waste the words of the Divine Order on a wretch so far gone as yourself. Your leader however... This Lady Alexeara Cansellarion. She may yet be deserving of this wisdom."*

The mere mention of his beloved commander's name made the aasimar's blood boil. *"If you believe the Lord Marshal would listen to a single vile word to come out of your mouth, you are gravely mistaken."*

The innocence on Dominus' face may well have been feigned or genuine, few other than himself would know which it was. *"But why not? She is already privy to the Holy Word, is she not?"*

"Do not even dare to compare your psychosis with her!" Endranni's voice increased to a shout, *"Lord Marshal Cansellarion is a true conduit of the divine, not some pretender like you! It is the Inheritor herself whose will she channels!"*

"Then it is true. Lady Iomedae truly guides the hand of this mortal soul?" The false paladin leaned in, eager for the next response.

Overtaken by emotion, the Knight Commander hardly noticed that he had played into his captor's hand. He wished only to wipe the smile off of the vile being's face. *"Yes. I've seen it myself. The woman is blessed, and with our Lady guiding her, the Lord Marshal will surely end your miserable heresy!"*

The response Endranni Malesk received however, was not dread, nor frustration. Rather, it was joy. The man sitting opposite him, who eagerly participated in tyranny and torture, had the unmistakeable look of immense jubilation.

"Such wonderful news... Wonderful!", Dominus affectionately patted the prisoner's shoulder, as one would a companion, "Truly, I must thank you, lost lamb... To learn of this is a true blessing!"

"Only a madman or someone who seeks absolution would rejoice at the promise of their own destruction... I pity you." The knight commander could only look in confusion and concern. It was a look Dominus had seen all too many times from the priests on his pilgrimage.

The servant of the Divine Order sat back down in his chair, his exuberance tamed somewhat, *"Your failure to see the Truth is vexing, but you have given me a gift, and merits reward. Speak then, how have you come to pity me?"*

"I pity all who have succumbed to the temptations of tyranny. Your short sightedness will be your undoing, all of you. You chose to be loyal to something that has no loyalty towards you. Do you really believe Thrune won't throw you to the dogs the moment it's convenient for them? That Hell will spare you from the agonies of damnation? You will enjoy a brief privilege at the cost of an eternity of suffering, and you will realise far too late that it was a poor deal."

Dominus stroked his chin, as though pondering the words. His impression of a scholar seemed almost comical when one knew of his reputation. *"It is this that separates you and I, heretic. Your thinking is far too narrow and simplistic. You see this as some sort of battle where one side must win and the other must lose. Where power and suffering reside in what one can grasp with their hands or feel with their flesh. This is not the way the world works!"*

"..." Endranni waited in silence, watching the twisted cogs turn in the broken mind before him.

"The Reality of this universe is more akin to a puzzle, or a beautifully intricate machine composed of many fine components, each working in harmony to produce something beautiful and meaningful. What are Heaven and Hell, if not gears that grind in opposition to each other, each necessary to maintain the motion of its counterpart? What is punishment, if not simply a purification of the materials? I do not fear such things, because I am pure, and if I were to receive such a thing, then I would know it is in the service of honing me, as one uses a whetstone on a blade to sharpen it. Do you understand? Divine punishment is only a punishment if one misunderstands its purpose!"

Dominus stood from his chair. He began to restlessly pace around the cell, as though energy was desperate to scape from him.

"I suppose I cannot blame your ignorance. Even I did not fully grasp Order's Will until now. I thought your uprising to be a festering infection, but that is not entirely accurate. You are impurities yes, but the nature of your rebellion is not chaotic, as a malady might be. No, this is a controlled extraction, as one might do to filter out impurities from clean water. I thought you all lost lambs, stampeding without reason, but you had a shepherd after all! I see now that your Lord Marshal truly is the other half to this equation. She is the anvil to my hammer! The one who sets firm the steel of our Empire so that I might

strike it until it is perfectly shaped! She sees the Truth as I do, and we shall complete each other! This is the Divine Order's Will!"

After hearing such a litany, it was all the Knight Commander could do not to weep for the state of the false paladin's deluded mind. *"Dominus Fex, I pray that one day the light of heaven will reach that tortured broken mind of yours, for it is clear to me that you are well beyond any sort of mortal salvation."*

As Dominus' thoughts raced, he barely considered Endranni's words, *"I thank you, but the Divine Order's light shines upon me amply. In fact, as Lady Alexeara has herded you to me as a herald of our joint purpose, it is only appropriate that I complete the ritual to acknowledge the message. For the anvil guides..."*

Dominus' hands raised up, revealing the heavy mace Sinderbos in their grip. Endranni closed his eyes for the last time.

"...and the hammer strikes."

The flaw in the metaphor was not lost on either man. To forge an item with anvil and hammer, it ought to be composed of metal.

Be it made of marble, or bone and flesh, Knight Commander Endranni Malesk's body would ultimately make a poor, and messy, substitute.

24/04/19 & 24/05/03 - Session 71 & 72 - Connect the Diabolical Dots

Moonday, 21st Kuthona, Citadel Rivad, Longmarch

Participants: Vipostix (Justin)

The Pentagram Ritual continued on track. Given the individuals we have sent on this mission, one could hardly expect otherwise.

The remaining points selected for the ritual were the Southrun Eddy and Founder's Peak. Neither are sites of any particular worth beyond historic significance. All the better that they be made useful.

First, the eddy. It could best be described as Westcrown's sewage drain. A current pulls waste from the river into a whirlpool that naturally produces an unsightly accumulation of filth. A fitting metaphor for Westcrown itself. The death of Aroden left a city-sized gaping hole, and that hole has served as a gathering point for refuse and degenerates. Were it not for its significance, I would have preferred that we strike the filthy ruined city from the map and build it anew. Alas, far as Westcrown has fallen, it was once the greatest pillar of the human god's worship, and that gives it worth, even in its decrepit state. Provided, of course, that it is properly cleansed first.

In that respect, the Southrun Eddy is much the same. At one time, the locals made a half-hearted attempt to clean the wretched whirlpool from time to time, but it was hardly enough to deter the immigration of a pack of omox demons. Those disgusting pests saw to the last few band of cleaners, and the effort has been abandoned since. How typical of the lazy Wiscrani, to abandon a site once sacred to their ilk for something so trivial. A properly managed territory would have sent a squadron to blast those nauseating creatures out of existence. Fortunately, Hell keeps its holdings to higher standards. Rest assured, if we create a heap of waste, it is out of intent, not negligence.

As for dealing with the interlopers, there is little to be said. The dragon woman ate one (green dragons do have questionable taste, after all) and the rest were obliterated by magic or projectiles. A savvy demonologist would recognise that omoxes weaponise their noxious bile as their primary form of offence, and such a practice can very easily be denied with simple magical solutions that purify air or avoid the need to breathe entirely. As luck would have it, the priest used just such magic briefly before the fight commenced.

My favoured pet would no doubt call this a brilliant act of prescience by one guided by the great Asmodeus. The Hellspawn priest himself may think something similar. That would be ridiculous of course. Dexsius merely made use of his magic to avoid an unpleasant smell, being the petty and vain man he is and ought to be. He was fortunate enough that it perfectly countered their upcoming foe. This fight was won not by the cunning of mortals, but by the inevitability of their natures. To understand those natures, and then to place them in the correct environments to yield the ideal outcome is how our game is played. It is a game I happen to be exceptional at. Though, I will grant, my pieces give me a modest advantage. Competent minions are a rarity these days.

There was one brief interference just barely worthy of note. In search of a suitable sacrifice, the agents seized a nearby fisherman. Uncouth and unrefined as any fisher, this one, though he had a singular talent for being astoundingly dense and irritating. Simply listening to the man prattle felt as though it were sapping my intellect, even as a distant observer. The agents dispatched him before he could cause any real damage, though they botched the sacrificial ritual in the process, wasting everyone's time and forcing them to find another candidate.

Given the circumstances, it would be reasonable to assume that such an act was some sort of sabotage. Perhaps Iomedae or one of her inane cronies was desperate enough to attempt something, since they could hardly halt the process by force. I might have expected such a ridiculous scheme from the likes of the drunkard god-pretender or that pesky overgrown insect Desna.

And yet, it was neither. Rather, the irritating fisherman was little more than a tasteless jape from the Lantern King, of all things. Why an Archfey would dare to meddle here is beyond me, though most of their behaviours are, truth be told. Even my ability to comprehend foolishness has its limits. Let those absurdist caricatures keep to their First World; they ought to have no place in proper reality.

Well, there is little to be done over such a trivial thing as this. It did nothing but delay the inevitable by an hour or so. Let us hope they make no further attempts to derail this story, or we shall all have to suffer a most tedious tangent as we remind them of their place. None of us want that, I'm sure. This story has already gone on longer than it needs to.

Speaking of, let us take a brief moment to acknowledge the fourth ritual then be on our way. Founder's Peak is located within the olive orchards of the Arthrugge estate. The Arthrugges are a middling noble family known only for their production of luxury oil. When the crusading army arrived, they smelt trouble and promptly left for an extended stay in Isgar. A reasonable course of action for pitiful mortals with only material wealth as any metric of power. The priest considered this an act of heresy and, were it not for the interference of the teacher, would have sent his subordinates to kill them, which is hilariously in character for the zealot. If I didn't know the reason for his continued existence, I'd have to wonder how he wasn't already quietly assassinated by the church for his complete lack of tact. As much could be said for all of these agents really. The ways in which their follies fly in the face of standard decorum do make for great entertainment. It is the only form of chaos I can abide.

Initial reaction aside, the minions did have the sense to intend to spare the orchard of any collateral damage, lest they endanger Egorian's precious supply of olive oil. It was a pledge that makes the ensuing events all the more amusing. You see, that plan changed rather abruptly when they came across a giant ram-shaped animate bush. Being the territorial creature it was, it attacked them, and in the ensuing commotion the peasants swiftly hid in their cellar, hoping to hide from the dragon that apparently roamed onto the premises. The agents took exception to the disrespect.

Well, I suppose they mostly kept to their plan. Only a modest patch of the orchard and all of its caretakers were incinerated or corroded, and a token effort was made to compensate for the destruction. Really, the only measure of restraint was that the manor was still standing and House Arthrugge may survive with only a few ruined harvests. Most likely, our dear Queen will rationalise this as the cost of doing business and find some way to turn backlash into political clout. At times, her ability to twist things to her favour rivals that of my precious Dominus.

It's of little import to me, of course. Egorian could stand to lose a few of its luxuries from time to time. Such scarcities serve us well. You'd be surprised how many nobles are willing to sign away a soul or two for the sake of a few high quality ingredients. Of course, it's never their own, but it serves us all the same. Chelaxian nobles are quite generous when bartering with goods that are not their own.

In any case, that sets things up nicely for the last and most important step of the ritual. Assuming all goes well, and there is no reason it wouldn't, Westcrown will be in our hands by the day's end.

What a wonderful way to celebrate Dies Irae!

24/05/10, 24/05/24, & 24/08/17 - Session 73, 74, & 75 - A New Crown for the West

Moonday, 21st Kuthona, Qatada Nessudidia, Westcrown, Longmarch

Participants: Vipostix (Justin)

The Qatada Nessudidia is a lovely little piece of architecture. Perhaps the only redeeming feature of the festering blemish that is Westcrown. I must give some credit to Founder Vadrus, his crystal light fixture does make for a suitable focal point for what is perhaps one of the grandest seizures of my illustrious career. That the Reclamation would seal away something so grand with such a garrish thing as a rudimentary wall of stone speaks volumes to their lack of culture. Placing a statue of Lymirin on the dais was even further insult. These pitiful attempts at jabs against us lack any elegance or tact.

Nevertheless, the patron of first blood was a suitable spectator for the arrival of our agents.

Now, I could certainly provide a detailed recounting of the battles that ensued, how each soldier of the Inheritor fought in vain and fell before our might, or how a swarm of irritating motes tried again and again in vain to protect its charges, achieving nothing save to be a mild annoyance. I could even include some quips about the dragon of Geryon's apparent contempt for stairs, opting instead to simply bore through the floors...

I could do all this, but I will not. The simple fact of the matter is, ascending the "tree of Nessus" was child's play for Hell's chosen. Maraya, the foolish brijidine, thought amassing some feeble footsoldiers and an overenthusiastic pile of window shards would be enough to so much as slow them down.

Well, that is not entirely true. Maraya knew what was coming and did try desperately to relay a warning to her masters. It's a pity they never saw fit to send her the reinforcements she requested. How utterly unfortunate for her to suffer such a simple miscommunication...

Dear reader, I do hope you've caught on to the sarcasm in my words. Naturally, this was my doing.

You would think followers of a war goddess would better secure their logistics from tampering. Then again, these are the same followers that allowed the likes of an azata into their ranks, so their grasp of structure and security was already questionable at best. I can hardly take credit for sabotage when my opponents are so woefully inept. I still will, of course, but it's a meagre accomplishment.

Maraya herself was ever so moderately more challenging than the rest of her fodder. Truly, the sole reason for that was the gift she had received from her deific patrons. Were the brijidine's flames not bolstered with divine force, it would have been a farce to pit her against Hell's champions. Nevertheless, even with such a gift she was humbled swiftly. Surely, she should have expected a dragon like Arcatraz to attempt to seize her and prepare some countermeasure. Or at least, a countermeasure that had not already been assassinated near the beginning of the fight. How pitiful it was, to spend her last moments being devoured, unable to flee and with her divine boon severed.

A fitting end for one of Elysium's vagrants. Good riddance.

In the process of liberating Lord Asmodeus' place of worship, our agents also had the good fortune of rescuing Westcrown's High Priest, one Jarvaxus Garestic. I'm rather fond of the mortal myself. All the acumen that his father squandered was put to good use in his son by having him serve us directly. He

has enough intelligence to act with only minimal guidance, unlike my dear pet, but nevertheless knows his place well enough not to overstep, unlike so many of the “faithful” in the service of our Lord. It was a stroke of wisdom to place him in Westcrown, where he could be truly useful in organising our seizure of Aroden’s last bastion. In that, he has played his part adequately. No doubt his promise would have swiftly eroded in Egorian’s courts. We have ample sycophants as it is.

Dear reader, I wish to convey how deeply pleased I am with our accomplishment. As you can surely surmise, the Pentagram Ritual was a success, and so it was that on this, the Dies Irae 110 years after the death of the mortal god Aroden, Westcrown was given over to a new master.

Now that it is well and truly ours, there’s just the simple matter of removing the unwanted guests...

24/08/23, 24/09/13, & 24/10/18 - Session 76, 77, & 78 - Order of Operations

Moonday, 28th Kuthona, Qatada Nessudidia, Westcrown, Longmarch

Participants: Vipostix (Justin)

Yes yes, I know it's been a while since I updated this little record. I promise you, it was not on account of any lack of drive on my part. Quite simply put, I was otherwise occupied, and there was fairly little that transpired here that would be worthy of committing to the written word. Despite how my dear puppet so often makes it out to be, not every moment of Our grand designs are particularly glamorous, nor do they all make for harrowing tales or opportunities to provide insight. Nevertheless, I would not wish to leave you, dear reader, with nothing. Fortunately, enough material has now accumulated to be worth my time, and by extension, yours.

One of the boons that comes with completing the Pentagram Ritual is the ability to use it as a focus point for the Inferno Gates. Given that our agents had already secured one such gate, the realignment was quite simple. Now, there is a direct passage from Malebolge to Westcrown, meaning we can accumulate a suitable legion to bring down upon the upstart Iomedaeans. Much of the week was dedicated to this purpose. Now, I cannot say that we are sending our best. After all, this is a mortal affair, and thus needs only minimal investment on our part. Nevertheless, it will be enough to fulfil our end of the bargain. One interesting detail I've heard is that among the forces there are signs of some of green draconic influence. No doubt Gartheris' prolonged proximity to the gate had something to do with it. Not that We mind. If anything, I suspect Lord Geryon finds it amusing.

Visperthul grumbled somewhat at his relocation, but in time he came around to appreciating the importance of this new assignment. The appropriation of Westcrown is no small achievement, and as such its bridge to Hell merits at least some measure of competent oversight. Well, competent might be a strong word. For an Ayngavhaul of his station to allow someone like the elder Fex to uncover his true name is a significant failure. However, it is a failure that serves me well. It is by my underling's hand that Visperthul retains some measure of freedom, a debt I will all too gladly collect should I ever have need of it.

Now then, back to the triteness of mortal matters. As our agents have surmised, the Glorious Reclamation's power structure is ostensibly solid on the surface, but is actually a very fragile house of cards. The bulk of Iomedae's crusaders are putting all of their effort into maintaining a secure central perimeter around the Korradath. It should come as no surprise that the Inheritor's vermin would scurry back into her former master's seat of Imperial power. These simple creatures live in the past, yearning for a lost glory they only believe they once had. In doing so however, they've entrusted the care of the rest of the city to but a few key influencers.

Conquest is a simple thing when the enemy misplaces so much trust in their emissaries. Westcrown is in a raw state, easy to sway one way or the other with the right pressure. All it takes is to knock over a few cards, and the underlying support that the Reclamation relies upon will fall apart.

The first, and perhaps most significant of these cards was Aveshiel the Swift. Over the years in my role as the Arch Adjudicator of Celestial Acquisitions, I've often found myself at odds with this particular planetar. Iomedae seems to enjoy sending this general to time sensitive situations, which is a descriptor that applies to most instances where I have sought to appropriate heavenly relics. Too often, Aveshiel has swooped in at a most inopportune moment to attempt to deny me my prize.

To date, the most problematic aspect of this planetar is that they are blessed with divine speed. They've never sought to confront me nor my minions directly. Instead, they seize that which I covet and immediately abscond beyond Our reach. In Westcrown however, their role is somewhat different. They've been tasked with eradicating organisations of lesser mortals and intercept their logistics. The lesser mortals of the Infernal clergy and the Hellknights are too feeble to face an angelic general, so Aveshiel functions as a sort of catch-all one-angel patrol force. A suitable role, all things considered. Something akin to an angelic janitor.

What a shame for them that this also means they would have nowhere to run, lest they abandon their post. It is a rare opportunity, to force my pest into a confrontation from which they cannot flee.

Aveshiel the Swift, swift though they may be, is far from strong enough to contest our agents. Their speed cannot pierce the armour of a high tier Infernal battle cleric. Nor can speed account for that which is undetected, such as the bolt of a particularly subtle kobold assassin. A bolt, might I add, suffused with the power to disrupt angelic properties.

Speed is a useful blessing, but it is, in essence, a multiplier. It relies on a strong base to offer any real benefit. No amount of speed can compensate for impotence. And there are few things as impotent as an angel stripped of their divine connection.

Aveshiel's demise and its consequences were indeed swift, so their title remained consistent even in death, at least.

The battle transpired in a public space, where many onlookers were able to confirm with their own eyes what had happened. The Wiscrani are an opportunistic sort, shrewd and unprincipled enough to accept whatever status quo befalls them. Seeing one of the Reclamation's strongest allies fall so resoundingly was a clear message. The streets were no longer the uncontested territory of Heaven's knights. Rebels could no longer rely on their angelic protection. Loyalists could resume their minor operations with impunity. The citizens of Westcrown would quickly learn to adjust their behaviour.

As for our agents, they chose an interesting trophy. Dexsius' decision to construct a reliquary from Aveshiel's fleeting ashes was amusing to say the least. For a mortal to bear the remains of an angel in such a prominent vessel is a mark of great arrogance which I for one applaud. Naturally, it will paint a target upon him for his enemies and rivals in the clergy alike, but Mephistopheles' pet projects never seem to be too fond of subtlety in their ambitions. When all is said and done, I look forward to adding the trinket to my personal collection, but it shall do well enough in his hands in the meantime.

Speaking of the Hell-touched cleric, he had sent out some of his minions into the northern district of Rego Cader in search of some allies some time prior. The next chronicle in this project of ours will surely have something to do with the outcome of that excursion...

24/11/08 - Session 79 - Enough to Make Your Skin Crawl

Toilday, 29th Kuthona, Qatada Nessudidia, Westcrown, Longmarch

Participants: Vipostix (Justin)

As I mentioned in my last tale, the cleric in Our service sent some of the more skilled members of his delegation to Rego Cader on a quest to find some allies. Technically, that is sufficient context to proceed with the story, but that would be sloppy on my part. Your uneducated mind has no reason to recognise the implications of such a statement. Would you, ill-informed as you certainly are, have any reason to know what Rego Cader is or why one might go there in search of potential allies to our mission? Of course not, dear reader. Fortunately for you, I am nothing if not thorough, and I take pride in instructing those in need of education, as you've no doubt come to learn by now. Rest easy, as I shall simplify all these mortal entanglements for you.

Rego Cader is a ruined area in the northern end of Westcrown. It is a hive of scum and villainy, mostly of the distasteful sort. It is separated from the marginally more respectable Rego Crua by a rather large wall, with only the heavily fortified Obrigan Gate functioning as a connection between the two. Well, that is if we exclude the innumerable ways one might get around a perfectly mundane high wall, but it is nevertheless sufficient for the feeble mortals and creatures that inhabit that field of refuse.

Prior to the invasion, the guard faction known as the rundottari took on the responsibility of patrolling the region, but with the Glorious Reclamation at the helm, they've reduced that patrol to merely holding the wall and gate. This allowed the riff raff of Cader to fester and form into cabals, or at least the nearest thing their puny minds could approximate to structured organisations. Still, the evolution was significant enough that there might be some value in negotiating with them, at least in a capacity as fodder against the Reclamation...

There is some merit to using such scum for our gain. After all, the Iomedaean could hardly call themselves orderly if they permitted bandits and monsters to run free, and the more distracted they are, the more freely we can act against them. Ultimately, it is not too dissimilar to how the faceless stalkers were used in Kantaria.

This was the premise the High Priest of Westcrown and the Hellknight Paralictor brought to our agents, and the reason for Dexsius sending his underlings into the rego.

But as one might expect, the minions of minions are rarely so impressive, and these three sub-agents found themselves prey to one of the more able groups within Cader, that being the vampire harem of one "Skinless Sark".

Do you know of *ecorches*? I do not refer to the artistic rendition of a skinless humanoid, but rather the creatures that evoke their namesake. Quite nasty things, those giants of flesh and muscle. I've made a few of my own over the years, mostly out of boredom, though they can be quite useful for infiltration missions. Simply provide them with a skin, and they can wear it with surprising ease. I confess, I take quite a bit of pleasure in observing the horror in a mortal's eyes when they witness a massive undead abomination burst out from what they believed to be their comrade or precious mentor. That particular flavour of shock and horror adds a very special spice to their souls.

As you might have surmised by that tangent, Sark was just such a creature, though not one of mine. As for the vampires, I believe they were once the toys of some forgotten actor or some such. Hardly anything worthy of note, save perhaps if one is an aficionado of the Wiscrani theatre scene.

In any case, with the context out of the way, we can resume the tale. Dear reader, I do hope you appreciate the effort I put to enrich these narratives for you. Many in Hell would be honoured to receive a fraction of the attention I generously offer you. I heed you not forget that.

Now, where was I? Right, the sub-minions in the clutches of Sark's vampiric harem. Trapped as they were, they did still manage to accomplish their task, which was to relay a request to parlay. Sark and his wenches, though undead, were not mindless. They knew the chance to speak to the enemies of the crusaders was one they could not ignore. So, an invitation (though some might call it a ransom) was delivered to Dexsius by way of a scroll of sending. The invitation was immediately accepted.

Our agents were told of Sark's reputation as a major player in Rego Cader, and subsequently had little trouble making it to the designated meeting place. Naturally with their lizard's skills, they knew what they would be getting into well in advance, but nevertheless they chose a more diplomatic approach. The negotiation was as simple as one might expect when a trained priest of Asmodeus negotiates with a petty thug with a rotted brain. Sark may be shrewd for his kind, but that only makes him marginally more clever than the average Iomadaean knight. It is much akin to witnessing a trained duelist sparring with an infant.

Much as I would love to disclose the full contract here, it would be poor form of me to publicly expose the exact details of a barrister's work without formal solicitation. Instead, I shall summarise the broad details of the contract for you: Sark would be granted occasional access to Rego Crua in exchange for rendering services to House Thrune and its representatives (most likely this would come in the form of designated feed targets, but other forms of service were not excluded). Additionally, Sark would return Dexsius' three valuable underlings for no less than 20 live prey, as well as at least one lieutenant from the Obrigan Gate for Sark's personal use as a new skin suit.

In order to seal the agreement, our agents needed control of the Obrigan Gate. The ensuing massacre was predictable. A squad of mundane guardsmen and a few lesser holy knights could hardly pose a threat to our chosen Infernal servitors. One earth elemental, various evocations, a few well placed bolts, and an abnormally large swarm of hornets later, and the rundottari were made to provide a sizeable portion of the contract's prey requirement. Meanwhile, devils and agents loyal to House Thrune would take over operation of the gate. With the loss of Aveshiel, there was nothing the Reclamation's few remaining patrols could do in response, save abandon the district. The butchers and meat peddlers of Rego Crua would need rely on the benevolence of their returned masters if they did not wish to become meat themselves. A simple arrangement to secure their compliance, indeed.

It remains to be seen for just how long Dexsius intends on keeping his agreement with Sark in place. The undead did not think to include any clause protecting themselves from later retribution, should our agents or House Thrune deem them past their usefulness, but such a clause could have easily been navigated if it was. Such is the folly of negotiating with Hell's favoured.

That being said, the priest had no qualms with the notion of supplementing the prey quota with his own lesser followers, a surprisingly generous stance towards the *ecorche* all things considered. Perhaps our tiefling cleric sees special value in keeping Sark satisfied? Could it be part of some grander long term machinations on his part? Perhaps. Perhaps not. Perhaps Dexsius truly sees such little worth in the masses of his congregation that their sacrifice are worth it to save him some administrative effort.

Naturally, it would not be difficult for me to expose the reality, but I would not wish to rid you of the privilege of speculating upon it yourself. Stories are always better with a little bit of mystery, after all.

No need to thank me. Simply think of it as another favour on my part for your enjoyment. As you should know by now, we devils are always happy to grant favours...

24/11/22 - Session 80 - Report From High Priest Garestic

Oathday, 31st Kuthona, Qatada Nessudidia, Westcrown, Longmarch

Participants: High Priest Jarvaxus Garestic (Justin)

To Her Infernal Majestrix, Queen Abrogail II of the Thrice-Damned House of Thrune,

Your Majesty, I am pleased to report that the ongoing project to retake control of Westcrown is progressing smoothly. The agents you've sent have continued to demonstrate excellent skill in systematically demolishing key pillars of the Reclamation's infrastructure. At our current velocity, I anticipate Westcrown's complete submission within a month's time.

To corroborate the account of the situation with Ambassador Kyniar, I can confirm that Paraduke Kennari and Archbishop Oscellus were successful in persuading the Taldan ambassador to comply with the relocation request without the need of any magical interference nor problematic methods. Classic Chelaxian diplomatic insinuation was sufficient to persuade him to go along willingly.

The Fey Court's plot against Ambassador Kyniar was very helpful in the discussions. I applaud your intelligence network for their shrewd work. Naturally, there is no tangible reason for the ambassador to suspect that we had any involvement in the Court's actions against him, though from what I know of Vors, he may come to believe it was our doing regardless. If he does, rest assured that there is no proof with which to make such an accusation credible. Similarly, I do not believe the agents suspect any such conspiracy exists either, or if they do they are discreet enough for it to not be an issue.

The protection provided by the agents was satisfactory. They were effectively able to repel the ankou without any harm coming to the ambassador. One bodyguard suffered injuries, but nothing that wouldn't be expected in the line of duty, and all clearly perpetrated by the fey assassin.

Special mention is merited for Paraduke Temoni. His magical protections and overt selfless acts were instrumental in preventing any harm to the ambassador while demonstrating the sincerity of House Thrune's protection. His political and arcane acumen are excellent, and his devotion to you rivals, if not eclipses, that which he had for your great-grandmother. I understand that your Majesty holds the Paraduke in high regard, so I wish to express my gratitude for sending him on this venture. During his escort of the ambassador, I understand he took the opportunity to report to you personally and offered his own assessments. I pray to Lord Asmodeus that his opinions on me were similarly favourable.

With regards to the kobolds in service of the green dragon Lady Arcatraz, the one known as Kezax did an exceptional job not only in permanently eliminating the ankou, but also in cleaning the suite after the job was done. There was hardly any work left for my own subordinates. However, we observed that after the incident, he brought back a component of the shadow creature. Lady Arcatraz made use of our ritual circle to bind these properties to him. I was not able to take full stock of the effects, as the dragon is not fully forthcoming with her knowledge, and Kezax is exceptionally hard to perceive, but from what I was able to gather, I believe the kobold to now be capable of limited magical power. I'll continue to take stock and provide a summary as I learn more, though it stands to reason that his already considerable assassination skills have been made even more potent. Nevertheless, neither he nor his master have given any indication of enmity against your Majesty at this time.

On the matter of Archbishop Oscellus, following his discussion with you he came to me with a question regarding spiritual matters. In essence, he wished to know whether Hell's favour is tilted towards House Thrune or the Asmodaeen ecclesiarchy.

My answer to him was the same one I once gave to your Majesty: Hell will stand to gain regardless of the victor. The mandate of Hell is given to the mortals who have the drive and guile to claim it, so it is in one's best interest to use these traits to prove their continued worth to Lord Asmodeus. Those who succeed will have his favour so long as they do so, but those who fail irrevocably will only have value as fuel for his engines, regardless of their intents, ambitions, or faithfulness.

Dexsius was unsatisfied with this response alone, as it did not give him a clear answer, so I continued the exercise by guiding him to assess the two options in as objective a measure as possible. He naturally came to the same conclusion as I did, and sees continued loyalty to House Thrune as the best avenue for personal accomplishment. In my estimation, his loyalty is secure for the time being.

You requested my opinion on Dexsius Oscellus's suitability for your goals. Your Majesty, he is a blunt instrument of pure Infernal force. He has great talent and acumen that rivals many High Priests, particularly in his mastery of Hell's gifts, but these talents are more innate than they are the product of trained devotion. His grasp on the political nature of the faith is his weakness, especially considering the immense potential he has. This is why he has not risen the ranks of the church until now, despite his extensive tenure. If he were to wield his skills with more tact, I believe he could easily become one of Hell's most powerful servants on the mortal plane. However, I believe this same weakness is a strength for House Thrune. So long as Dexsius is convinced of the truth that service to You is service to Lord Asmodeus, then his power is yours to wield as you see fit. You need only ensure that no other force lead him astray, which would be a difficult proposition, given his ironclad will.

With this in mind, I am confident in my endorsement for his candidacy as your next High Priest in Westcrown. With my supervision, I believe he can be a fitting bulwark against any opposing ambitions, while securing your continued relationship with Lord Asmodeus.

On the subject of endorsements, there remains the matter of the new Archbaron Fex. With all due respect your Majesty, the reports of his mental state were severely understated. The man's mind is so far gone that I hesitate to call him cognisant. The influence of the deimavigga Vipostix is so thorough that it would be more apt to call him a puppet. What I found most impressive while speaking to Dominus is his ability to rationalise any situation to fit his twisted perspective, even without his master's intervention. As a servant of Lord Asmodeus, I am incredibly impressed with such an effective and obedient agent, and would counsel that you make full use of Vipostix's talents if you are able. As a mortal servant of House Thrune however, I must advise caution. Vipostix is a manipulator of Hell's highest order, and his interests in this conflict go beyond Hell's contract with House Thrune.

Vipostix's primary objective appears to be to hunt for Iomedean artifacts. The acquisition of Heart's Edge is among his top priorities, but from conversations with Dominus, I've come to believe that he also has an interest in acquiring Alexeara Cansellarion herself, given her supposed direct connection to Iomedae. My view is that Vipostix takes personal offence at the fact that Iomedae is using a similar form of influence to what he has done with Dominus, and wishes to pervert it to his own ends.

Given our aligned objectives, I believe it would be in your Majesty's best interest to negotiate a contract using these assets to secure Vipostix' ongoing alliance after the rebellion is concluded. This should allow you to keep Archbaron Fex as a useful pawn for your projects. I fear that without an established arrangement, Vipostix will have no reason to keep Dominus explicitly in Cheliix's service once Heart's Edge and Alexeara Cansellarion are secured. Without that restriction, the risk of collateral damage from his continued existence could prove problematic, to say the least.

This concludes my report, your Majesty. I will continue to observe and report as per your wishes.

Faithfully yours,
High Priest Jarvaxus Garectic

24/12/13, 24/12/20 & 25/01/17 - Sessions 81, 82, & 83 - Eye of the Storm

Fireday, 1st Abadius, Dorjanala, Westcrown, Longmarch

Participants: Dominus (Justin)

Too long has it been since I last recounted the exploits of our righteous quest. Speaker of the Divine Order Lord Vipostix has of course been monitoring our mission closely as of late, so my own reports have been unnecessary. I took this time to take charge of my recently inherited role as Archbaron. As the Inferno Gate technically resides within my domain, responsibility for its continued rulership falls to me.

Part of that mandate has been the organisation of the Infernal forces we have brought forth to restore Order to Westcrown. It has been a true pleasure to set my ever-growing legions upon this most important of tasks, and to great effect, might I add. High Priest Garestic and Paralictor Chard have been truly helpful as well in pinpointing the critical points of control within the city. Ser Quintus has also served me well as a troubleshooter. Once we are done with our mission, I have a mind to take him on for my personal retinue, as Father Dexsius no longer seems to have need of his services.

My comrades have not been idle, of course. Lord Vipostix regales me with their exploits in service to the Divine Order, and it would seem they are doing splendidly. Much of the Reclamation's heresy has been cleansed, with but a few blemishes left to scrub.

One such blemish was brought not just to their attention, but mine. The Dorjanala, a place of both Chelish royal history and a beacon of Arodenite faith, remains an obstacle to the complete dedication of Westcrown to its rightful masters. We recognised this to be the work of Bellinia Dorjana, the Chelaxian high priestess of Iomedae, known as the Silvereye for her rather unique blessing. To complete our work, we would have to remove her.

Much as I respect my allies, they lack the understanding of this mission's significance, knowledge that I possess. They surely see this as another rebel attempting to defy Hell, but that is an oversimplification of the ritual at play. High Priestess Dorjana, blessed with the vision and role that she has, surely understands that the Divine Order's blessing requires not just the authority of Hell, but the submission of Heaven. As the Inheritor of Aroden's will, it is Iomedae's responsibility to formally complete the transfer of ownership. Likewise, as the descendant of Chelish royalty, it is High Priestess Dorjana's responsibility to formally cede Westcrown to House Thrune. This is a necessary pact for the proper completion of the Pentagram Ritual, one that we must not neglect any further.

For that reason, I chose to join my companions on this particular mission. It is best that I be there to ensure that the transfer of power is completed correctly, after all. Lady Arcatraz, knowledgeable in rituals as she is, opted to leave this one to us, as this was first and foremost a ritual steeped in religious significance.

As always, Mister Kezax took the vanguard, scouting the Dorjanala. The site was unmistakably bathed in the Inheritor's light, protected not just by its attendants, but by the Lady of Valor herself. The Light within the Shadow made for splendid imagery. It filled me with anticipation for the eclipse that would come.

Temoni's magic and Othiel's divinely structured presence ensured that the barriers would not prevent our arrival. None greeted us, though the sounds of prayer emanated from the conservatory. High Priestess Dorjana and her acolytes surely expected our arrival, and had wasted no time in preparing the site of the ritual.

Before we could join them, Othiel declared our arrival with a wail of ecstasy, a cry that alerted us to the presence of other guests. A group of wolf-like beings were waiting in one of the side rooms. I've long understood the symbolism of hounds as the guardians of thresholds. So many times, even going as far back as the rebels in Longacre and my very first mission upon returning from my pilgrimage, they have been a symbol of my taking a step into a new phase. Clearly, these beings, so far from home, served a similar purpose.

As I got to work completing the first stage of the ritual, Father Dexsius continued to the conservatory. In that moment, he faced the next test, one that challenged his strength of devotion. Much like House Thrune, thrice he was damned with the words of Destruction, and then struck with the fires of perdition. An unworthy representative would have surely perished, but Father Dexsius did not falter in the face of this test. I thank the Divine Order to have granted me such a stalwart ally, as I can think of none better to hold its virtues with such unrelenting determination.

As Father Dexsius held his ground and I tended to the hound-men, Paraduke Kennari and Mister Kezax saw to the attendants at our rear. Surely, as representatives of the Inheritor, a test of strategic acumen would be needed, so an ambush ought to be expected. The priests divided our battle with walls of blades, leaving Othiel with me and the Paraduke with his summoned earth elemental and Mister Kezax to support him. Clearly, the next test would be whether we could be divided and conquered, as surely the servants of the Divine Order would maintain unity at all times. The High Priestess sought proof by attempting to remove some of Father Dexsius' protective magic. The Paraduke, despite being obstructed, still came to his ally's aid and denied this, once more proving our righteousness.

For the next test, Father Dexsius would have his faith tested. The hound-men, satisfied with my performance but needing to prevent interference for this stage, covered the corridor with sleet. This allowed High Priestess Dorjana to focus her attention on the Asmodean. She struck him with a powerful word of magic that could not be refuted. Under any other circumstance, no mortal could withstand such an utterance. Here, it was not Father Dexsius' personal strength that was tested, but his faith. By invoking Lord Asmodeus against impossible odds, he proved his devotion, and in doing so, averted certain death.

If there was any doubt left in Father Dexsius' worthiness as an avatar of Hell's authority, it was snuffed out in that moment.

The hound-men departed in that moment for the conservatory, which made clear that it was my turn to join in the next test. Paraduke Kennari was kind enough to remove the storm that raged, giving me passage to join Father Dexsius. There, I saw a ghaele azata poised to strike at him. Perhaps some might question why filth from Elysium would enter such a place of sacred Order, but its purpose was clear. Just as Dexsius proved that the Divine Order must hold firm against all challenges, I needed to prove that we are able to strike back at the nefarious forces that would erode us. After the magnificent performances thus far, I could not be lacking. I was not, and my sword struck as true as it should.

By this point, Paraduke Kennari and Mister Kezax had done enough with the rear guard to leave what remained to the elemental and join us in the conservatory to begin the offensive. We had done admirably thus far, but the test was not yet done. High Priestess Dorjana called forth magic befitting Iomedae's representative. None save Othiel and myself, as servants who recognise the Inheritor's graceful role within the Divine Order, were granted the next privilege: an audience with Iomedae herself!

Brief as it was, I could not allow the opportunity to go to waste. I pledged before the Lady my undying devotion to the cause of the Divine Order, that I would see the mission she had set before us to completion. Her High Priestess, who so graciously offered herself as the sacrifice for such an important ritual, would be handled with the utmost respect, and soon I would see to it that Her chosen Alexara Cansellarion is properly shepherded into the Divine Order, as she so clearly wished. Exalted as I was, I was unable to register the words she spoke to me, though I need not hear them to know their contents. I have not a shred of doubt in my mind that she is proud of the services I have done for her and the Divine Order.

When I returned to the plane of mortals, Othiel was still wrapped in his communion. As a celestial himself, I understand his desire to remain in that blessed place for a while longer.

While I had been speaking to the Inheritor, the clerics had turned their attention to the Paraduqe. Though the strength of his devotion is admirable, the depth of his faith are not as profound as that of Father Dexsius nor I, so while he passed, it was with some difficulty. Fortunately, in his wisdom he used the last of his strength to join Father Dexsius, who returned him to form. The Divine Order is a testament that a whole is greater than the sum of its parts, and so too is a band of comrades greater than any one agent.

Contributions from Father Dexsius, Mister Kezax, and even Miss Zylstra brought an end to the test, ending the attendant clerics. I personally saw to the azata. A single hound-man pledged itself to its new purpose, and was generously taken in by Lord Vipostix. A single cleric remained in the main hall, keeping Tayapkēt and the Paraduqe's elemental preoccupied so as not to disrupt the final ritual.

With all of her trials completed, all that remained for High Priestess Dorjana was to submit to the final stage that would mark the complete transition of power. Naturally to prevent any mishaps, I took measures to ensure that any involuntary reflexes such as a flailing limb would not interfere. Mister Kezax was kind enough to assist; bolts make excellent stakes.

As Father Dexsius is our representative of Lord Asmodeus, apex deity of the Divine Order's hierarchy and recipient of the ritual's charge, it was appropriate that he oversee the ritual. I merely uttered words of thanks to the Blessed Hierarchy for this glorious evolution. Every Duke of Hell bore witness through the stained glass as the Inheritor's light relinquished its hold over the ancient bastion to the Infernal Masters.

Once before, at the Winter Grove, we heard the approving voice of the Dark Prince, and now, we were granted the wondrous gift of hearing it again, as he claimed the High Priestess' soul in honour of the new pact finally sealed upon Westcrown. Never before have I witnessed such a beautiful sight or heard such beautiful cries! I pray only that I might see it again, to bless us when we complete our quest and I am finally able to elevate Lady Cansellarion to her rightful place beside me as a fellow herald of the Divine Order!

25/04/23 - Intermission - Jailbreak Part 1

Oathday, 31st Kuthona, Qatada Nessudidia, Westcrown, Longmarch

Participants: Vipostix (Justin)

I know I know, it must feel like an eternity has passed since I've last regaled you with a tale of our conquest. Fortunately, time is irrelevant to a planar creature such as myself, so I am very much unbothered by this delay. The conclusion is all but inevitable at this point, after all.

Still, it would not do for me to leave you completely unsated as the threads of fate untangle this mess and see it resume, so instead, allow me to offer a couple stories that occurred previously, beyond more attentive eyes.

You may have noticed that several players in this game of ours have been conspicuously missing. Dominus, my dear pawn, did not make an appearance at the Obrigan Gate, nor did he contribute to the escort of the Taldan Ambassador. So too has the loyal knight Quintus been absent. You would certainly be forgiven for thinking High Priest Garectic and Paralictor Gonville Chard, being mere secondary characters in this tale, were inconsequential, but it would be an error nonetheless. Then of course, there is the matter of all of the many undeclared devils and cultists, and even less known kobolds under Kezax's command. These hordes are oft forgotten, but in the case of the kobolds, this is by design; do not forget who it is that leads them, after all.

In truth, all of these pieces had their parts to play in this game of ours. Much of it administrative, of course. It is not as though the populace of Westcrown can be trusted to keep themselves in line while the primary agents are busy with more significant objectives. They have already shown themselves to be unruly and willing to bend for whatever master might come into their presence. It would simply not do to leave a vacuum behind. Still, that is not the part of which I wish to speak in this little aside.

Rather, I thought it interesting to tell a tale about a couple more significant systemic tasks that were undertaken by our rear guard. The first of these is the cleansing of the Ducotrion.

Ah, right, I believe we've established previously that you may yet lack the vernacular to recognise such a title. The Ducotrion is the headquarters of the dottari. In more vulgar parlance, it is the primary station of the guard. Since the Glorious Reclamation took hold of Westcrown, the organisation has been taken over by a half-elf named Ariende Jharnavar. Much to our simultaneous irritation and amusement, Duxotar Jharnavar is an efficient commander. In but a matter of weeks, his work has done much to rectify the mismanagement of decades of inept leadership.

Were his focus solely on the dottari's incompetence and corruption, there may have been a case to convert the man. In fact, under a less pressing timeline, I might even have enjoyed adding him to my collection. Capable summoners are rare, and quite useful. Regrettably, his most interesting facet is also the one that makes such an endeavour problematic: the patronage of his bonded angel, the one so presumptuously titled "Righteousness".

To an inhabitant of the Outer Planes such as myself, an eidolon is a curious thing. It is a greater commitment than answering a simple summon, but less so than answering a calling. We do not invest our whole selves into the service of the summoner, but we do bestow unto them a great deal of power as well as the autonomy to direct that power themselves. That is not to say we have no influence at all, of course, but it is an implicit understanding that we are giving the summoner the authority to use our gifts as they see fit. You can think of it as us making an investment in a particularly promising individual and hoping that they will use our contribution in a manner that suits our interests.

As you might imagine, I am not overly fond of the practice. The notion of leaving my power unattended in the hands of some lesser being is thoroughly unappealing. The minds of mortals are far too malleable to entrust with anything of value. I know this better than anyone. Gambles like that are for those too undisciplined to forge their own success. No, I much prefer the manual approach. If you've taken measures to mould your subject properly, then you can always be certain that they will do exactly what is required of them, no matter the circumstances. I would hope that Dominus has suitably demonstrated just why my method is so effective.

...

What relevance, you might ask, does this have to do with the mission to reclaim the Ducotrion? Why, it is to illustrate one simple point. It is important that you understand why my methods are superior to those used by the Duxotar's patron saint. Not only will it be the key difference that spells victory here, but also in another tale I will tell in the future. Fear not, you'll understand in due time.

In any case, back to the story.

Entering the Ducotrion itself was a trivial matter. With the city all but completely overrun with our servants, the guard was spread dreadfully thin. Even if they did not underestimate the wrath of Hell, they had no means to safeguard themselves against it. Perhaps they even believed that we might ignore them in favour of higher profile objectives. Well, in a sense that is true. We didn't send our main force to deal with them. Still, we've been careful in cultivating enough resources that we can afford to be thorough, and I am not one to leave loose ends.

All of that to say, Dominus, Quintus, and the Paralictor, flanked by the unseen lizard armies of the dragon's retinue, simply walked through the front door. And my, what an arrival it was!

I confess, there was a small measure of amusement in finding that the clerk at the front desk was a pacifist Sarenite. Someone naive enough to follow the goddess of redemption had no place in an establishment of Lawful punishment. My dear minion knew exactly what was to be done. If the boy loved his mistress of flames so much, he should appreciate being immolated. In return for this gift, his howls of exaltation made for a fine alarm bell. Subtlety would only prolong the inevitable.

Much of the garrisoned dottari fell to our might swiftly. Hellknight Chard saved some time by dealing with the training group personally. No doubt, he had a score to settle with his supposed former comrades in law enforcement. Whatever the case may be, it left only the Duxotar to be dealt with.

Under normal circumstances, I'm certain this Jharnavar and his eidolon might have been some challenge. He was not a wholly unqualified soldier, as I've previously attested, and the eidolon so-called Righteousness was formidable in strength. However, this is where the key difference between his patron and I manifests, and I do mean "manifest".

Perhaps those of you with some measure of cleverness might have already come to realise why my influence over Dominus is preferable to forming a summoner's pact. What makes my power immutable and reliable.

Simply put, the power I channel through my servants cannot be dismissed.

The magical gauntlets gifted to Dominus by the Order of the Godclaw were a fine artifact, and quite useful in this moment when our arcanists were preoccupied with other matters. Quickened Dismissal is a very worthy enchantment, and its application was perfect for illustrating the moral of this tale. In

a mere moment, the angel supporting Jharnavar was removed from the equation, leaving the summoner to fend for himself. Unfortunately for him, he relied far too much on the support of others, and so was helpless alone. Between the prodding stabs of swarming kobolds, a few well-placed arcane shots, and a final crushing hammer, the Duxotar was in pieces well before his patron saint could even consider how to intervene.

Would our agents have prevailed nonetheless? Almost certainty, but that isn't the point. My angelic adversary here made a critical error, that being a lack of diligence, and it cost them any chance at victory. Their influence was ephemeral, tethered only through a vulnerable magical connection, whereas I was thorough. I always take great pains to ensure that no matter the circumstances, my servants are always of service to me. My will pervades them inexorably, and will do so forever.

That self-reliance, my dear audience, is the reason I will always be victorious.