

by Max Barry



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Gbant
Minister

Posts: 2457
Founded: Feb 11, 2013
Civil Rights Lovefest

Men of the Cloth

by **Gbant** » Wed Jun 25, 2014 1:49 pm



"Men of the Cloth"
Letople, Heilanor

The room was dark. Dim lights lit up the corners of the room. It was Nathan's makeshift war room in Leto's Palace. Nathan stood there alone, lost in his own lamentation.

Nathan stood over a map of Zathalon, with a fresh bandage on his head. He reeked with a sense of gloom. He was sick. Sick from the air. Sick from the death. Sick from everything.

He traced a pallid finger over the map. He followed the coastline north with it. This war of conquest and unification. It was all he knew now. It was all he had left to him. The rest of the world, and the things in it, were lost. He couldn't stomach that thought for long.

His thoughts wandered as sweat dripped from his forehead, still pounding in pain. The plan was not to linger in Letople for long. A proper lightning operation required fast movement. Such was the plan regarding the northern nations that once comprised Zathalon.

First would be tiny Carpalan, nestled on the coast between Heilanor and Clorusan. *Should be easy enough.* Next was Clorusan itself, a nation that sent a ship to intercept and destroy his own. *They will bend the knee or be destroyed.* And then there was mighty Gilesholm, the crown jewel of what followed after the great split of Zathalon. *Once it falls, the hard part will be done, and Zathalon shall be born again.* And once those three were consolidated with the parts of Heilanor under his control, the south would be next. And then, the continent would be united under one banner.

But what Nathan really hungered for was Gbant. The land of his birth was bleeding, suffering more and more as he languished in the dream that was Zathalon. He once dreamed of a beautiful woman that loved him, whose touch was like the finest silk, who smelled of summer roses. But she was gone. *Zathalon is all that remains.*

A knock came upon the doors of the room. *Damnit.*

"Come in", he said.

It was Hemlock. "Nathan, the men of the cloth are here."

They move quickly. Nathan thought. "Very well. Let us get on with it, shall we?"

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With that, Nathan followed Hemlock through the halls of that strange palace. *The one that conveyed nothing but death and suffering.*

They took the hallway that connected the Palace to the main Cathedral. As they entered it, they found it packed with people. There was Archbishop Callixtus of the Church of Zathalon, men of the cloth, a large gathering of soldiers and men of import. They were arranged in a particular formation, with the Archbishop and his main group of holy men at the front of the Cathedral, while the rest flanked each other in a parallel arrangement.

Nathan stood in the back for a moment, until he realized that it was a coronation. *Oh, what fun.*

After he realized that, the men of the cloth came up behind him, and ushered him forward. More still came after him, and fashioned a cloak behind him. Then they urged him down the rows of people.

It must have been a strange sight to behold. A Ghantish Emperor, drifting somewhere between life and death, being crowned the Emperor of a nation that has not existed in 500 years.

As he reached the alter at the front of the Cathedral, the Archbishop spoke. "We are gathered here today to witness a most spectacular event. The restoration of the true God's Empire! The washing away of sin, of vice, of apostasy. Kneel now, chosen ones."

Nathan dropped to both knees. He looked to his right, and saw Lara beside him, also on her knees.

"Submit thy selves now to God, and become her instruments of retribution and justice in the world. Scour the land clean of heretics and apostates! Deliver the land from damnation, into the light of the one true God. Do you accept yourselves as her true servants in the world of men, and to deliver it into her realm?"

"I do." Nathan and Lara said simultaneously.

At that, men of the cloth poured water unto both of their heads, and chanted. Then a boy brought a cushion forward with Leto's Crown upon it. *The Crown of a Hundred Emperors*, he thought. *Returned at last.* The Archbishop lifted it off the cushion, and placed it atop Nathan's head.

"You knelt as men of flesh and bone. Rise now as the Emperor and Empress of Zathalon, and good servants of her divine will. Rise!"

And with that, they stood.

"I now pronounce thee Emperor Nathan and Empress Lara of the Empire of Zathalon, so ordained by God. May they reign long and well, and the children after them, so on and so forth until the end of time!"

And with that, Nathan was handed the ball and scepter of Zathalon, and they turned to face thunderous ovations. With the exception of the Ghantar, who all had looks of disgust on their faces.

And they walked down the length of the Cathedral, out the front doors, and into the plaza. People cheered them on. Although, if truth be told, Nathan heard more cheers for Lara than for his own name.

He thought he ought to address the crowds. "People of Zathalon..."

Lara cut him off. "People of Zathalon, behold divine retribution made flesh! For far too long our great nation has been subject to sin. Disgusting leftist policies and politicians, those would drive you away from God. Their time has come, reckoning is here! Join us now, and together, we will reforge God's Empire together, and usher in a Golden Age brighter than you could ever imagine!"

The people went mad. "Zathalon! Zathalon! Zathalon!"

A smug look of satisfaction crept Lara's face. Nathan just stared at the bodies

of beaten men hanging in the shadows.

After that, they returned to the Palace, where there was a party. Nathan drifted amongst the guests, delirious and removed from the action. Faces blurred past him, and voices seemed like abstract noises.

But one face that approached him caught his attention.

"Hello, Emperor. Congratulations." The man said.

The man was none other than Ion Lorus, a man in service to the Emperor who went off to Heilanor before he himself departed Ghant. "It has been awhile, Mr. Lorus."

"Indeed it has been. I have been hard at work for you."

"Clearly. What all did you do, exactly?"

"Oh, you know, the usual. I talked to the Archbishop about you and Lara coming, and your goals and ambitions. He was behind them fully. And then I talked to the Prime Minister."

Funny he should say that, Nathan thought as Prime Minister Martina Tangerine approached them.

"Hello, Mrs. Prime Minister." Nathan said.

"Congratulations, your Majesty. It is good to see you and Lara in your rightful place."

"You returned from Loufe not too long ago?"

"Indeed, returned just in time to order the military to disengage your forces and to yield the city to you. I then ordered the nation to accept you and Lara as their rightful Emperor and Empress. Most of the northern half of the country dutifully obeyed. Many in the south have not. They are traitors, and they shall be dealt with accordingly, rest assured."

I am sure they will, Nathan thought. "And what of Selena? Is she dead, truly?"

"It's a...shame what happened to Selena. When those Loufian terrorists bombed the town hall, Selena was...thrown from the rear balcony by the...blast. Nobody could have survived that."

How convenient. "You will have to excuse me, Prime Minister, but I must speak with Lorus privately."

"Certainly, your majesty. I live to serve." She bowed before walking away.

Serve who? Me or that snake Lara? He turned to Lorus. "I need to know what is going on in Ghant."

"I wouldn't know, your majesty. I have been in Letople all this time. Although, some associates of mine have told me that men loyal to your cause have been attempting to...wrest control of the nation from those that...oppose you."

"You will explain."

"That is all I know. I am kept unaware of the details. Lara knows, though."

Of course. "Thank you." Nathan turned to walk away.

"Also, your majesty, there is a matter that I discussed with the Archbishop, one of a...delicate nature."

"Oh? And what is that?"

"As part of the arrangement that was made with the Church to ordain you as Emperor and support your cause, it was agreed upon that the Inquisition would be reintroduced to Zathalon, so that the land might be purged of infidels, apostates, and dissidents to the holy war that you are about to embark upon."

Nathan was horrified. "No, that is unacceptable. A fucking Inquisition? Are you mad? I would never agree to something so disgusting as that!"

"...Lara already has."

Nathan was enraged. *That bitch* "You will have to excuse me, Mr. Lorus."

"Certainly, your majesty." Lorus bowed and then walked away.

And there he was. *A day before I began to advance north against the northern nations, and an inquisition will follow me like a shadow.*

The thought made him sick. More sick than he already was. *Some men of the cloth they are.*



Ghant



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Recipient of the [Greater Dienstad Roleplay Reward](#)

"Look on my works, ye mighty, and despair!" - Percy Bysshe Shelley,
Ozymandias



Libraria and Ausitoria
Negotiator

Posts: 7099
Founded: May 30, 2011
Ex-Nation

by **Libraria and Ausitoria** » Sat Jun 28, 2014 7:45 am



[OOC note: This was released yesterday before a substantial map revision, which necessitated a complete revision of the article].

Article from the New Alexandrian Courante online
version; 18th Augustia, 2014, Assorted Ausitorian
Standard Time
Subsidiary of the ABC

Reserves mobilized upon expectation of imminent hostilities in Zathalon

With Parliament widely expected to approve hostilities against the Empress Lara within Zathalon within a couple of hours, perhaps even before the Senate does, an eerie calm has fallen upon the nation as it prepares for its first major unilateral military strikes for decades.

In spite of confident predictions about the course of the war, and the minimal intervention required, opinions have been mixed, with the stock market falling more than 10% from its all-time peak, reached yesterday on headlines that 'effective victory' had been gained over Firmador, and with expectations of Lara's defeat in Heilanor.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer, Lord George Tilt, used his speech to Parliament to reassure investors, saying that war was unlikely to directly touch the Imperial Commonwealth realms, and that Zathalon was 'the only place where human rights and international stability are being seriously threatened'. He also pointed out that the price of domestic shipping insurance has continued to fall on the news that 2 carriers returning from the Capitalist Associate fleet are to be repositioned as a new 'Amrajan Fleet', which will take responsibility for the confined waters between Heilanor, the Amraja, and Naybra.

However, this was followed by the Defence Secretary

Lord Argus confirming a full mobilization of all reserves 'as a precautionary measure' and that Ausitoria was granting all nations 12 hours, effective immediately, to remove unannounced sub-surface assets from Ausitorian waters, which could no longer be considered to be enjoying 'innocent passage'.

In the wide-ranging joint Parliamentary debate, the Prime Minister, Sir Henry Taylor, further confirmed that the cabinet is of the opinion that "the war in Mizrad-Maverica is a historic anomaly that holds little immediate strategic interest". Although refusing to rule out Ausitorian intervention should the peace conference fail, the Prime Minister drew attention to the number of Ausitorian allies now on the scene, from Maverican allies to Mizradian allies, and suggested that "Ausitoria can therefore continue to rebalance its forces to counter newer threats". However, he refused to comment on whether 'effective victory' could really be claimed before the peace treaty had actually been signed, stating that the Ausitorian government was like a central bank for nations: the moderator of last resort, always ready to shuffle forces to maintain international order.

The Leader of the Opposition's subsequent call for Ausitoria to give up the strain of being world policeman and adopt a more neutral foreign policy was immediately rejected by the Foreign Secretary Sir Henry Terefort, who said he had no intention of letting Ausitoria be the neutral sort of fireman who let the fire burn down the house. "Ausitoria has a record of successful interventions, from Bavungria and Pingolia to Rhodesea and Mizrad, and I am confident that Ausitorian and allied forces are not overstretched. Indeed, following continuing Associate State negotiations, the New Chattakang and Borethnian Fleets are now flying the Ausitorian flag. We are united with all our allies, which includes most Senate nations, by one overriding objective: there are always advantages available from co-operation."

However, a vocal minority of strategic commentators continued to express doubts that the added strategic responsibilities are outweighed by the benefits of military and economic integration, with many organizations estimating that even a short war in Zathalon supported by the Capitalist Association and regional government will claim thousands of lives and trillions of dollars.

Bank Governor Lady Barbara King, responding to the economic shifts, has been compelled to cut interest rates from 2.75% to 2.25%; a U-turn from her comments only yesterday on the danger of hot money and speculation. This shift comes as the seventh major policy reversal in the past fortnight, with the Alexandrian Chamber of Commerce releasing a report suggesting that volatility is at an all-time high, and suggesting that due to diplomatic uncertainty business investment is expected to be down 10% on the last quarter, and internal investment expected to be approximately flat. The Chamber also reported an exodus of money from the country to the tune of \$10 trillion, with commodities prices rising and the Ausitorian Bar sliding by 3% against the Universal Standard Dollar to \$1.80, although remaining level with the Panelysian Dollar at around \$3.62.

The debate continues.

Last edited by [Libraria and Ausitoria](#) on Sun Dec 27, 2015 9:24 pm, edited 5 times in total.

The Aestorian Commonwealth - *Pax Prosperitas* - *Gloria in Maere* -
([Factbook](#))

Disclaimer: Notwithstanding any mention of their nations, Ausitoria and its canon does **not** exist **nor** impact the canon of many IFC & SACTO & closed-region nations; and it is harassment to presume it does. However in accordance with my open-door policy the converse does **not** apply: they still impact Ausitoria's canon.

◦ [Commonwealth Capital \(Bank\)](#) ◦ ◦ [Commonwealth Connect \(Bank Treaty\)](#) ◦ ◦
[SeaScape \(Shipping & Energy\)](#) ◦

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Libraria and Ausitoria
Negotiator

Posts: 7099
Founded: May 30, 2011
Ex-Nation

☐ by [Libraria and Ausitoria](#) » Wed Jul 23, 2014 12:18 am

QUOTE

1200 feet above and to the East of City Square, Ghish

"Flying is for drones," said Flight Ensign Harry absently as he flipped his aircraft into evasive maneuvers and released another cloud of chaff. That was definitely the barrel of a shoulder-launched missile in front of him, so that was definitely a missile streaking towards him at about 500 meters per second, and thank god, that was definitely an explosion in the chaff underneath him. His plane vaulted a hundred feet up into the sky as though it was made of nothing more than wet tissue paper, and he struggled to regain control as he revved his engines and flew over the western edge of the square back to relative safety.

This cannot go on, he thought to himself. For he, like many before him, had discovered the limits to air power; and he was half a second from throttling up and seeking refuge over open waters. Even as he asked the radio operator on the carrier to get those Lowlandian forces to destroy those missile launchers, he knew that it would take time for the request to filter down to the forces in the square... more time than he had left.

But what had he done so far? Fired three bursts with his autocannon: a total of perhaps three hundred rounds. Was that really all that air power could do?

If the Lowlandians on the ground had any sense, they would already be dealing with those iniquitous missile launchers, and would undoubtedly be restoring some order and organization to the scene so he could start to fire longer bursts - perhaps even use a missile...

Having reached this conclusion in under a second, he sighed and Immelmanned his aircraft back around. A high speed dummy run was evidently called for to re-assess the situation. He longed for a slower, bulkier, ground support aircraft: this operation was like trying to fit a square peg into a round hole...

The Spring Palace, Alexandrino

The Ausitorian government had once again been busy. Foreign policy was the only area which the central government had managed to keep a firm grasp on, and Ausitoria naturally thought in terms of grand coalitions for whatever task was at hand. There was no point in doing things on your own when there were other nations willing to help.

And now, as military discussions continued with northern and southern allies on air force arrangements and the like; the government issued a terse statement.


Pax Prosperitas

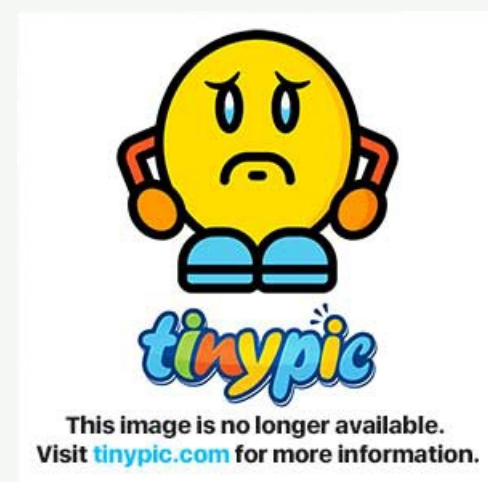
By Order

From the Ausitorian Government to the Empress
Lara:

The iniquities and offenses of your persecution
against the people of Zathalon have not gone
unnoticed by the Hermithean powers you have united

against your wanton aggression. War is a mad business, but when you madly attack multiple sovereign nations, our deterrence must be backed up by action to protect the pax prosperitas. We hereby give notice that unless you retract your claims to Zathalon within the next three hours, the Imperial Commonwealth will be at war with your evil forces.

Nobody expected the ultimatum to be agreed to. And so the bombers started to fly, the landing craft set out from the carriers, and the most magnificent bureaucracy in Panessos finished fine-tuning their dispatches. The bean counters had balanced the forces, balanced the costs and taxes, and considered the odds to a close approximations.



TPC-HWC-AI-1: Socio-economic considerations of War in Heilanor with Ausitorian Involvement

1. Heilanor, with a population of c. 0.4 billion people, is a medium-rich industrialized country (with a GDP of c. \$20,000 per capita) and a near-neighbour of Chattakang, and constitutes the nearest major market excluding Terripin and Nepanti.

2a. In the past year, via the Auralian trade resolutions, Heilanor has grown to become the second most important trade partner to Ausitoria in Panelysiam, with annual trade along the lines of \$0.9 trillion. Heilanor is one of the few countries that Ausitoria maintains a trade surplus with.

2b. The immediate cost of contractual rearrangements would cost the economy a maximum of c. 150 billion (0.3% of United Realms GDP).

3a. FDI in Ausitoria: Last month Heilanor owned c. 10 trillion (25% of FDI in the United Realms) in Ausitorian assets, particularly factories in the Anrraja exporting clothing, commodities, and low-value products, and oil rigs from the Strait exporting to Heilanor, due to the relative competitiveness of Ausitorian produce

But he had his work cut out for him. Upon hearing of the problems in Ghish, Margela immediately summoned the imperial legion to march with him into Ghish to restore order and deliver it into his control.

He made that very clear to the people in Ghish via a public service announcement.

"Ladies and Gentlemen, people of Ghant. This is Acting Prime Minister Maeson Margela speaking. At this time I order all people in Ghish to lay down their arms. I invoke Errespetua at this time. Any person who refuses to comply will be treated as an enemy combatant and will be dealt with accordingly by the Imperial Legion and Imperial Army forces marching on the city as I speak. Any Ghantar who complies will not be harmed. Any foreign forces that refuse to comply will be treated as hostile foreign forces, and that will constitute an act of war against Ghant. Thank you."

It didn't take long for his message to have the desired effect. By the time the Imperial Legion entered the city, the Ghantar were done fighting. Word was that Albert was dragged back into the Imperial Palace by his men, and his famous "Knight of Skulls" pet had joined him there. Meanwhile, Sophia of Dakmoor was supposedly in the Government Palace somewhere. Securing both individuals was of the utmost importance to Margela.

Margela could not account for the foreigners though, and he did not have the ability to command them. Especially the Lowlanders, who supposedly dug into Ghish like a bunch of ticks.

When Margela took up temporary residency in a government building on the north side of Ghish, he decided it was time to get them to come and talk to him. He turned to one of the Imperial officers and said, "get the Lowlanders in here as soon as possible." The officer bowed and scurried off. When he returned he told him that "their commander is coming."

"Good."

Acting Prime Minister Maeson Margela paced around the room, waiting for the Lowlandic Commander to arrive to speak with him. Margela was a man of moderate height, with short, brown hair and beady, dull red eyes and an unflinching face.

The door opened, making way for the tall, wide frame of the brown-skinned Brigadier Demaes, black-rimmed reading glasses on as he studied a document, followed closely by Colonel Hasyim. Both men wore, along with their grey, urban-camouflage combat fatigues, scowls on their faces as they entered, one after the other, to look up at Margela wordlessly.

Margela didn't smile or offer a handshake as he spoke. "You must be the Lowlanders. Well met. I am Maeson Margela, Acting Prime Minister of Ghant in adherence to all the laws of Ghant. Thank you for coming. Please, can I offer you food and refreshment?"

The two soldiers eyed Margela cautiously, sharing a glance before the Brigadier spoke; "I think we'll be quite alright, Mr. Margela. Shall we get straight to the point?"

Nice to meet you too, asshole, he thought. Margela nodded his head. "Aye, let's do that. You see, we have a problem. Ghish is all kinds of fucked up, and people are dead and dying because of fighting. I need to deliver it into proper Ghantish justice, and I can't do that with you...foreigners running around shooting up the place. Now, I want to know what it is going to take to convince you lot to vacate the city and respect the democratic process of Ghant. It is my hope that we can reach an accord that is favorable for everybody, so that I don't have to reduce Ghish to rubble in order to deliver it under proper government control. You get my point?"

"If you've brought us out here to make idle threats, you could have spared us the trip," Demaes informed him simply, adjusting his glasses lightly. "If you want to help us regain control of the city, you're more than welcome to network with my units in the field. We've been granted a mandate by the standing government."

I could have you dead where you stand, kanpotar, he thought. Margela frowned. "I don't think you understand. I am the standing government. And the city is not yours to regain, its mine. It will be well enough under control, once you are gone. So, tell me what your conditions are for that to occur."

"The standing government, last we heard, was lead by one Sophia of Dakmoor," Demaes responded, glancing over his document and nodding quietly. "We've not been informed of any change by what we consider the legitimate authorities- as a result, De Jure, we cannot accept your authority as legal." The Tilpashimi man shrugged. "If you can guarantee that you're willing to work for the legitimate authorities..."

"Allow me to explain what the situation is, then. Sophia was acting through Ormond Bortidoc, the former Prime Minister. He is now in Letople in chains, unable to perform his duties. The Deputy Prime Minister, Simon Brignac, is dead, died in Loufe at that Conference where he was shot. The Emperor is gone too, off in Zathalon. So, Albert, who is next in line, assumed the regency in Nathan's absence, and in his wisdom decided to appoint me to serve as Prime Minister, so that true law and order might be preserved in the realm. I can show you all the seals that can authenticate this transition of leadership. I would also challenge you to question Parliament itself, of which I was a member, and from which I was conferred. And, although Sophia's service is duly noted, her time is done."

"Last we were aware, Albert was confirmed killed," Demaes replied simply. "As the United Provinces doesn't recognise the Crown as cause for legitimacy, I'm afraid we're at an impasse. Are there recording devices in this room?"

"No recording devices. I am a man whom you should trust, as a Head of Government, it is my sworn duty to behave honorably. Albert is in the Imperial Palace, dragged there by his own men. Whether he is dead or not I cannot be sure, as I need Ghantish forces in the city to find out. And our constitution states that in the case of emergency or when the Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister are unable to fulfill their roles, that the crown may appoint a temporary Prime Minister until new elections can be scheduled. That would be me."

The Brigadier nodded impassively for a while. "Cut the shit, Margela. We're all soldiers here; I'm sure you know damn well what's going on in that square." Quietly, Demaes proceeded to take a seat, examining Margela. "We can trust you about as far as we can throw ourselves- and you know why. First Nathan, then Albert, and now we've got you. What assurances do we have you won't go apeshit against our interests?"

Fuck your interests, he thought. "What are your interests, exactly?" He asked, dryly.

"The moderates stay in. Lara and her posse stay out. Immunity from prosecution for individuals of interest, and allowance for extraction of the same until Ghant stops being a mess." Demaes glanced quietly at his document. "No touching our Embassy- or those of our allies. We get to leave a garrison behind for our image's sake. Oh, and we get a statue."

"You might find that I am quite...moderate. What do you think I am trying to do? I want to deliver this country from Lara and her pets. Albert and his men did this city a service by staving them off. I have already defeated and apprehended a number of those thugs as they trickled in from the northwest. If you want immunity from prosecution for individuals of interest, consider it done. Give me names, and I will see it done. Extraction of them as well? Done. Your embassy will be guarded and secure as well, in addition to those of your allies. As far as a garrison, and a statue, well, I am not sure those are political feasible at this time."

"I'm sure I have no idea what you're planning, which is the problem," Demaes responded, frowning slightly. "We'll want Sophia of Dakmoor, and a few others; I'll get you the full list some other time."

You can have her for now then. She can't hide forever. She will be mine eventually. "You can have her, if that is what it will take. My plan is to unite the nation and defend it against all enemies, foreign and domestic. A storm is coming, and Lara rides it like a stallion. I mean to be prepared for it."

"In which case you should be glad of foreign help," Demaes informs him. "You recall the anti-piracy mission some time ago?"

"Not specifically, no. Foreign help at this point will only make matters worse."

This is a Ghantish problem, and Ghant will solve it. All men will be held accountable for their actions, including these Knights under Albert's command."

"You have failed utterly at solving it thus far," Demaes reminds him. "For a Ghantish problem, it has had international repercussions. Like it or not, the world's eyes are on Ghish."

"I was in the process of descending from the north, and gathering the armed forces to my side. Now we are here. Time to rectify the situation...the Ghantish way."

"I'd rather not have a repeat of a way that's failed to do anything but harm, at least not without a second option." Demaes replied curtly. "We either get our garrison, or we have no agreement."

"You can have your garrison, but it answers to me."

"The Army of the United Provinces answers to no-one without the say-so of the Stadtholder," Demaes replies. "You can take your case up with her."

"I will do that, then."

At that point the Lowlanders left. *Dickheads*. With them having reached an accord, he figured it wouldn't be that long before he himself and his forces could enter the city proper and begin to clean up the mess that Albert left behind. *Dumbass*. Margela should have felt some sense of gratitude. All he was feeling was *contempt*.

Last edited by [Ghant](#) on Wed Jul 23, 2014 8:34 am, edited 3 times in total.



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Commended by [Security Council Resolution #450](#)

Recipient of the [Greater Dienstad Roleplay Reward](#)

"Look on my works, ye mighty, and despair!" - Percy Bysshe Shelley,
Ozymandias



Libraria and Ausitoria
Negotiator

Posts: 7099
Founded: May 30, 2011
Ex-Nation

by [Libraria and Ausitoria](#) » Thu Jul 24, 2014 7:53 am



Admiral Lord Arthur Lea's drawing room, HMS Panda, Ghant Fleet, somewhere south-west of Ghant.

"They seem to have disengaged, so I have too," reported the disembodied voice of Harry, Flight Ensign, current foremost guard of the advanced flight of the forward squadron of the vanguard of Ausitorian naval power, in between a burst of static.

Static, in this era, thought the Admiral, absently: evidently the pilot was still observing the scene at some frightfully low altitude until he had to dash for fuel; just in case there was anything else to report. But otherwise it was all mission accomplished: the Ausitorian flag had flown over the skies of Ghish, with a flash of fire from the heavens to protect the innocent: the responsibility-to-protect doctrine had been exercised perfectly. There, for the whole world to observe, was an example of Ausitoria's dedication to maintaining world peace with a swift flash of steel (or, as was actually the case, composite fibres). The Pax Ausitoria ruled once more.

The Admiral reminded himself to relax, even as he focused on the tasks ahead: for the Admiral was well aware of the public service announcement, and knew that the shortcomings of immediate Ausitorian air power had been badly exposed: it was the Lowlandian forces on the ground that were, so to speak, the facts on the ground.

But, frankly, who cared about facts on the ground that could change?

The Admiral knew that many people got tremendously confused over gunboat diplomacy. Good naval powers knew that sending a fleet was unnecessary. The important and often overlooked word in gunboat diplomacy was the word 'boat'. It was not 'fleet', nor 'battleship'. It was 'boat', a puny little naval vessel,

seemingly all alone, flying the flag valiantly. For a small boat was not there to fire shells or bullets. It was not there to fight courageously, blindly, or stupidly to its end against insurmountable odds. It was there as a manifesto: a simple, terrifying, "Hello".

And the Admiral knew it, and knew just who to call, and say, "hello" too. His was a small fleet, rather like a tiny gunboat next to the vast hinterland of Ghant; but the tiny little boat had a nation behind it, and didn't mean to let anyone forget it.

To: Acting Prime Minister Maeson Margela
From: Admiral Lord Arthur Lea, HMS Panda, Ausitorian Navy

To whoever is in charge, for the moment;

As you may have noticed, we are currently on hand to provide support for the innocent, our allies in the legitimate government, and the Lowlandian forces; with a division to land in Ghish shortly on a friendly goodwill visit in case their support is necessary.

As you seem to have some sort of hold over affairs in Ghish, I have been asked by my superiors to inform you that we shall hold you responsible for:

1. Co-operating with the Lowlandian forces and delivering Sophia of Darkmoor and her associates to safety, pronto;
2. Rounding up all of Lara's agents and handing them over to international courts, pronto;
3. Transitioning Ghish into a demilitarized zone, with only international peacekeepers allowed, to maintain law and order;
4. Forming a moderate and legitimate government, and keeping us fully informed.

Proper progress towards these goals will be met by our support and formal diplomatic recognition.

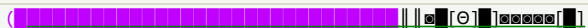
Best wishes etc.,
Admiral Lord Arthur Lea,
HMS Panda
Ausitorian Navy

Last edited by [Libraria and Ausitoria](#) on Fri Aug 08, 2014 12:26 am, edited 5 times in total.

The Aestorian Commonwealth - Pax Prosperitas - Gloria in Maere -
([Factbook](#))

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[◦ Commonwealth Capital \(Bank\)](#) ◦ [◦ Commonwealth Connect \(Bank Treaty\)](#) ◦ [◦ SeaScape \(Shipping & Energy\)](#) ◦



Alderann
Ambassador

Posts: 1039
Founded: Sep 21, 2012
Ex-Nation

by **Alderann** » Thu Jul 31, 2014 9:34 pm

QUOTE

Imperial Palace, Alderann July 25th 0230

It was dark with a chill in the air, the moon was full which illuminated the countryside. Isaac Tribble was the Prime Minister of Alderann and the Emperors must trusted advisors he also happened to be the last one to arrive to most important meeting more important then he knew.

Isaac crossed over the bridge that led to the imperial palace.

" what could be so important that I had to get called at 2 in the morning."
Isaac thought to himself.

Isaac himself had been Prime Minister of Alderann for 15 years serving Emperor Aries I the current Emperors late uncle. Isaac also helped raise the current Emperor from a boy to a young man and he knew this was odd behavior for him.

Finally the car pulled up to the palace which only had one light out front on the rest of the palace was dark. There Isaac was greeted by Chris Edds the minister of the and forces and General Harper Leve commanding officer of the Imperial Guard.

" what are you two doing here?" Asked Isaac.

" everyone has been called here, all the ministers and all the heads of the noble houses. It has to be important for the Emperor to call us at this time of the night." Replied General Leve.

The three then were lead through the palace to the inner chamber where the ministers and house of nobles had gathered awaiting the Emperor. The three of them took a seat with Issac having a seat up front because of his position.

10 mins passed with a low roar from everyone talking in the chamber when Emperor Titus entered the chamber immediately everyone stood up and bowed. Emperor Titus walked to the front of the room facing all the members in the room, and took a seat on his throne with Isaac seated just to the side of the Emperor.

" gentleman first let me say thank you for coming out at this hour I know it's late but I felt secrecy was best. To my ministers and to the 24 members of the house of nobles your loyalty continues to show. I'm sure all of you are curious as to why I have called you here." Said Emperor Titus

Isaac by now was very curious as to what was about to happen. The Emperor himself was only 17 and hadn't been on the throne for long. But he projected power wherever he went a trait that he got from his late uncle Emperor Aries I.

" yes milord we all are curious why you would call us at this odd hour." Spoke Isaac.

" gentlemen I'm sure you all are aware of the war that is happening in the world. They call it the war of two Empresses. And this war will shape our world. Every aspect of it will touch us in some way. But why would we let it shape us when we have the power to shape it. This war is our chance for glory, for Alderann to become a mighty empire again."

By now the chamber grew with a roar amongst all the members present. Isaac felt a knot grow inside his stomach but felt that he needed to take control of the situation.

" yes milord I agree with you. The self proclaimed Empress Lara needs to be stopped. And I cast my vote for a crusade against her." Isaac's words calmed the chamber.

Emperor Titus sat on his throne with a devilish smirk on his face.

" oh Isaac my friend. I do not want a crusade against the Empress Lara, I want to support her."

The chamber erupted with all members yelling. Isaac felt a sickness that almost made him vomit. Why would Titus want to support her! Thought Isaac. The leaders of the noble houses began to leave when Titus stood up.

" sit down!! I am Emperor!"

With that all members sat down.

" now that I have your attention. When is the last time Alderann had glory? When is the last time our name was said in fear? Empress Lara is giving her nation glory. The same that I want to do with Alderann. She is forging an Empire!! That's what we use to be!"

By now all the leaders of the noble houses were agreeing with the Emperor. Titus by this point standing and looking at the house of nobles.

" do you want Imperial Glory! Do you want to be remembered for all time!! I can give you that! I can give you glory, wealth, power, our name will be feared again!! Join me and reforge our empire!!"

The house of nobles all stood shouting the Emperors name." Long live the Emperor!!! Long love the Emperor!!!"

" now assemble your banner men, any ships that you can provide do so. And do

all of this in secret. I want all preparations finalized in 2 weeks. In 2 weeks we sail. We sail for glory, for honor."

The house of noble broke and went back to their lands to carry out their orders. Isaac sat in the chamber with him and the Emperor the last two people left.

" Isaac get this letter to the Empress Lara. Make sure it arrives right now no one else knows of what we plan. Keep it that way."

Isaac took the letter and gave it to very capable hands. The guild of assassins. The letter was written by Emperor Titus himself for the Empress Lara.

Dear Lara,

I hope this letter finds you in good health. As I hope your conquest go unchallenged. You are most remarkable and for the nations of this world to treat you like a monster is unfair to you and does not do you justice for how could someone as fair as you be a monster. I want to tell you that you have inspired me, at one time my nation was a great empire and feared. But those days have long been gone but because of you, and your inspiration I have decided to reforge my empire. For the inspiration that you have given me I pledge my support to you. Hopefully I may meet you soon. I am drawing up plans and I expect my fleet to sail in two weeks time. I have called upon my banner men and I know they will not fail me. Until I meet you.

Sincerely yours,

Titus I



Ghant
Minister

Posts: 2457
Founded: Feb 11, 2013
Civil Rights Lovefest

Overrun

by Ghant » Sun Aug 03, 2014 11:47 pm



"Overrun" Carpalan, Carpalan

"Bend your knees to me, or be destroyed." Lara shouted out into the city square of Carpalan. The city fell with ease, and with the city, the whole country as well, much like a stick of butter falls to a hot knife.

They moved quickly and decisively, striking at the small country like a leopard going for the throat of a gazelle. It was brought down in almost one fell swoop.

Only Clorusan and Gilesholm stood in her way now, before the conquest and reunification of Zathalon was finally complete.

It brought a tear to her eye. People all over the continent had often lamented how the Civil War divided the nation in half 400 years ago, and how the northern half fractured even further. The nations of Zathalon forged on through time, for reasons of greed and power. *Foolish reasons*

The people cried out for unification, for the empire of old, under one ruler and one god. The politicians and noblemen kept the Empire divided for their own benefit, and grew rich and complacent. *Until me, that is.*

Those same leaders and politicians who exploited the continent were trembling in fear now, is their days of greed and avarice were soon to be at an end. Those not fortunate to flee to the south were already imprisoned, or put to the sword, often publicly. Lara loved giving the heads of scandalous politicians to the people. And there was no one to stop her or stand in her way that she could not deal with.

Not even Nathan. He was a sullen and broken man, along for the ride. She needed him just a while longer, until to ensure that the child within her womb grew strong- her heir.

She lied to him. She told him that Sophia was dead, and that her forces were in control of Ghant. But the opposite was true. Apparently, Albert, Ausitoria and the New Lowlands thwarted that, and Sophia lived, while Marius fled back to Gaemar with a dagger in his ribs and a deformed face. The news of that made her enraged.

I never should have underestimated that Albert fucker. I should have had him offed. She thought. Letting him live and letting him gather that hose and that power was a mistake that could bite her in the ass later. I need to get the

Lowlanders and the Ausitorians off my ass, and on his. I need Ghant weak and divided so I won't have to deal with them later. She arranged for Albert to die, but Marius failed at that too. From what she heard, Albert was hit in a non vital area.

The fact that Sophia was still alive also annoyed her, although it seemed that she would be neutralized by Albert and his newfound pet Margela.

So there it was, that Sophia, Albert and even her sister Selena were still alive. Selena survived her fall and was in critical condition in Loufe. *Figures*. She would end all of them herself when the time came.

The Ghantar were useful, in any case. The Ghantar comprised the vanguard, absorbing the blows of combat. And as the war went on, she lost more Ghantar, but gained more land in the process. A reasonable trade in her mind.

Her numbers swelled by the day. People flocked to her banners and acclaimed her the restorer of the old Empire. She feed upon that, used it. She gave the people mob rule, to do as they pleased. To exact revenge against the noblemen and the rich fat cats that exploited them.

She sat in the former President of Carpalan's office, with her feet on the desk and the President's blood on the carpet. With fire in the sunset sky behind her, she read her new letters:


Pax Prosperitas

By Order

From the Ausitorian Government to the Empress
Lara:

The iniquities and offenses of your persecution against the people of Zathalon have not gone unnoticed by the Herithean powers you have united against your wanton aggression. War is a mad business, but when you madly attack multiple sovereign nations, our deterrence must be backed up by action to protect the pax prosperitas.

We hereby give notice that unless you retract your claims to Zathalon within the next three hours, the Imperial Commonwealth will be at war with your evil forces.

"Fucking Ausitorians. They can get bent." She composed her response.

CODE: [SELECT ALL](#)

From Lara, Empress of Zathalon
To: The Ausitorian Government

These lands belong to me by rights of blood lineage, and their governments are illegitimate. Carpalan is already within my grasp, and soon the others shall follow. I will not be stopped, and you would be unwise to oppose me. Evil is a point of view, as I see my cause to be noble and just. I have access to an arsenal of nuclear weapons that might convince you to stay out of my way. And please do not contact me again unless you wish to acknowledge my legitimacy.

Sincerely,

Lara, Empress of Zathalon.

And then it was on to the next one message.

CODE: [SELECT ALL](#)

Dear Lara,
I hope this letter finds you in good health. As I hope your conquest go unchallenged. You are most remarkable and for the nations of this world to treat you like a monster is unfair to you and does not do you justice for how could someone as fair as you be a monster. I want to tell you that you have inspired me, at one time my nation was a great empire and feared. But those days have long been gone but because of you, and your inspiration I have decided to reforge my empire. For the inspiration that you have given me I pledge my support to you. Hopefully I may meet you soon. I am drawing up plans and I expect my fleet to sail in two weeks time. I have called upon my banner men and I know they will not fail me. Until I meet you.

Sincerely yours,

"Hmm, some new friends, that recognize my righteous cause. It's about fucking time." She composed a response.

CODE: **SELECT ALL**

Dear Titus,

Thank you for your kind words and blessings. So far, everything has been going well, and our Lady God has blessed us with delivering the realm into her justice. I agree, my treatment is most unfair, as I do what needs to be done in the name of the realm.

I look forward to meeting with you in the future, and your assistance is greatly appreciated. We shall, in turn, return the favor, once the realm is secure from foreign intruders and traitors alike.

Sincerely yours,

She sent the new letters and burned the old ones. She relaxed for a moment, and prepared for the next part of her war. The conquest of Clorusan and Gilesholm.

Her and her commanders reckoned that it would take six months to conquer them and return to Letople, just in time to give birth and check in on her secret weapon, nestled in underground Letople. *The Sword of Sanctification*, she thought. The thought of it made her grin. Soon it would be time.

Lara wasted no time. Blitzkrieg was the name of the game, as well as the pursuit of justice.

In the city square the following day, she addressed the gathered crowds, as a man covered in chains. "This man has wronged you. He has mocked Lady God and abused you, took advantage of your, and betrayed your trust. But I am a merciful empress, yes indeed. What should we do with him, o people of Zathalon?"

They all chanted. "Kill him, kill him kill him."

"Should I bring you this man's head?"

The crowd erupted in approval.

The man was pushed roughly unto the block, bloody and slick. "Please don't kill me, I am sorry. I will serve you, your majesty. I have a family, children. Let me live..."

One thing Lara admired about the Ghantish was their tradition of killing the men that they condemned to die. She took a double bladed battleaxe from one, and wielded it in her hands. She looked down at the man. He was crying, pleading for his life. *What a piece of shit.*

"I, Lara of the House Yaraslan, first of my name, Empress of Zathalon, Queen of Heilanor, Carpalan, Clorusan and Gilesholm, and Avatar of the Lady God, hereby sentence you to die."

She didn't ask him for his last words. Amid his whimpering, she dropped the battleaxe right on his neck, and it went right through, severing it in one fell swoop.

Lara handed off the bloody battleaxe, and bent over to pick up the man's head. Her uniform was covered in blood..just the way she liked it.

She held the severed head up and spoke to the crowd. "This, people of the Empire, is true justice. No corruption, not courts and laws to hide behind. But cold, hard, swift justice." She threw the head out into the crowd, and the crowd erupted.

"Lara, Lara, Lara"

She reveled in it, but wasted no time. She returned to her preparation room, and got ready for her next move.

In the morning, she gathered up her forces, freshly augmented, and left a token force to hold the city for her while she was gone. And with her Arragard steel sword in hand, she pointed to the north with it.

"Let us fulfill the will of Lady God. Bring the northern realms into her justice, and my rule."

And so it was that they moved out, machines of war both old and newfound. There would be great battles ahead. The Empire reborn awaited her. The blood of her enemies would nourish the soil of her Empire.

But first she had to overrun the rest of Zathalon. And then after that, overrun the world.



Ghant

Factbook | RP Resume | IIwiki Admin

Commended by [Security Council Resolution #450](#)

Recipient of the [Greater Dienstad Roleplay Reward](#)

"Look on my works, ye mighty, and despair!" - Percy Bysshe Shelley,
Ozymandias



Libraria and Ausitoria
Negotiator

Posts: 7099
Founded: May 30, 2011
Ex-Nation

by **Libraria and Ausitoria** » Mon Aug 04, 2014 10:43 pm

QUOTE

The Spring Palace

Alexandrino, Sebvorca, Libraria and Ausitoria

The Prime Minister was finishing dinner, alone, in a dark and stuffy room. He looked out onto the window, regarding the stormy clouds - an extratropical cyclone here was guaranteeing smoother waters in Southern Heilanor, he had been told. Far away he knew the maneuvers were already in progress.

The watermelon was delicious. And then, a knock; and he read the telegram from Lara with his heart racing. It was, unfortunately, what they had expected. She was a lunatic, and she must be stopped, and they would not deign to reply.

"Nuclear weapons, eh? If she uses them, so do we," said the Prime Minister to himself.

And then, after wiping his mouth with his handkerchief, and walking out to the window:

"These are dark times indeed."

And far away, the Ausitoria fleet launched its most protracted naval operation in history.

Notes on the Landings



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Marshal Jeremy Miles, C-in-C A/B (Southern) Theatre

The soft thump of bombs and heavy artillery, only ten kilometres to the north, seemed to shake the emergency lights as the Marshal descended the stairs. It was an old grey container terminal, belonging to some forgotten domestic agency that had once been at the centre of a thriving port - probably some forty years previously, since it had obviously seen better days. Now there were bullet-holes occasionally pockmarking the walls: not from the almost unopposed landings half an hour previously, but from the small-scale fighting yesterday in the city, as brother fought brother in the civil war that was being fought on a small-scale throughout Heilanor. There had been yet more bullets flying in the small hours of the morning, as special forces had quietly reconnoitred, meeting with rebels to prepare the dawn uprising, assassinating enemy guards, and taking strategic communications - a whole battalion of them having worked quietly throughout the night all along the coast to prepare the major cities for the landings and to keep the enemy up all night.

And now, a mere hour later, with the first glimmers of sunlight still struggling over the rolling hills to the east, this was his HQ, and the enemy were regrouping to deny them this vital port. Merely ten minutes before, at his headquarters on the landing craft, there had been reports that the enemy had invaded in force and were already at the city centre. But there had been no time to turn back, and the marshal knew that reports were never as bad - or good - as they first seemed to be; and so he had stepped calmly ashore, with the ground trembling underfoot as the first wave of artillery advanced straight into their firing sequences; his HQ a mere ten kilometers behind a front that could advance or retreat that distance in a mere five minutes. Hopefully it would advance that distance in that allotted time.

Normally an urban battle would be unthinkable: the potential death toll alone would make the politicians quail. And the Marshal was not thirsty for blood either. Against an organized enemy, the whole operation would have been certain death to no military benefit. But this was not an organized enemy: this was a corps of no more than 20,000 men, of whom many might be reporting sick; spread over 200 kilometers of coast and harassed and blitzed in the small hours by guerrillas and the relentless overflight of bombers, the largest flying all the way from Ausitoria: at most, there was an enemy platoon per kilometre; and what could they do when the Ausitorians could select any spot they liked and land ten times that force within ten minutes, with as many aircraft in close-in support?

Nevertheless, there had been incidents - despite Ausitorian fighters in the air destroying enemy radar installations whenever and wherever they dared to show themselves, a foolhardy cruise-missile battery had destroyed several landing craft further along the coast before itself being destroyed. Despite the swarming of AWACs aircraft, some suicidal enemy squadrons had got through the net and launched their anti-ship missiles to devastating effect. But here, he had a foothold and a headquarters on enemy soil for the rest of the morning. (Was it really only dawn?)

The Marshal reached the storage basement room, nodding approvingly: a vast screen projected onto the wall opposite showed the positions of his forces, right down to the squads. But he had no reason to micromanage them as each

individual platoon could be expected to seize the initiative and engage the enemy more closely. His task was that of the conductor of a vast orchestra of self-contained orchestras of orchestras of war. And now, even as he sat in a comfortable chair, surrounded by his staff, the reports were coming in: the city centre was being mopped up by the Alpha Tank Company, the enemy was moving IFVs up the highway from the west, there was fierce desperate fighting in the eastern ports, there were enemy fighters operating from the airport, the air marshal wanted to know when he could take it, there was an enemy bomber squadron inbound, ETA 15 minutes, the South Heilanorean forces were being held up on their advance, and he himself was ten minutes behind schedule.

So, he had two tank companies, which one should deal with the IFVs, which one with the airport? The situation on his eastern flank was perilous and they needed support; on his other side urban warfare on his western flank would delay the advance - the forward tank company should turn left and cross the river; the third wave of reserves could land even further to the east of the city to turn the enemy's flank - and he had no more time to think about whether that was the right decision; for an enemy infantry battalion was in force in the northern suburbs: the tanks would need to advance there next, along with IFV support. Could a fighter be sent to photograph their positions? They were probably preparing fields of fire; a strong assault might be called for, after it became safe for bombers to fly in, or could the third tank company fall behind their rear and encircle them? A concealed mechanized company, no, regiment, had suddenly attacked the western flank; the third tank company and the rest of the fourth wave must instead be redirected to support the fighting there, and there were no more reserves; he was only conforming to the enemy, not the other way round, so should he prepare to attack the northern suburbs in force, or perhaps in flank? The tanks advancing on the airfield were meeting enemy fire; and now attracting the diverted enemy bomber squadron: he could feel the vibrations in the earth; although most of them had been shot down by allied fighters. He was twenty minutes behind schedule; the tanker supply situation would be critical within an hour; but his civil service counterpart would be ready to receive the replenishment ships within only ten minutes. A Fallenrun paratrooper battalion had set out, but since he hadn't secured any of the planned landing sites, where should they land? Perhaps with the third wave? The photograph of the northern suburbs was in, some of the defensive positions could be inferred; and simultaneously the enemy IFVs were scattering in disarray: he would send a tank flight to finish them off; were the remaining tanks sufficient in force to take the northern suburbs? Not until the airport was taken and the bombers arrived, although they could hook around on the western flank to keep the enemy under pressure. In the airport they were fighting in the hangers, the enemy wasn't surrendering, could they demolish some of the buildings? It was a choice between a risky bayonet assault or a long-range assault. They should fire at range: Ausitorians were more expensive than hangers... the enemy was easing off on both flanks; they were thirty minutes behind schedule; the airport was taken and the units manoeuvring to take the northern suburbs; the Fallenrun forces had a landing site.

And suddenly, nothing. Although he had had no idea it was coming, and knew not when he would next be needed as a conductor, the powers that ordain it had given him a break, and he was shivering with adrenaline; and yes, a cup of tea would suit him. And now he had a chance to look at the bigger picture; and plan on a grander scale, and he leaned back in his chair and prepared the next stage.

He cast his eyes over to a general map of the entire south-eastern coastline. What was the situation to the East? Just as in his area, there had been heavier fighting than expected all along the coast, substantial parts of E force had been destroyed, but a mechanized enemy brigade had been comprehensively destroyed by D force. In the sky, they had air parity; there were fewer enemy fighters on this front than expected; but some of the planned airbases that they had snatched overnight had been mined, the enemy had caused considerable damage with SAMs, and the tanker situation was serious. And in his own area, he now had the makings of five battlefields, all of which he could expect to win in; and he would still have two spare battalions with which to start the lightning strike up the roads northwards.

He had lost time and lives, and there would be more of both lost in the northern suburbs: resistance was stiffer than expected. Overconfidence had

always been the hallmark of the Ministry of Intelligence and Statistics, and the Navy, and the Air Force. Lara's cronies would already be moving reserves south to meet this latest threat, and he cursed the strategic planners at the Ministry of War: did they truly think it possible to overrun even a small continent within a few days? For every minute's delay now might mean half an hour tomorrow...

But, before he had a moment's further thought; *thump, thump*, went an unexpected artillery battery, and previously unmarked enemy battalions appeared, one in the east and one in the west; each with artillery support, evidently a counterstrike to give Lara's coastguard time to organize itself. But unfortunately for them, the city was now virtually secured and he had a helicopter squadron from the carrier and a new bomber wing coming up, and the Marshal was conducting the orchestras once more ...

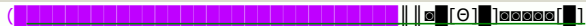
*Edit: Spelling...

Last edited by [Libraria and Ausitoria](#) on Fri Aug 28, 2015 3:35 pm, edited 9 times in total.

The Aestorian Commonwealth - *Pax Prosperitas - Gloria in Maere* -
([Factbook](#))

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[Commonwealth Capital \(Bank\)](#) [Commonwealth Connect \(Bank Treaty\)](#) [SeaScape \(Shipping & Energy\)](#)



Ghant
Minister

Posts: 2457
Founded: Feb 11, 2013
Civil Rights Lovefest

by [Ghant](#) » Wed Aug 06, 2014 6:38 pm



"Soldier" Somewhere in Loufe

Awakening to a pop coming from the dying fire beside him, John opened his eyes and looked around. Yawning and stretching his arms over his head he then emerged from the shelter that the pair had slapped together the night before. Holstering his pistol once again as he had done every morning routinely, John climbed his way to the top of the rock he'd built the shelter into and got a view of what was going on. Trees and snow for miles.

Noting the searing pain in his legs, Turner headed over to Martin.

"Time to wake up princess, we're burning daylight." Spoke John barely past half past five or so in the morning. "There's nothing in those woods for miles, our best bet is to head down the river and look for civilization there. Either way we'll need to find a place to ditch these clothes."

Martin got up, and stretched. "I was hoping this was all a dream. In any case, we should avoid the big towns. People are probably looking for us. Somebody wants me dead. You too probably."

"You have a point, but if we can get to a road or something evading the authorities won't be too hard. News doesn't reach places this far north in these conditions so fast. As long as we head away from the crash site we should be fine. Nobody here will know who I am, I had a mask on during that whole meeting fiasco and this uniform has no affiliation with Mizrad. You also look like nothing more than a guy whose seen some hard times. Does your family think your are dead?"

Stamping out the fire, Turner talked once again.

"We'll make sure to stay away from anything too big but no matter what we've got to get moving."

Martin sighed. "Most people think I am dead. And the ones that don't, can't believe that I am not, or want me dead." He looked up. "We need to get to the coast and get a ship."

"A ship won't get us as far as we need as fast as we need. As I said, there's a powerful man who owes me a favor and he'll supply what we need. The only thing we should worry about is getting to a phone to reach him."

"Will he give us a plane?"

"For what I did, he'll give us anything we want. A plane, some weapons, some clothes and whatever else we may need to reach Nathan. You up for it?"

"Yes. Let's go."

Helping Martin up, John grabbed what few things he had left and kicked over the shelter. Putting together the items he had tossed away, Turner then draped a wolf pelt over it and began walking down the tree line.

"Time to get moving then. So tell me, what was it like getting to see light again after five years of captivity?"

Martin looked at the sky, wincing his eyes. "It was bittersweet. You get used to the darkness, but loathe the light and embrace it at the same time when you see it again."

"Interesting, and is there anybody you plan on meeting with after this fuckfest burns out?"

"I already met her. She moved on. So has everyone else. My mother, I suppose. I miss her. And my father, brother and sister."

John nodded. "It's hard to just jump back to normal life. I've been mindlessly following orders and shooting at other human beings for so long I just gave up on life back home. My parents are long gone now, and most people at home think I'm gone too. Maybe... Maybe one day I'll settle back in to life."

John trudged through the sand and rocks on the shore line. "But things will never be the same. You can't just forget shit like this, for all I know everybody else in that plane is dead. Those men became my only friends, my family. I led them and for all I know they're gone right now but some how I managed to block out the emotions I have over that until now. You go so long seeing death and destruction think that it's all insane until eventually you become insane."

He hobbled over a log and stared at an empty can. "The only thing I can do now is just survive. Thriving isn't an option anymore. That can means we might be close to something though."

Martin shrugged. "I will buy you a drink. That is a good place to start."

John grinned. "A little alcohol before our journey wouldn't hurt either. We should pick up the pace a

bit." He said as he limped a bit faster towards what could have been a small town.

Martin tried to keep his pace up. "I am due for a good getting fucked up."

Before Turner could laugh at Martin's reply, the sound of a church bell striking six screamed through the air. Stopping dead in his tracks he looked up and could barely make out a steeple poking through the trees.

"I think we may have found an answer to our little problem Martin. Like you said if it's too big a town we should back off. Up for a little recon?"

Martin nodded. "Certainly. Let us do that."

Heading into the trees, John tucked away his pistol, knowing that a Colt was not standard Loufian issue. With no Mizradian flag on his uniform he could act as a soldier from Loufe. While moving towards the town he explained his plan to Martin.

"We both look like we were in one hell of a gun fight, so here's the deal. Unless you can speak Russian fluently don't say anything and let me do the talking. I'll tell them I'm from the Loufian military and my unit was attacked by a group of men not too long ago and you were caught in the cross fire. Unfortunately we were the only survivors and we need a phone to contact our support. Any objections?"

Martin shrugged. "Sounds good to me. You lead the way."

"OK brother, here we go."

Noticing most of the people in the town are either still inside or in church John decides to get a look at what's around him. Multiple houses, the church and some shops all along a road which he assumed would be the only easy passage through the region. Then he spotted it. A telephone booth. Not taking anymore chances he quickly hobbles over to it with Martin by his side.

"Pick up the pace, we might not have much time to do this."

Martin waved his hands towards the booth. "Oh, a phone! Quick! Make it count."

Heading inside the booth John scrounged around for some change and found a few coins scattered on the ground. Picking them up with his scarred and dirty fingers he pushed them into the machine, then he pulled out a piece of paper from his vest pocket.

Unfolding the brownish white and creased note covered with different names and phone numbers, he mumbled "Bingo" before pushing a few keys to make a call.

Hearing it ring a few times, John Turner tapped his fingers.

"Come on, come on you son of a bitch pick it up."

Suddenly his face lit up, as a voice answered. "Hello? Who the hell is this?" The person on the other end of the line answered in a heavy Hispanic accent.

"Carlos it's me, Harry. I need a favor how fast can you get a plane to my position?" John replied, smart enough not to say his real name or the other man's.

Carlos responded. "As soon as I can old friend, where have you been?" the voice answered.

"I don't have time for this brother I'm in some deep shit. We can talk over a couple of shots later but right now I need you to come through."

"Where are you?" Responds the other end to Turner.

"I have no idea, track the call and get me the fuck out of here. This will repay everything you owe me. See you soon man." John then hung up.

Martin noticed people walking around in the town. "Hurry up man, we need to get out of here before somebody sees us."

"Right, back into the woods we can wait for him there."

Exiting the booth Turner grabbed Martin's shoulder as he began to make a steady speed walk for the woods as he limped.

"So you don't mind getting a ride from a criminal right?"

"It's better then getting killed." Martin shrugged.

"Good enough, trust me I'm not too fond of it either but there's nobody else we can go to. Well now we play the waiting game." Turner sighed and sat down a bit past the treeline of the town.

"Yeah, I would have to agree. I will take my chances. Hopefully this friend of yours has something good to eat." Martin laid down in a bush.

Martin took a nap in that bush in the woods, outside of the town. He awoke to the sound of a car. He went over to John. "Hey, a car is coming."

Crawling up from under the concealed position he had made himself, John scanned the street before spotting an old pick up truck. Thinking it would just pass by, it stopped at the end of the street and an Asian looking man along side a Latino begin walking the street in clothing clearly out of place from the things the people in Loufe wore.

"Who the fuck are they? Friends of yours, Martin?" John looked at his new found ally.

"I don't know who these guys are. But they don't look good, I can tell you that. They are looking for something...unless, of course, they are friends or your friend you called in the booth."

"Only one way to find out." Walking past the tree line, then down behind the parked cars along side the road John moved swiftly to avoid detection yet slow enough to seem normal if he was caught. Coming up behind the two men, he whispered just loud enough to be audible for the men. "Donde esta Carlos?"

The two turn around with confused looks but responded with a good sign for John. "Que?" the Hispanic asked. John stood up and looked the man dead in the eye. "Es Juan, tu habla inglase?" Turner asked quickly. The man said yes, recognizing John was as one they were supposed to be rescuing. However his look went from collected to frightened upon spotting a camouflaged Loufian military truck. Hoping the truck would pass by, it didn't.

"Бы! Иди сюда!" The soldier yelled, signaling for Turner to come over to him. Taking a second to think, John came to a decision. Raising his pistol at the soldier, who only had his rifle slung by his shoulder, John didn't take too much time to aim, and he dumped a few rounds into the man with no remorse. Aiming at the car he fired again and again until the click of his pistol running dry is heard. "Vamos!" he then yelled to the Latino.

He then yelled to Martin. "Get in the bed of the truck! Now!" As he hobbled over to the rear of the pick up. The Asian helped him in as he leaned against the cab in the bed of the truck. Kicking the flap down for Martin to enter easily, Turner then slapped another magazine into his pistol to prepare to fire. Meanwhile three soldiers in the Loufian truck were still alive, and the passenger was taking control of the vehicle again to start moving.

As the others moved towards them, John fired his pistol in an inaccurate spray as the other started the truck and turned it around. Looking up once again Turner yelled "Pick it up prince we got to move!"

"Shit!" Martin exclaimed. He knew that shit was bout to get real. He ran for the truck and dove into the bed, barely missing some shots being fired at him from somewhere in the town. "They fucking staked the town out. We need to go go go!"

Abiding to the yells of the other men, the Hispanic driving their get away vehicle railed the gas and begins barreling down the road towards what Turner hoped would be a plane or another means of exit. An escape wouldn't be that easy though, as a bullet grazed the side of John's face knocking him back. He got in a firing stance to keep himself in place as well as keep shooting. Waiting for the Loufian truck to line up behind them, he held his pursuers before repositioning himself to fire another three.

The men continued their chase. Once again there wouldn't be an easy way out. Storming down the oncoming lane were two more Loufian police sedans with an armed compliment. "Hold on amigos!" Screamed the driver as he smashed through one of the cars in an attempt to get through. Faceplanting into the bed John holds Martin down to protect him from the gun fire. Loading his pistol, he waited for the cars to come within range. Suddenly a tight grouping of bullets railed through the truck and into the back of the Asian's head, and injured the Latino driver. Swerving over the road a bit, he regained control but lost the edge. Looking at Martin, Turner came up with a plan. "Take my gun and keep them suppressed, I'm going to take the wheel!"

"Shit!" Martin exclaimed once more. He took the gun and got in position in the back of the truck. He took a few glances at the vehicle pursuing them. He noticed men sticking their heads out the windows

with guns. He waited for his chance and then tried to shoot the driver. He missed. He didn't have time to shoot more than once, as the others started shooting at him again after his head popped out.

Noticing the back window of the truck had already been smashed out due to the gun fire, John didn't waste his time and stayed low as he crawled over to the opening. Staying in cover he reached into the cab and pulled the dead man in with him. With the open space, John quickly dove in and ordered the Hispanic to move aside. Taking the wheel as the passenger starts firing with Martin, Turner railed the gas and kept his head down to stay protected.

John banked left to knock the truck back. Doing so successfully, although it still wasn't enough to keep them back as the Destinadian's shots missed and Martin was firing at a different vehicle. "Grab hold of something gentlemen!" Coming up to an actual left turn John realized the Loufians were going to try and knock him into the woods. Hitting the gas to try and get around the truck, it didn't work. He attempted to turn left.

"Both of you concentrate fire on that sedan! I'll handle the truck!" feeling the metal door of his pick up begin to take hits as the fragments spear into his thigh, John began to slow down when that gave him an even better idea. Taking the truck to it's top speed despite the pain it caused him, the turn came up even faster. If Martin didn't hit the sedan driver now John's idea wouldn't work and they'd all surely screwed.

Martin got lost in the pattern of taking cover and shooting, trying to hit the driver. He was unable to do so. What ended up happening was a combination of grabbing on to things in the truck and also trying to avoid getting shot. So far he was successful. "You alright up there?"

"Just keep holding on!" John replied. Looking into the cracked rear view mirror he realized that Martin had yet to take out the driver and the Destinadian took a round to the throat. Somehow the man was still alive though. Not being able to take attention off the road Turner yells out to the man. "Put your finger in the hole and just keep breathing you'll be fine! Get ready boys I'm about to do something a bit stupid!" As the pain in his body surged, he relieved the pain for awhile while also causing the sedan to rail into the back of the pick up and the other truck to go flying through the guard rail. Feeling an immense pain all over John pushed himself into the back of the truck and started again. "I can't take much more of this pain, you drive I'll put a round in that fucking sedan. I saw a bridge up ahead and maybe a clearing after that. Let's just hope the plane is there." Taking back his gun before lying back down in the bed of the truck and losing consciousness.

The Destinadian, with his fingers plugging the bullet hole, pointed towards the clearing past the bridge and attempted to mutter out a word. "Plane".

Martin hopped in the front seat, and drove frantically towards the extraction point. He was never happier to see a plane in his life. As they drove at high speeds to the general area, he could sense that the Loufians were turning up the heat. He would have to act fast. He drove the car up into the trees near the

plane, and brought it to a screeching halt. Then he hopped out of the truck still in good shape, and found John bleeding and becoming pale and delirious in the truck bed. "Let's go." He said, as he grabbed John and threw him over his shoulders. He then made a B line for the plane, as bullets were humming all around them. He threw John in and jumped in after him.

As the Destinadian rushed in to the rear of the plane with them, the pilots yelled a few things in Spanish before closing the rear ramp and pushing forward to take off. Looking around at the inside of the fuselage, John saw a few things. The pilots and some other Destinadian thugs, along with the one that survived the car chase. There were some crates also filled with god knows what but that was almost everything. Then there was Martin.

With a grin on his face but blood dripping from almost everywhere on his body John mutters a few words before growing faint from his wounds and from the pain.

Martin's eyes grew wide. "Hey John. John. Don't die on me. I need you dammit. Stay with me. Stay with me Goddammit. I can't do this without you. Hang in there." Martin held John and tried to stop the bleeding.

Reaching up to grab Martin's shoulder, John mutters out a few words. "I'm fine brother, just tell these damn spics to try and help me out here. I look like I'm in Santa's fucking suit." He said while rubbing away the blood from his flesh wounds.

"I still owe you a beer."

"I'll call it even." And then it hit him. With a grin on his face but blood dripping from almost everywhere on his body John mutters a few unintelligible words before passing out due to both the wounds and the pain.

"John...John...John!" Martin shook him, but to no avail.

John had laid down his life for the mysterious stranger, and took comfort in known that the prince did the same for him.

And so it was that John Turner lost consciousness. Whatever happened, at least he had did his duty. As a *Soldier*.

Last edited by [Ghant](#) on Sun Aug 31, 2014 10:05 am, edited 2 times in total.



Ghant

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"Look on my works, ye mighty, and despair!" - Percy Bysshe Shelley,
Ozymandias



Alderann
Ambassador

by [Alderann](#) » Sun Aug 10, 2014 9:54 pm



Dinath harbor, Alderann

It was a cold gloomy morning. A storm the night before had made the seas uneasy. A fog had come in from the ocean covering the city and harbor making it hard to see anything. All there was besides silence was the faint sound of

the ocean waves splashing against the rocks of the shore.

The harbor for the past 2 weeks had been full of life and energy. Emperor Titus called for his banner men and they had answered. The noble families of Alderann, all of which was seeking glory and to share in the riches provided ships, equipment, and men for the Emperors war.

While the harbor had been full of life today was a somber day. Soldiers and noblemen spent time with their families saying their finale goodbyes before they embarked on this journey for glory.

The morning was cold, but Emperor Titus stood on his balcony just listening to the sound of the ocean. It was a small comfort to him. To enjoy this peaceful moment, to not have any advisors around, to not hear the constant ramble of his war council. In this moment it was just him and the sound if the ocean.

Titus thought about what this war would mean for his nation. Would he be remembered as the Emperor that restored past glory to the Empire, or would he be known as the Emperor who brought it to ruin to Alderann.

"No" Titus thought to himself as he removed any doubt from his mind. Titus came from a long line of warriors, everyone of his ancestors had their war and prevailed, this was Titus's war.

Titus just stood their looking into the fog when his friend Dietrich Tribble came out onto the balcony to talk with Titus. Dietrich and Titus had been friends since both of them were children. And Dietrich was the only son of Isaac Tribble the Prime Minister of Alderann.

The two of them stood on the balcony looking out into the nothingness of the fog. Both men enjoying the silence of the moment. Dietrich then turned to the Emperor Titus.

" cold morning my friend."

Titus just took a heavy breath.

" yes. Very cold."

Then a moment of silence passed between the two men.

" I'm sorry to disturb you milord but we have business that needs to be discussed."

Titus sighed a little. " very well Dietrich let's move this discussion inside."

The two men walked into the study where a glow from the fireplace was the only light in the room. Dietrich poured both of them a glass of brandy and then sat at across from the Emperor at the table sliding him a glass of brandy.

Emperor Titus took a sip of the brandy and rubbing his forehead spoke to Dietrich.

" alright Dietrich give me statues of our forces assembled currently."

" well milord as you know your banner men have answered you call. A grand fleet has been assembled. 5 carriers, 25 amphibious assault ships, 10 battle cruisers, and 15 supply ships. With 28 destroyers to be escorts. Obviously we have more but due to supply issues this is what we can deploy effectively."

" very well Dietrich. Are all other preparations ready? What about the divisions that will be going on the first wave?"

"Well milord we have infantry, armor, and artillery division prepared. Along with plenty of helicopters to support operations. Milord let me ask you a question. Are you doing this to for Alderann or for the Empress Lara?"

Titus took another drink from his glass of brandy and cleared his throat. He was a little taken by the question but in a way was already prepared for it.

" Dietrich we have no each other since we were kids. Do you remember when

we were in school learning the history of Alderann and all the great conquerors of past? I'm doing this to reforge our empire. And yes you are correct about Lara also, I intend to enter into a union with her."

Dietrich was a little stunned but didn't show it. He remained expressionless at the what Titus had just said.

"but my lord she is married to the Emperor Nathan what about...."

Dietrich didn't get to finish his sentence before Titus cut him off in a small fit of rage at what Dietrich had just said.

"she only married him out of need not want!! Nathan what a joke. He shouldn't even be considered nobility. He's a potbelly pig. Now go Dietrich we are sailing tomorrow."

Dietrich stood up and with a slight bow left to follow up on the rest of the preparations. Titus was left there alone in his study. While he sat there he drank more of his brandy and wrote a letter to the Empress Lara.

Dearest Lara,

The fleet has been assembled and the finale preparations are being made. If all goes well I will be sailing on the morning waves. I plan in using a ruse to land my forces claiming to be part of the alliance against you. If they fall for it then my troops will land in the north. I look forward to our meeting and to a bright future. I would like to propose a union between us. I know currently you are married to that pig Nathan, you let me worry about the disposal of him. Until we meet.

Sincerely yours,
Titus



Ghant
Minister

Posts: 2457
Founded: Feb 11, 2013
Civil Rights Lovefest

by **Ghant** » Sun Aug 31, 2014 2:21 pm



"Desperado" Destinado Tierra

The plane was en route to Destinado Tierra. *Wherever the hell that is.* Their destination was the least of his concerns. Martin was frantic in his devotion to keep Captain John Turner alive, who already seemed near death. Martin was not content to let Turner die. Despite the fact that Turner was near death, Martin did what he could to keep him alive, using what tools he had at his disposal for that very purpose.

Watching the ragged prince attempting to patch up a familiar face, a young Hispanic man began walking towards him. Adjusting his parka he looked down at the bleeding body. Taking off and tucking away his sunglasses, the man propped up John's head and slid his foot under it to keep him in place.

"Your friend, he is Mizradian correct?" He asked in a surprisingly Russian accent.

"Indeed, he is." Martin nodded.

"Right, he comes from a place I once called home. Unfortunately we do not have time to talk my rough looking companion. Tell me, do you have any medical experience?" He asked while removing a small folding knife from his pocket as he began to cut away at John's clothing to reveal the wounds.

"I have some, but I am no doctor." He said with a concerned look.

The mysterious man sighed and took off his worn leather jacket. "I was afraid of that." He tossed the jacket behind him, while he yelled in Spanish to the co-pilot. "Yo necesito un medico kit!"

The pilot tossed back a bright red bag to the tall

Hispanic. He then got to work and pried it open. He grabbed a fist full of gauze, and then with the other hand he pulled away the tattered pant leg covering John's wounded calf and thigh. Both were oozing blood at too high a rate. He quickly wrapped as much of the gauze as he could around them, and he looked up to John's stomach wounds. "We're going to need to remove the bullets on those ones first, can you handle being around this sort of thing?" He asked Martin.

"Yes, I can handle it. Let's do what needs to be done."

"Right, then we must begin now. Hold this please and try and stop the bleeding on the other wounds while I work on this." He took out a pair of tweezers and with them he opened up the wound and moved another pair of them in to remove the bullet. Turner began to twitch a bit in response.

"The fact he is alive is a start", the man said. He slowly and deftly removed a bullet, and he dropped it into the pan and put both tweezers in the pan as well. He then began to stitch the wound up. As he worked, he seemed to have pondered for a moment. "Aha!" He pulled out the Zippo from John's pocket and cauterized the wound.

The man then turned to Martin once more. "I knew this white bastard would have one of these. Would you care to hold some gauze over that?"

Martin followed the man's orders precisely, while the sweat dripped from his forehead. "Certainly" he said in response to being asked about the gauze, and he executed that request.

"Wonderful. Now I assume you are important if you have got this man to dive in front of what seems like a magazine full of bullets for you am I wrong?" He asked, continuing the process he had committed to before, focusing on the second wound right below the left side of Turner's rib cage.

"Well...I am Prince Martin of Dakmoor, from Ghant."

Finishing up with the wounds on the torso, he moved down to Turner's legs and quickly realized that he wouldn't be able to do anything past field dressing the injuries. He leaned back against the interior of the plane, then lit himself a cigarette with John's lighter and looked towards the prince. "That cannot be true my companion. You see I fought against that man once long ago and I can assure you after what my friends in Rhodesea committed upon that camp nothing survived. So please stop playing these games, tell me who you are."

"I was kept alive by General Kruger in captivity, out of fear that my release back to Ghant would have led to retaliation against Rhodesea. I am in fact Prince Martin of Dakmoor. Begia guztiak ikusten."

The man's eyes widen. "It appears you are more than the eye can see. I'm sure we can prove this when we arrive in Destinado. Anyways I am Zakkhar Anatoly. My father was Loufian and my mother a Destinadian woman, after one of the first Eprarian wars he arrived in Destinado to try and find a new home and thus I was born. Skip forward a few years, both my parents passed and I arrived in Loufe as fresh

recruit. Yet I had what most call a gift was employed as a medic and then a field surgeon. Day in, day out I heard stories of your demise soon after your camp was raided. Each one now seemingly greatly exaggerated. However a few more years into the future and I had grown tired of that life, moved back with what remained of my family in Destinado and ended up the Boss. That was where I met your friend here. Anything else I should know about the man I'm going to be stuck working with."

"...Is there any word from Ghant?" Martin asked, inquisitively.

"I'm not sure you'll wish to know. Ghish is in pretty bad shape right now."

Martin began to grow cold and pallid, with the hollow feeling in the stomach, worried about his home and his family. "Please, tell me now."

"A large group of what I can best describe as rebels took control, threw out the girl in charge who I believe held the name of Sophia and began an all out war against everyone and everything around the palace after their leader was shot. Big funny looking bastard that man was, I can't seem to recall his name though. Though forces from the New Lowlands and Ausitoria all drove hard inland and have probably dealt with the problem by now. I'm sure you know first hand of what happened in Loufe as well."

"...What girl in charge?"

"Sophia, she was the acting leader or something equivalent to that I believe. Wait a moment..... she was of Dakmoor too wasn't she? I did a little research on this type of stuff during the war my apologies for I don't remember much about it."

Martin's jaw dropped and he turned white as a ghost. "What happened to my sister?"

"I..... I don't know. I'm sorry." He said, finally switching his tone of voice over from a calm, cool and collected Russian accent to an honestly concerned yet unknowing tone.

Martin was both terrified and livid at the same time, wanting nothing more than to rush home. "I need to get back to Ghant, as soon as possible."

"Not if you're taking this man with you, and I'd be willing to bet my life you're hiding a few wounds from me as well. Give it a few days and I promise I'll do all I can to help. Things just aren't working out for everybody right now and I sincerely wish I could help you out but as of right now the only comfort I can offer you is medical attention."

Martin sighed nervously, inclined to take this man's word for it. "Fair enough."

"It's going to be a hell of a story to tell one day my royal friend, one day." Zakkhar exhaled deeply and looked up to the ceiling of the plane. All they could do now was hope that they made it back in time to make things right.

Zakkhar had fallen asleep during the time it had

taken for the small plane to reach the compound in Destinado Tierra. Sleeping was always an interesting thing for such an emotionless and straightforward man, as sleeping meant dreaming, and dreaming meant having to think about his life. Blood tended to be a huge part of whatever he thought about. Coughing a bit, he woke up as the plane smacked down on the hard packed dirt runway. He heard the pilots argue yet again in Spanish. Zakkhar got up and stretched out.

"You awake my friend?" He asked Marin.

Martin was passed out from exhaustion, but eventually awakened to the sound of his companion speaking to him. "...I am now. Damn, I must have been out a long time. We there already?" He asked, as he came to and became aware of his surroundings once more.

"Yes, I will have my men take your friend to a safe place where my colleagues and I can work on him but for now I must take you to meet somebody who has been waiting to see you. Are you ready?"

"That sounds good. Yes, I am ready, about as ready as I am like to get."

"Let's get on our way then," Zakkhar said as he took off his parka and stuffed it into a dark green military style backpack. He tossed the bag on over his grey V-neck t shirt, dark blue jeans and black combat boots. Then he started walking towards the back of the plane. As the rear ramp came collapsing down Zakkhar called out again while putting on a pair of sunglasses. "Let's get going my friend."

Stepping out into the muggy, humid tropical setting, a large white walled villa could clearly be seen on a short hill just beyond the runway. On the road leading up the hill was a medium sized village of huts and adobe houses. Off in the distance a massive mountain range ran along the horizon. "This is where we'll be calling home for a while, follow me." Zakkhar said setting off for the large main building.

Martin nodded, and got his clothes in order, before following along. "Sounds like a plan to me. Sleeping in a bed without having to worry about if I won't wake up the next morning sounds lovely."

"Now this man is an ego driven prick, so be careful. If I were you I would start off by calling him sir. Trust me I don't like it either but it's the little things that count." Said Zak in English as to make sure nobody else but Martin could understand. "Anything else you want to know about him?" He asked while walking up the dirt road to the village.

"I would like to know what else I should avoid doing."

"Don't appear too hostile but if I were you-" He stopped and put his arm out in front of Martin to stop him as an old truck carrying chickens drove down on the village road. Zakkhar put his arm down then walked up the road once again after it passed. "Try not to look too weak either. If he wants somebody to be feminine he'll find a girl. Don't be sarcastic either he doesn't get that, the man's like a robot. Anything else?"

"Nope, that is all, should be helpful enough. Thanks."

"Right, then we'll be on our way now. So please enlighten me, have you ever been to a place like this? Worked with men who are viewed so badly as us?" Zakkhar asked Martin on their trek.

"I have had dealings like this, yes. In the deeper parts of Ghant."

"Go on, please, I was never a fan of the ambient nose of this place a human voice is always more soothing."

"Mercenaries, wild folks, the underground. Mostly people that are not members of contemporary society, rather living on the outside, by their own set of rules."

Stopping in front of the main black iron gates, Zakkhar laughed as they opened. "You'll do just fine here then amigo."

"That is very reassuring. Thanks." Martin said as the black iron gates gave way to them, allowing them to walk into the grounds of the Villa. Martin never felt more like a *desperado* then he did in that very moment, as he waited to see what might happen next.

Ghant

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"Look on my works, ye mighty, and despair!" - Percy Bysshe Shelley,
Ozymandias



Ghant
Minister

Posts: 2457
Founded: Feb 11, 2013
Civil Rights Lovefest

Biding

by Ghant » Sun Sep 28, 2014 5:59 pm



"Biding" Ghish, Ghant

In an office building down the street from the Imperial Palace, Oscar stood in the living room horrified beyond belief at what he had witnessed earlier. Meanwhile, Yula Zimya sat and brooded at a table, red as a beet and frustrated as all hell.

"Godamnit!" She exclaimed as she slammed a fist on the table. "Albert is such a fucking idiot."

There were at least two dozen people there, standing around and sitting down, discussing the situation, and various plans of action.

A young woman with brown hair and blue eyes in a raggedy black blouse spoke up. "He is still alive, I heard, at the hospital. His goons are in the Palace right now."

A young man with black hair and a bruised eye to match responded. "Maeson Margela is upon the city with the military. He can secure the city."

Zimya snorted. "Margela is in league with Albert and these other scumbags from up north. Nothing he is going to do will be any good for anyone but their own."

One of Zimya's guards, presumably, spoke next. "Margela is en route to the Palace as we speak, most likely to speak with whoever is there...someone is there, we just do not know who."

Zimya laughed. "Toregg? Can't be. He is just some brute with a battleaxe. There is no way to know for sure."

Despite his better judgment, Oscar spoke up then, for the first time. "Silverworm. That is who occupies the palace."

The room turned silent, with all eyes turning to Oscar. "Silverworm...really? How do you know that?"

"...Before everything happened the way it did, Sophia had me crawl through the secret tunnels to the overlook behind the wall in the throne room. I saw Silverworm enter, and converse with Albert. The two are in league, although I suspect that Silverworm is using Albert for some unknown agenda...which even now might be coming to fruition. Margela is a part of whatever scheme Silverworm has."

Everyone in the room began to buzz in commotion, the noise of it was almost deafening to Oscar. After a few moments, Zimya slammed a fist unto the wooden table. "Enough, all of you. If what Oscar says is true, then there are sinister things taking place in the palace. We need to find out what they are saying..."

The girl in the black blouse spoke again. "How do you suggest that be done?"

Zimya grinned. "We send someone in..."

Upon having said that, Zimya turned her eyes to Oscar, as did everyone else. The hair on the back of Oscar's neck stood up. "No...they knew about the overlook. They will have someone posted there. They will kill me if I am caught."

A man dressed in black sthat was leaning up against the corner of the room responded, without looking up. "There is another way, you know. One that they might not know about."

Zimya turned to the man, whom she hadn't noticed before. "Oh? And what might that be, exactly?"

The man laughed. "The secret tunnel beneath the throne that runs the length of the palace and exits out of the courtyard in the back, built by King Robert I."

"...And how would you know about that?" Zimya asked him, seemingly annoyed.

The man flashed a grin at Oscar. It was James. "I just do...because I am a purveyor of such information. Needless to say, I can get Oscar into the tunnel beneath the throne, so he can hear whatever is being said. A recording device might help." James pulled out a sound recorder from one of his coat pockets, and he tossed it at one of Zimya's guards.

The guard caught it, and handed it to Zimya. Zimya snatched it, and examined it in her hands. "Alright, this might work. Whoever you are, you will take Oscar here down there and show him the way." She

turned to Oscar. "Oscar, you will plant this beneath the throne, so we can hear what is being discussed in the palace...and for God's sake, do not get caught."

Oscar sighed heavily, and then shook his head. "Do I have to do it?"

"You have already been down there once." Zimya snapped. "Last time you went down there for Sophia. Now you go down there for Ghant. Your country calls upon you to act. Will you rise to the occasion?"

"...I will do it." *What am I getting myself into?*

"Good. You should get going now, then, as it is getting dark out." She got up and walked over to Oscar. Staring him in the eyes with her icy blues, she placed the recorder in his hands. "Good luck and Godspeed, my boy."

James put a hand on Oscar's shoulder. "Time to get going."

Oscar nodded, and the two of them left the comforts of the building as everyone watched on, silently. James pushed open the front door, and out into the city the two of them walked.

The streets of Ghish were hellish in appearance. There were scattered fires, trash, bodies, and the silhouetted figures of looters and street fighters lurking about. In the distance, Oscar could hear the occasional gunshot and scream. It made him gulp and shake...his eyes grew wide and his skin was marked by gooseprickles.

James knew how to go about undetected, moving from shadow to shadow, and beckoning Oscar to follow him. Each step seemed like another perilous adventure, ridden with danger and the risk of being discovered by someone with ill intent.

After what seemed like hours, James came upon a small building that sat at the corner of the Government Palace and the Imperial Palace. Like the Palaces, it was an ornate building made of marble and stone, with columns, and stood three stories tall. The door appeared to be locked, but James fumbled at some keys that he drew his pocket. He tried one on the door, and it opened. He gestured to Oscar to follow him inside, which he did.

The building was dark, and no one was there. There were paintings and tables with ornaments upon them. "The Corner Building, where members of the Imperial Palace often met with those of the Government Palace."

"Indeed it is. Hasn't seen much use lately, which is helpful for us. The passageway that runs from the courtyard to the area beneath the throne has an access point from the basement." James grinned as he led the way downstairs into the basement.

The basement was a maze of bookshelves, many of which were in poor shape and littered with cobwebs. James meandered his way through the bookshelves, with only the light of a flashlight he pulled from his pocket to illuminate the otherwise pitch black chamber.

Eventually they came upon a bookshelf against the

wall at an end of the path. "This one is it, I believe." James said. "Help me move it."

Oscar helped James move the massive bookshelf to the side, just enough so that James could slip behind it. Once back there, James fumbled around the wall, until he found a loose piece of stone. He pulled it loose and pulled a lever in the gap, which made the stone wall open. "There we go. Follow me now."

Oscar followed James into the tunnel. This one was different from the other one he was in previously in. This one was much older, and wide enough for two people to walk shoulder to shoulder. It was also winding, with many angular left and right turns, so that one could never see that far in front of them.

After walking through the tunnel for awhile, James stopped in front of a stone wall. He pulled a loose stone from the wall beside it, and pulled on another lever. Quietly, the wall before them was retracted in, revealing the fabled chamber beneath the Obsidian Throne.

They could hear talking as they entered the chamber. It was round, with reinforced stone columns ascending to the top of the chamber. There were steps to the left of them, ones that presumably went up to the area directly behind the Obsidian Throne, and in front of them and to the right of them were smooth stone walls that created the round chamber.

James leaned into Oscar's ear, and whispered. "Careful where you step, there are bones."

Oscar looked down, and saw bones...human bones. He shuddered in fear. The legends of Queen Baela of Ghant, of the House Pazuzu performing ritualistic human sacrifice in the Throne Room were apparently true.

A new voice could be heard from above. Without much hesitation, Oscar pulled out his recorder, turned it on, and held it up to the ceiling, just beneath the Obsidian Throne...

Maeson Margela was feeling annoyed of late. *Fucking foreigners, always sticking their noses where they don't belong.* It was bad enough that he had to compromise with the Lowlanders for the sake of good faith...but it was another thing entirely to have to deal with the Ausitorians. *Fucking bastards.*

He received a message from Admiral Lord Arthur Lea of the Ausitorian Navy not too long ago...

To: Acting Prime Minister Maeson Margela
From: Admiral Lord Arthur Lea, HMS Panda, Ausitorian Navy

To whoever is in charge, for the moment;

As you may have noticed, we are currently on hand to provide support for the innocent, our allies in the legitimate government, and the Lowlandian forces; with a division to land in Ghish shortly on a friendly goodwill visit in case their support is necessary.

As you seem to have some sort of hold over affairs in Ghish, I have been asked by my superiors to inform

you that we shall hold you responsible for:

1. Co-operating with the Lowlandian forces and delivering Sophia of Darkmoor and her associates to safety, pronto;
2. Rounding up all of Lara's agents and handing them over to international courts, pronto;
3. Transitioning Ghish into a demilitarized zone, with only international peacekeepers allowed, to maintain law and order;
4. Forming a moderate and legitimate government, and keeping us fully informed.

Proper progress towards these goals will be met by our support and formal diplomatic recognition.

Best wishes etc.,
Admiral Lord Arthur Lea,
HMS Panda
Ausitorian Navy

When he wrote his response in that temporary office of his, before he went to the Palace, his words were firm.

To: Admiral Lord Arthur Lea, HMS Panda, Ausitorian Navy
From: Acting Prime Minister Maeson Margela

In response to what you shall hold us responsible for,

1. Sophia of Darkmoor's whereabouts are currently unknown, but should she be recovered, she shall be delivered into your protection for her own safety.
2. Any and all of Lara's agents that are apprehended within our borders shall be dealt with as we see fit, and shall face proper Ghantish justice.
3. Seeing as how Ghish is the capital of Ghant, and how the Ghantish armed forces are now in the city, I am firmly opposed to any and all suggestions of demilitarization.
4. My government is both moderate and legitimate, and naturally you shall be kept up to date on any developments as they should happen to occur.

Thank you,

Maeson Margela,
Prime Minister of Ghant

Maeson had a copy of these messages on his person as he strode into the Imperial Palace, which was under heavy guard. In the throne room, it was as silent as a crypt, and nearly as dark. Sitting upon the throne was none other than Lysander Lyzahn himself, the man otherwise known as *Silverworm* with his fingers interlocking beneath his long, steeped nose.

Maeson looked up apathetically towards the tall, gaunt figure seated upon the throne. "Good to see you in such fine health, Silverworm."

Silverworm reclined back into the throne. "Have you ever considered how I feel about being called that?"

Maeson shrugged. "...Can't say that I have. After all, tis a most endearing nickname."

"Indeed it is. Fact is, I have been called Silverworm

for so long, that there are times when I think it is my name.” He smirked. “Did you come here to regale me over the merits of that?” He asked pointedly.

“No, I have not. I have come bearing the words of the Lowlanders and the Ausitorians.” Maeson presented Silverworm with the messages and notes of his meeting with the Lowlanders, which included their terms.

Silverworm seemed un-phased. “The Lowlanders want a garrison and the White Rose of Dakmoor... they can have both. That garrison could prove quite useful at latter stages, and the White Rose will be of use to us at a later time.”

This one has it all figured out, doesn't he? “What about the Ausitorians?”

“They can have their cake as well. Your response is adequate, as it shows them that you are willing to meet them halfway. They won't bother us with the rest...they will have their hands full soon enough elsewhere.”

Maeson tilted his head. “Care to explain?”

“Lara's campaign is progressing rapidly and with flying colors. The northern half of the continent will be unified under her banners within six months, if they keep their present pace and if it goes according to how I anticipate.”

“...How are they able to advance so quickly now, even as the Coalition presses upon them?”

“Lara is threatening nuclear retaliation, which is forcing the Coalition to exercise extreme caution, as well as slowing their counterattack. Also, Alderann is planning to use a ruse in order to attack the northern nations in an attempt to deliver them with greater ease into the hands of Lara. Quite useful Alderann is proving to be...so convenient for us.”

“What exactly do we want out of this?” *Or what do you want, perhaps a more aptly put question.* Maeson knew better than to put this all on Silverworm at this point. Chances were that Maeson would be held responsible for whatever Silverworm did at this point.

Silverworm grinned widely. “...Time.”

“Time? How can we use time?”

“You shall see, my friend. For with time, all things are possible. We just need to *bide* it. Wait, and be patient.”

“...I don't really understand.”

Silverworm laughed. “Of course you don't. Lara and her brother Constantine are at each other's throats. Other parts of the world are consumed with fighting and one insurrection or another. The rest of the world is growing weaker, and more fragile. A vacuum, if you will. The longer it goes on, the... easier it will be for *us* to do what needs to be done.”

“...And what needs to be done, Silverworm?”

Silverworm pressed his fingers against his chin as he

leaned forward upon the throne, deep in thought. Then he gave his answer, in his ever gentle tone that served to mask whatever he was thinking at the time. "Princess Arietta is in Kravia right now, being courted by Prince Artyum. Such a union cannot come to pass, if we are to prevail in the way that we mean to. For this reason, Arietta must die, and her death be pinned on the Kravians."

Maeson was taken aback by that. *Building our political agenda on the bodies of dead princesses.* "...And how would you have that be done?"

"Quite simply. Empress Alisa Nesterenko should be having a grand and festive coronation ceremony within roughly six month's time. Arietta will be in attendance. It will be all too easy to slip some poison into Arietta's goblet, and then we she succumbs to it, we can just as easily say that the Kravians did it. It should be believable, considering how long and how vehemently the Kravians have thought ill of Ghant and its Royal Family. The blood between House Gentry and House Nesterenko does run deep, after all."

"...Is Albert aware of this plot? Surely he would not be thrilled with a plan that involves killing his niece."

"Albert doesn't care about the girl. He will be the first one to tell you that the child isn't even his blood, but rather the bastard spawn of her whore mother and some fellow that wasn't the Crown Prince John. We should it matter to him that his false niece dies in a plot that would inadvertently result in his own consolidation of power?"

"Yet, Alisa Nesterenko is the spouse of Empress Selena of Heilinor. Surely both will demand retribution from us should the plot be discovered."

Silverworm chuckled. "Selena is in critical condition in a hospital bed in Loufe, and Alisa has been mentally wrought over this whole thing. The power of lesbian love is great, it would seem. Alisa's weakness shall be exploited and used against her for our own gain. Such are the consequences of women in power."

"You speak of Albert consolidating his power. That cannot be done for as long as Nathan lives."

Silverworm's eyes began to flash. "...Precisely."

Maeson's own eyes grew wide at that, seemingly in disbelief. "You can't mean to say that you will see him dead."

"Of course I mean to see him dead..after the northern half of the continent is consolidated. Nathan will serve no more use, and can only do more harm than good. When Lara and Nathan have returned to Letople, I mean to have him killed..and we can pin that on Lara, the bitch that she is. It wouldn't surprise me to learn that she has some plot to dispose of him after she has accomplished her goals in the northern half of the country. Nathan's forces are taking heavy losses on account of Lara using them as cannon fodder." Silverworm shrugged benignly. "Besides, I consider offing him a favor. The minute that he received word that Sophia had been killed, he died on the inside. I pity the man, truly, for having to live out the rest of his days

thinking that.”

This plot to leave the Emperor dead so that Albert could seize the throne was leaving Maeson aghast. “Albert would not approve of this plot, and as for Sophia...she is not dead.”

Silverworm’s eyes narrowed. “He wouldn’t complain if his nephew did perish tragically. After all, Albert is an ambitious man, who was wanted the throne for quite some time. He has just lacked the gumption to do it himself...we can do it for him...I have no such reservations with bloodying my hands of him.” He shifted upon the throne. “As for Sophia...of course she isn’t dead. Nathan doesn’t know that, and he will continue to be ignorant to that fact...and we have the Lowlanders and the Ausitorians to thank for that, seeing as how they plan on whisking her away.”

“What happened to her, anyway?”

“When the fool Marius and his Lara henchmen commenced their attack on the city, he led a detachment into the Government Palace, where she was located. No doubt he wanted to try his luck at making good on his...affections for the Princess. Luckily for Sophia, she had a dagger that I gave her in advance, anticipating such an event.” He smirked widely. “Albert’s dagger...I have received word that Marius fled back to Gaemar, with a hideously disfigured face and the dagger between his ribs. It would seem as though he failed...after all, every rose has its thorn.” Silverworm looked around the room, studying the architecture, and then he continued. “Once Gaemar raises its banners and decides to press its luck, Albert will have the excuse he needs to purge Ghant of those that would challenge our agenda, starting with Gaemar.”

“What of the other Dakmarans?”

“What other Dakmarans? Martin is dead, Michael is amok with mercenaries in Rhodesea, and Malibar is... ill and indisposed. They are no longer a threat, not a one of them. We shall be free to go about our business unperturbed as a result.”

Maeson laughed. “So, let me see if I get this straight. You plan on ruling Ghant through proxy compliments of Albert, and weakening all the other countries in the world, including Zathalon, so you can sit back and eventually acquire...time?”

Silverworm nodded. “Yes, more or less. Tell me, Margela, have you heard of this witch of Albert’s that is lurking about the Palace as we speak?”

“I have no idea what you are referring to. A witch? What good are witches and their prophecies of future events?”

“Well, Margela, I mean to let you see for yourself.” Silverworm turned his head. “Guards, bring in the witch, if you would be so kind.”

Flanked by guards, the witch emerged a few moments later, dressed in solid white, with hair long and black, skin as white as snow, and deep blue eyes that seemed to burn like a blue star.

Silverworm beckoned to the woman. “Witch of the

northern wilds, tell me your name, please.”

“Esmeralda, if it pleases you.”

“Indeed it does. Now tell me, Esmeralda, what was the prophecy that you told the Lord Protector? Please recite it.”

Esmeralda closed her eyes and breathed deeply, and then she spoke.

“The Soldiers shall be scattered like smoke, and the
Lords
shall succumb to madness. The Sword shall be drawn
too late, the
Eagle shall bathe in its own blood, the Wolf shall fall
into its shadow,
the Dragon shall with two heads devour its children,
the Leopard shall witness a miracle,
the Bleeding Roses shall bloom once more,
and the Dark One shall bring forth the night upon
entering the world.
A thousand lands shall be rent with fire, and even the
Immortals
shall tremble, for there will be no haven but the
night, no safety
without fury, no peace until the ashes grow cold.”

Silverworm raised an eyebrow, even as he cocked his head. “You see, Margela, there is much to come. The words of a woods witch are ever wise, are they not? Best to be prepared in any case.”

Maeson snorted. “Bullshit. There is no wisdom in that, just archaic superstition.”

“Oh, is that so?” Silverworm asked with a curious voice. “I shall prove it, then. Guards, seize the acting Prime Minister.”

Maeson’s eyes grew cold, and his fingers numb. As he began to quiver in fear he yelled. “No!” By then it was too late. Silverworm’s guards had seized him, and he was being held in place.

Silverworm was amused. “Esmeralda, tell me of this man that is restrained before you.”

Esmeralda nodded quietly as she drew a dagger from beneath her dress. She approached Maeson silently and with grace, almost like some ominous specter. She came upon Maeson fast, and with her dagger in her hand, she stared deeply into his eyes, something twisting within them like a serpent in dark water. “Your hand. Give it to me.”

Maeson reluctantly stuck out his right hand, by then trembling with fear. Esmeralda drew her dagger across the palm of it, drawing blood. Maeson grunted and shivered at the sight of his own blood, and then Esmeralda drew the wound into her mouth. She sucked on the blood for a few moments, her mouth warm and sweet. She studied his eyes for a moment, and then she pulled away.

Then she spoke. “Maeson Arastos Margela, born April 12, 1963, in Jehenna. The eldest of two sons born to Artemis Margela and Ezri Arastos. You and your brother were close, oh yes. You shared everything together, toys included. Tvas a wooden soldier that belonged to your brother. Oh how you wanted it, how

jealous and envious of your brother you had become. When it was denied to you, certain measures were taken. You fought with him by the river, your brother Artos. There was no one there to see you do it, for you two were alone in the woods playing, while your father worked and your mother prepared dinner. You knew you could get away with it, and be rid of your annoying little brother, once and for all. So during this fight you gave him a good beating, and he said you could have the wooden soldier. That wasn't enough for you though. He cried, he screamed, he begged you not to do it. Every step as you dragged him by the back of his hair to the side of the river, he begged you. Yet you didn't listen, and you threw him into the river. You watched as your seven year old brother drowned in that river, as the water filled his lungs and the current swept him away. You smirked, even, knowing that the deed was done. Then you ran home and told your mother that your brother fell into the river. Everyone believed you and comforted you. Poor Maeson, they said, having to experience that. You cannot lie to me, Maeson Margela. For the blood can tell no lies."

Maeson was in tears now, weak and powerless. It seemed like such a long time ago, when all that happened. He was only ten...another life it seemed like. "...No one knows that besides me."

"I know. Your blood told me. Your blood tells me other things, Maeson Margela. In it I saw a vision. I saw a demon, pale and beautiful in a land of ice. She waits for you, with mismatched eyes and a thirst for vengeance. Artos waits for you too, to show you the way to the abyss, where all men of wicked nature find themselves upon death."

Maeson shouted. "Don't kill me, please."

Esmeralda laughed. "Today is not the day you die, Maeson Margela. There is yet time for you to draw your breaths and to count your blessings." She turned her back to him and walked away, back the way in which she originally came.

Silverworm laughed. "Told you. Such power, is it not? Such ability as that...should prove quite useful." He raised his voice then. "Guards, release the acting Prime Minister, if you would."

As Oscar intently held up the recorder to get the gist of the conversation, James leaned in close to his ear, and whispered. "Thank you Oscar, you have been very helpful. Now our time together has come at its end. You see, you know too much...not your fault, but it is the reality of the situation."

Oscar turned to James in that moment, feeling an immense sense of fear. "...No...I trusted you."

James smirked. "What did I tell you in the sewer? I told you that you should never trust a thief..." In that moment James reached for the recorder as if to snatch it from Oscar's hands.

Oscar pulled it into his body. "No."

James began to grow angry, his eyes flickering in the darkness. "Give it to me boy. It belongs to me."

Oscar struggled...and then he yelled.

Oscar heard the shouting coming from above. "What was that...beneath the throne, the chamber! Get down there, Toregg."

Before long, Oscar could hear a stone slab opening, and light penetrated the chamber, while James and Oscar struggled amongst the bones for the recorder.

James looked up. "Fuck," he said softly, and pushed himself off of Oscar. James did a beeline for the entrance that they originally came from, and he pushed the lever, to shut the door.

Oh no, Oscar thought, as he got up to run for the door as it was shutting. He was too late though, as the door had just sealed itself as Oscar got to it. He pounded on the door, and tried to frantically search the walls around it for a loose stone block.

Then something grabbed him by the back of the neck. Oscar kicked, and the recorder in his hand flew from his hand and landed in a pile of bones. Immobilized by fear, he went limp as the man that had him gripped by the neck began to haul him the other way, up into the throne room.

In what seemed like one long dull haze, Oscar was dragged up the steps and thrown around the corner of the throne, landing roughly on the floor. The man that dragged him up there kicked him hard in the ribs, making him roll across the floor a bit, until he was laying on his back before the throne. He looked up, and saw Silverworm seated upon the throne.

Silverworm smiled as he narrowed his eyes. "Ah, look what we have here. Oscar Talax, Secretary of the Jauneketxea. How kind of you to join us."

"Please don't hurt me!" Oscar exclaimed as he got to his feet, full of fear.

Silverworm gave a sly look. "Me, hurt you? No, I wasn't planning on that." Silverworm turned his gaze to Margela. "This is the rat that has been spying on me from all the fun little nooks and crannies of the throne room. What do you suppose we ought to do with Sophia's pet?"

"Keep him alive at any rate, he has useful information."

Silverworm snorted. "Information that I already have access to. This one knows too much already, and I mean to have him dealt with." Silverworm's face then lit up. "I mean to have you prove your usefulness to me, Margela. So it falls on you to do the deed."

Oscar nearly fainted, his body numb and shaking. He didn't want to die. *Please...no...*

Maeson snorted. "He is just a boy, fresh from University."

Silverworm chuckled. "Of course. Many a University student and recent grad have died in the past few days. Taking him out back and finishing him off in an alleyway would hardly be conspicuous."

"I will not bloody my hands on him!"

Silverworm's mouth contorted. "Either you will kill him, or I will have Toregg kill you and him. Your choice."

Maeson didn't say anything. He just nodded as he walked up to Oscar. Maeson grabbed Oscar by the back of his shirt collar and dragged him off. One of the guards handed Maeson a gun as he walked out.

Silverworm gestured to Toregg. "See to it that he follows through. Should he fail, you will kill them both, and bring me their heads."

The hulking warrior Toregg Demonyo nodded, and followed them out.

Oscar was somewhere else mentally, his eyes wandering. He must have pissed himself already, as he could smell the piss on himself. The sky was dark, and the moon loomed large amongst the clear stars, burning bright amongst the blackness of space.

After a while of thinking back on his life, his parents, his brothers and sisters, school, his apartment, his cats...he was thrown from Maeson's grasp into an alleyway. There was burning garbage, bodies strewn about...and shots in the darkness amidst the occasional scream, some women, others men.

Maeson stood over Oscar, with his pistol pointed at Oscar's head. Oscar merely trembled there, on his back, pushed up a bit by hands. "Please don't kill me, sir. I don't want to die. Please, I will do anything."

Maeson's eyes began to water, and his hands shook. As his lips quivered, he responded. "I am sorry kid. Sometimes, we all get to take one for the team. I bid thee farewell from the world, and may you find peace in the realm of the Gods."

Oscar began to cry then, tears streaming down his face. He shifted then, and threw himself at Maeson's feet, clinging to his right leg. He didn't say anything, he just wept there, his body shivering with fear. He closed his eyes as he cried on Maeson's shoe...

Then there was a loud bang, like a sound of thunder. Then it was over. In the final moments of Oscar's life, there was hesitation on the part of Maeson...as if he was *biding* his time.

Oscar's time was up...as the blackness turned to white...so much for biding time.

Last edited by [Ghant](#) on Mon Sep 29, 2014 10:52 am, edited 2 times in total.


Ghant


Factbook | RP Resume | IIwiki Admin
Commended by [Security Council Resolution #450](#)
Recipient of the [Greater Dienstad Roleplay Reward](#)

"Look on my works, ye mighty, and despair!" - Percy Bysshe Shelley,
Ozymandias



"Survive, Regroup, Hit Back"

by [Mizrad](#) » Fri Oct 03, 2014 5:12 pm

 **QUOTE**

OOC: Somebody please point out if you spot a godmod or if I'm missing something, but I think this post has it all so far. This is also Part 1 of the post

Mizrad
Senator

Posts: 3789
Founded: Jan 02, 2013
Ex-Nation

due to it exceeding the character limit.

Sea of Zathalon Mizradian Naval Patrol, Callsign "Guardsmen" Routine Patrol

Two Falchion-Class Corvettes led by a lone Crusader-Class Helicopter Destroyer slowly cut through the waters of the ocean along their predetermined patrol path. It was an everyday thing that most of the sailors had done for years now and despite running into a combat situation being rare, it had happened before on many occasions and everybody with the three ships was ready for it although nobody would really expect it. Only recently had talks of what the area could hold began and that was due the Emperor's fleet striking the continent Naybra lay so close to. Even though the desire to see action or to stay away from it was a strong emotion felt within the minds of the sailors, all of them knew even Lara wasn't crazy enough to strike the one country that seemed to somehow ally itself with every superpower in the regional conglomerate despite remaining neutral and still only pissing one out of many off. It was for exactly this reason that the souls sailing with "Guardsmen" fleet were so surprised about what was occurring in front of them.

"Sir, AWACS choppers have picked up something on the radar. I think you should see this."

Said a young seaman at the helm of the communications center on the bridge of the MNS *Horizon*, the helicopter destroyer. Quickly rushing over to see what was going on Captain Chin Han realizes what the sailor meant. It was a single transport vessel trudging past international waters and straight into the exclusion zone.

"How far away is the ship and do we know what it is?"

Asks Han to the sailor who quickly comes up with an answer.

"Not far, the choppers were circling it for a while before deciding to call in asking whether or not they should investigate. There's an AH-1Z, AN UH-1Y and an AWACS UH-1. They are capable of intercepting the vessel if need be sir."

The captain ponders for a moment as he looks out at the ocean.

"Is there anything else that has appeared on any radar or satellite reports?"

Taking a second to scroll through past reports and look at the map of the area with notes about any radar sightings tacked to it. Nothing showed anything significant that wasn't already dealt with or not combat related. Pretty much everything else was friendly movements of allied ships and other Mizradian patrols.

"No sir. This is the first thing we've run into that has yet to be handled all week."

Almost instantly Chin yells out orders.

"I want somebody to radio in to those choppers that they are to intercept the ship immediately and find out their purpose and origin. Somebody else sound general quarters and inform command what we've encountered."

Everybody on the bridge complies as the messages are sent out and general quarters is sounded. Almost instantly the missiles and 5" gun onboard the MNS *Horizon* go online as both the Falchion-Class Corvettes have their guns go active. A few sailors head out to reach the other weapons on board such as .50 Caliber HMG's and all SAM or other anti-aircraft weapons continue to train themselves on the sky as they had been doing before. Just in case this was in fact a trap or the vessel had more than met the eye the Mizradians would be ready. The last time that Chin hadn't ordered such an overreaction, they lost a few men and the repercussions weren't exactly good. While the captain and the fleet was busy reacting to the situation the squadron of helicopters receives the radio call to pursue the ship.

"All Rolex callsigns this is Rolex Actual, you are to track the vessel in the water and figure out what it's up to. Report back if anything changes we'll be here to

help if you need it out."

The lead Huey pilot, Warrant Officer Paul Conway radioes back to the ships.

"Copy that Rolex Actual we're moving on the boat now, out."

As communications between the ship and choppers stop, the three helicopters call amongst themselves. The Conway, at the controls of the AWACS UH-1 quickly steers maneuvers behind the AH-1Z as the man starts speaking through the radio to his wing men.

"Rolex Squadron this is Rolex 1-1, proceed towards the ship with Rolex 1-2 leading the way. 1-1 Will act as perimeter security, 1-3 will deploy a search team on to the ship once it is deemed safe. Please acknowledge over."

Flying into a formation with the attack chopper, Rolex 1-2 taking point the pilots call through the radio affirming that they are ready. Coming up on the vessel Conway breaks right and goes high to circle around as the other UH-1Y banks left then curves in towards the ship while the 1-2 heads straight for it. With Ensign Andre Wilson manning the weapons systems he uses thermal imaging to determine how to approach. As this happens Conway reaches for the controls to his chopper's speaker system as the co-pilot takes control.

"Unidentified ship, this is the Warrant Officer Paul Conway of the Mizradian Navy. You are illegally trespassing into protected waters. Please identify yourselves, your country of origin, purpose and prepare to be boarded. Any resistance will be met with lethal force. If you comply no further action will be taken."

A call back from the ship can be heard.

"Hello! We are an Alderannian cargo vessel! We will not hurt you!"

In a matter of seconds after the message is relayed, a rocket bursts out from the ship and screams towards Conway's chopper. Noticing the threat he slams the chaff and flares before railing the chopper into an evasive action. *So much for not hurting us* thought Paul.

"Incoming fire! All callsigns, weapons free take out the crew! Rolex Actual this is Rolex 1-1 we are taking small arms and anti-air fire from the ship requesting immediate assistance how copy over!"

As Conway manages to escape the clutches of the hostile weapon, the rather slow reply from the fleet comes in.

"Solid copy Rolex we're deploying a team of VBSS operators now. Just hold on out."

Meanwhile Wilson identifies his targets and prepares to fire.

"This is Rolex 1-2 solid copy 1-1 we're bringing the rain over."

Pressing his finger against the trigger a hail of 20mm bullets pour down from the 1Z's gatling gun and into the deck. The men manning a shoulder mounted AA launcher are instantly obliterated as the deck of the ship begins to splinter from the amount of shells slamming into the ship. Strafing along the length of the ship the chopper then lets loose with a volley of Hyrda 70 unguided rockets. Making sure not to put too many into the vessel and completely destroy it the guns are still more than enough to clear the surface of the ship until it's unrecognizable. As a few fighters remain shooting from the deck the attack helicopter pulls in as Wilson calls for the VBSS team to take it the rest of the way. With Andre suppressing anything that tries to fire at the Mizradian transport chopper, an eight man team from the UH-1Y led by Warrant Officer 2 Juan Josez gets ready to board. The man strap gas masks on, unroll their sleeves and tighten up their gloves before slapping magazines into their weapons. As the UH-1Y hovers over the stern of the ship while spraying it with M134 fire, Juan grabs a hold of the tan cord and ropes down with his team to begin a sweep leading up from the stern of the ship towards the bow.

Taking cover while the miniguns on the UH-1Ys mop up whatever else is left behind it then pulls off to await another call for support. Popping out from cover Josez and his men quickly spot a man trying to fire on them and a few

Marines release a quick burst of semi-automatic fire to end his life. As the opposing force holds strong, two of Josez' men are hit but push on until another man takes a bullet to the throat and begins to breathe the last air he'll ever take in. Running to his side is the team's corpsman who begins working to save his life while the two injured fighters keep suppressive fire going. As the medic continues to draw the fire of the Alderannian enemy force, Josez takes the advantage and with the three other Marines moves up on the starboard side of the ship while "Doc" takes the fire on the port side. Sweeping into the port side Josez pushes inwards dumping round after round of 6.5mm ammo into the hostiles. Noticing the remaining fighters falling back into the bridge and then most likely the bowels of the ship as anybody left on the surface was most likely dead. Knowing there would be a need to keep up the pressure Josez orders the corpsman to take the dead and wounded to the stern of the ship for pick up and calls for everybody else to head with him.

Following the order, one of the helicopters drops down at the stern end of the ship and picks up half the team. The other four men would have to search the rest of the ship, alone.

So far there was roughly twenty or so dead on the deck and most likely quite a few more injured or also dead below. However the ship was of a decent size, roughly a hundred fifty feet in length give or take a few meters. This meant there could be a whole lot more people below deck and whether or not they were hostile was yet another pivotal question. Up above Conway begins repeating his message but to no avail, nobody was coming out with their hands up or even replying. It wouldn't take too long for them to regroup and reinforcements would be a while away since Paul had just recently called in the request. Deciding to take the risk and push onward, Josez has his men stack up on the door to the bridge. Smashing in one of the windows, a Marine whips in a flashbang and begins firing as the three others blow through the door. Clearing from the top of the ship downwards they meet little resistance before heading into the bowels of the ship.

"Sir, we've got gas masks and tear gas canisters. They would be awfully useful in a place like this."

Says a Marine. Juan and the others agree. The men search the bow section and crew quarters under the ship only to find a few stragglers refusing to fight. The returning corpsman quickly takes them into custody and keeps them under watch on the deck. The four others then begin a push into the cargo hold. Breaking through the door and hurling in a few canisters of tear gas quickly spreads throughout the hold and sickens those inside. There would be little more room for them to run to and their only options would be fight or give up as hiding in such a small area would be useless once the rest of the Mizadians showed up.

The Marines watch their fire as quite a few former hostiles throw down their arms and surrender. Juan orders them to walk slowly and line up against one of the cargo containers in the hold. Staying in cover while directing their new prisoners around a quick head count reveals another twenty men. That meant around forty people were taken out of commission by the VBSS and chopper teams. That didn't mean however, that they were finished with their mission. Two Marines keep their sights on the captives as the other two begin a further search. Almost instantly Juan's comrade is hit in the chest by a burst of enemy fire. Knowing that the men guarding the prisoners wouldn't break their sights from them Josez takes a few pot shots with his rifle towards the enemy. The young W02 was amazed the tear gas had yet to subdue the few remaining hostiles, maybe another can would? Pulling out one last canister of the non-lethal mixture from his vest the man rolls it down one of the lower walk ways spraying it's contents along the length of the hold. This would be the last stand for this Alderannian crew.

Moving down the catwalk Juan gets notice from one of his squadmates that their injured friend wasn't dead he was just unconscious with pretty severe yet non-life threatening wounds. His bulletproof vest had done it's job but needless to say that Marine wouldn't be fighting again for a very long time. Finding a few lifeless bodies, Josez kicks their ribs with a hard and swift motion to see if any of them were still alive. He continues doing this until he finds a live man, coughing and wheezing from both the tear gas and a bullet wound in his torso. This was what remained of their mysterious enemy. Hearing as the opposing crew member of the ship gets shot down Juan drags the survivor to the line up of other prisoners. Doing one more head count,

Corporal Griffin Walker reports the situation to his commander.

"Officer Josez sir, we've got twenty two men captive as of right now and a number presumably higher than that as KIA. Our search of the ship suggest there isn't anybody else on board but we should do another check and try to find a manifest."

Juan nods and comes up with his reply.

"Good work Marines and thank you corporal. Any word on the wounded?"

Griffin's head drops down.

"The sergeant didn't make it sir."

The men sigh. Juan motions for the prisoners to head towards the deck of the ship as he rolls up his sleeves and pulls up his gas mask to reveal his Hispanic features, dark skin, brown eyes and a brown 5 O'clock shadow beard just short enough to be within military standards.

"Let's hope these pricks were worth it."

He exclaims. Coming down the from the stairs a group of eight more Marines meet with Juan. Their commander explains the other eight were up above providing security and checking for any survivors. Apparently there were five hostiles who had managed to survive the sweep of the deck. Two troops from the reinforcement group help Juan and his squad escort their new "Friends" to the deck for pick up. The fleet wasn't far away now in just a few minutes they would be seen over the horizon of the night sky. Lining the prisoners up against the shredded side of a cargo container on the top side of the ship a few Marines keep watch on them Juan calls them over to him and a translator capable of multiple languages one at a time. Fortunately Juan himself shared a common language with most of them, English and Spanish. It was only a little while before they had uncovered quite a few things. These men were Alerannian Imperial Guard, real top level shit as the translator would describe it. Another man is called over, seemingly more willing to talk. Juan asks him a few basic questions to start off.

"Good evening sir, what is your name and position on this ship? Why are you here and what is the purpose of all this?"

The man, dressed the same way most of the dead were but not similar to any of the other prisoners just stuck his tongue out. Leaving it there for a second or two he then slams his teeth down on to his tongue and it flops out of his mouth. Seemingly unfazed he continues to look dead into Juan's eyes. The translator decides to try and pat him down but the psychotic and unbroken prisoner head butts the translator causing him to fall back. Before he can move on to try and hit Josez, the Marine hits the offender with the butt end of his rifle in the face. Upon hitting the ground the Mizradian doesn't let up. Kicking him in the sides a few times to make sure no more stiff resistance could be given Juan picks him up by the clothing on his shoulders and drags him on his knees in front of the other prisoners. It was just now that he realized this was the man who he had found in the hold of the ship with a bullet wound, tear gassed, badly injured and still fighting. Making sure he stays in place Juan yells out to the Alderannians.

"This man here, who is he? What does he do? Why are all the men dressed like this so dead set on fighting? Do any of you know anything about him? Don't worry we won't hurt any of you as long as you don't try and hurt us first. Please just answer my questions and you'll all be home to see your families in a matter of days."

Nobody stepped forward or said anything.

"Fine, we can play it that way."

Said Juan as he hastily came up with a plan. He would call the men over one at a time in private to try and get them to talk. Maybe it was being in front of everybody else that scared them off.

"You, come here and speak to me. Everybody else turn around."

The man down the far right end of the container meets with Warrant Officer Josez as everybody else presses their face against the massive cargo box. Juan puts his hand on the sailor's shoulder and gives him a reassuring smile. A look of fear and nervousness crossed the crewmen's eyes. He had witnessed what the Mizradians could do to them with minimal casualties in firefight but what would they do to him one on one in a prisoner situation? The young sailor would soon find out as the equally young WO2 speaks in a hushed tone.

"I called you over here so you could speak to me without fear of repercussions from your friends over there. Don't worry about them because the only people who will know the truth of this conversation are you and me. My team's corpsman says you weren't fighting, you were just maintaining the ship when they caught you and you surrendered. Tell me what I want to know and we'll let you go home free no questions asked alright?"

The sailor nods. He then begins to speak in a quiet, rushed and very nervous tone.

"W-w-well"

He stutters.

"T-those men. They were br-brought on to the sh-sha-ship about a w-w-week ago. The Emperor's Imperial Guard. We were dressed different because we're just the crew. W-we don't e-even want to be here. I-if we didn't do a-as they said they would be angry. They told us we had to deliver some...."

He pauses.

"Deliver some what?"

Juan asks.

"Things for Lara and her war in Heilanor. They kept a lot of stuff quiet aside from how we would be handling the equipment. Immenise care and secrecy they told us. Most of the containers are filled with random equipment like small arms or food. Then there were the crates they didn't want us to open. They were all blue. As if somebody planned on hiding them in plain sight. I don't know what was in them but... b-but I heard it was really bad."

Juan taps the man on the shoulder and smiles at him again. He then orders a pair of Marines to take him back over with the other crew members for holding until the whole matter could be sorted out. However now that they knew why certain members of the crew were so hesitant to comply they would have to be a whole lot more careful. The surviving Imperial Guard members numbered at two and only one of them still had the ability to speak but he was also horribly injured. All of the crew was going to be further interrogated once they got on the Mizradian ships however.

Juan then heads down below into the depths of the ship to find the cargo hold. He passes by a few Marines just patrolling, piling up bodies or searching about as he walks. Reaching the blown open door the Marine steps over the random obstructions and debris while dodging eerie puddles of blood and bullet casings that had just begun to cool down. Seeing the fireteam of VBSS operators searching container to container Josez quickly jogs over to them. Stopping them before they can crack open any more containers he asks what they had found so far.

"Some rather interesting stuff. Non-perishable food, a lot of ammo, some soft skinned military vehicles here and there and an odd assortment of shit you would find in a store during Valentine's Day. A few cash and clothing shipments as well. We only have these blue containers over here left to crack though but there's quite a few of them. Probably three to be exact."

Juan starts walking towards the first container. His left hand is pressed against the door and his right is wrapped around the grip of his rifle.

"The crew. They said these containers were forbidden. That the men we had to fight against to get in here were the Emperor's Imperial Guard. What the hell would they put in here that requires a platoon full of die hard fanatics to guard and something nobody even told the crew about?"

The head Marine of the VBSS operators replies back.

"I have no idea but we should start checking. On me gentlemen, we're breaking this door down! Masks on!"

He yells as the Marines quickly get into place. Each one throws their gas mask back on just in case. Three men on each side of the door with two people prying off the lock with a crowbar. They grunt and sweat as they struggle but eventually the locks break off and the doors give way. Both Marines reach for the handle and pull it open as the other six storm in with their weapons up. What they found would be rather interesting. With the light of the cargo hold shining in it had seemed that an entire arsenal was located inside the container. Even the flooring had be reinforced to support the weight. M16's, Kalashnikovs, RPG's and even 120mm shells lined the walls with body armor and BDUs. Hundreds of weapons were stacked up everywhere. Everything matched up with what most of the Marines knew about the Alderannian military. It was quite clear their military was going to have a large presence in whatever the Imperial Guard had been up to.

"Holy shit! There's enough guns and ammo here to supply a whole battalion!"

Exclaimed a man.

"On to the next one?"

Asked a Marine. Juan was about to say yes when he found a manilla folder on the back table.

"Wait, I think I've got something here."

Josez opens it up to find a bunch of documents concerning the ship's purpose. A manifest of cargo and those on board along with the ship's log was inside. Everything seemed to be there including the weapons they had just discovered. However one man was just listed as "The Courier" and two containers were just listed as "Special Cargo". As if the one small arms container wasn't enough, apparently the fourth blue one was filled with the same gear. The fireteam takes note of this as they move on to the next blue container. Juan tucks the documents into his vest and moves on.

Piling against the door of the next cargo shipment the process repeats and the locks break off with some very stiff resistance. Rushing inside the eight Marines look on in confusion at what they find. Two flags hung from the back wall side by side. One was of the "Pink Dragon", commonly used by Lara's force and the other was the flag of Alderann. The bottom of the container was packed with dirt and pink roses and on top of the dirt were boxes upon boxes of love letters and jewelry. In front of the two flags on a black pillar bolted into the container though was two rings and a necklace of diamonds, gold, rubies and all sorts of other jewels. One of the item's alone was probably more money than Juan would make in his entire life. Also on the pillar was a letter with a red wax stamp at the top right. It read

Dear Lara,

I hope this letter finds you in good health. As I hope your conquest go unchallenged. You are most remarkable and for the nations of this world to treat you like a monster is unfair to you and does not do you justice for how could someone as fair as you be a monster. I want to tell you that you have inspired me, at one time my nation was a great empire and feared. But those days have long been gone but because of you, and your inspiration I have decided to reforge my empire. For the inspiration that you have given me I pledge my support to you. Hopefully I may meet you soon. I am drawing up plans and I expect my fleet to sail in two weeks time. I have called upon my banner men and I know they will not fail me. Until I meet you.

*Sincerely yours,
Titus I*

After reading through it Juan also grabs it and tucks it in his vest. The other Marines documents everything with their helmet-mounted cameras and take begin jotting down what they find. The VBSS Captain approaches the warrant

officer.

"Son, if I were you I would get those documents back to Captain Han immediately. He needs to see these."

Juan gives an affirming nod. They are interrupted as a corporal outside the container yells out.

"What the fuck is that awful smell!?"

Heading outside the container, the eight Marines gather around the last unidentified "Special Cargo" crate in curiosity. Nobody says anything until the captain orders it be opened up. The same process as before is repeated yet another team and as the men storm in they see a putrid and horrifying sight.

"Oh my God...."

The captain says in a straight forward tone in complete shock. His gun hangs by his side as he shoulders it and the other men just look on in terror. Written all over the walls in blood was "*Down with the nobles of Ghant*" and "*For you Lara*" like the things inside the container were some sick and twisted prize. The "Prize" was a dead body strung up on meat hooks against the back wall mutilated beyond recognition. On the ground were his innards and whatever body parts fell off paired up with multiple other bodies. The blood that had been caked on the floor had begun to dry and turn to a sticky paste that gave off an awful smell. Flies and rats had flocked to the crate like pigs to slop. It was a horrifying sight that the Marines didn't want to look at any longer. Exiting the crate they quickly search the last one only to find more weapons. With their search finally complete they head back up to the top deck after scouring every inch of the vessel. Juan could only think one thought as he went to head back the *MNS Horizon*.

What the fuck did I get myself into?

As they reach the surface the men take off their masks and wipe the disgusting remnants of what they'd scrummaged through below deck off of their BDUs. In the time they had spent in the ship it the rest of the fleet managed to make their way over to the vessel. The reports of the team had found were already being radioed in to the command section of the fleet and all the way through to the top of the Mizradian government. The ship was to be hauled back to a Mizradian Naval Station in Naybra for repairs and catalogging. Everything in it was going into Mizradian custody for further investigation and most likely sold off, used or held in storage. Josez still had something to do though.

Two Hours Later, Bridge of the *MNS Horizon*.....

Warrant Officer 2 Juan Josez had fortunately been given enough time to clean up and think about what happened. The other prisoners were being interrogated and the Imperial Guard members were in holding under tight guard to make sure they wouldn't try anything on themselves or the Mizradians. Josez was to have a meeting with Captain Chin Han on their way back to Naybra. He had gotten himself a clean pair of battle dress uniform clothing and scrubbed off his boots. He had even taken a shower, shaved and prayed to try and get the thought of what he'd come across on the ship to stop haunting him. As he approaches the captain, Chin immediately notices him and speaks up.

"Ah well if it isn't Warrant Officer 2nd Class Juan Josez. It's great to see you looking fine."

"Thank you sir, you as well."

Juan replies. Instantly Han picks up where he left off.

"Well let's get down to business then. The things you and your men discovered on the Alderannian ship were, eye opening to say the least. I was disturbed just looking at the reports and I can only imagine the horrors you must have witnessed. I also apologize for the loss of Sergeant Walsh. I know he was your friend and I gave the order to intercept the ship."

He pauses to compose himself. Chin knew death followed him everywhere no

matter what, like a bad omen.

"Anyways General Douglas was informed of this and he, along with Intelligence Department want to speak with you. The holoboard is yours to use my friend."

Juan walks over to one of the many holoboards on the bridge of the ship. It was a pretty impressive piece of technology, 3D rendering allowed it to recreate images and display them either on the board with it's touch screen or project them into the air for all to see. Juan always wanted to see what the second option was like and decided to pick that. Douglas and the MDI Director Alice Worthington appear as General Frank Douglas begins.

"Hello Mr. Josez, it's a pleasure to meet you. Unfortunately we don't have much time for introductions or any of the formal shit that I would usually kill time with. What you found on that ship was a crucial development in the War of the Two Empresses. What we've managed to figure out is that Lara is quite clearly working with Alderann as you should have been able to piece together on your own. Fortunately no transmissions were made off that ship and Lara will have no clue that it has been taken under our control. It's log also suggest that the ship would have arrived in port around noon tomorrow. Sadly we do not have the resources r time to put together a team and brief them upon what they need to do in only a matter of hours. You are also technically our best expert in the field so I come to you with a pretty big request that I hope you can handle. I need you to help lead a team into Lara's compound in Heilanor to ensure the letter is delivered as to make sure no suspicions arise. A few men that I trust with my life are being dispatched to aid you as they were stationed in Diamante and lay no further than a few hundred miles from your current position. I can assure you these people are the best of the best, but they have nearly no knowledge on the region or Alderann and that's why I'm coming to you to ask for your help. I want you to be their guide and see them through. You'll take them into the country, deliver the letter and then leave. It's actually rather simple if you don't think about it too much. This is a lot to ask but I need you to do this for your country. Think you can pull it off?"

Josez, completely shocked by the proposal is taken back. However he knew that this would be what he had to do to make sure more men didn't die. Seeing Walsh go was enough let alone millions more. It was his turn to save lives, and the role that needed to be played was nearly handcrafted for him.

"Without question sir."

Douglas smiles.

"Good, you'll be meeting with the team tomorrow morning and then shipped into Lara's territory through our friends at Black Shark International on a shipping vessel similar to the one you intercepted. You'll exit through the same means and if things go wrong we'll have the Ausitorians to get you out if need be. Get some sleep, you're going to have a big day tomorrow."

And with that the conversation ended as Juan heads back to his room to pack and sleep. Meanwhile a few hundred miles away on a plane heading to Naybra, Master Sergeant Allen Greene and Agent Matt Ross were about to make their return to the world stage for the first time since their incident in Loufe. The only three men left who knew plenty about Lara and what she was up to were these three men for Turner had unfortunately gone missing and everybody else was either dead or tied up in something different. This would be what made Mizrad's element of surprise their biggest advantage if they could just manage to pull it off.

Diamante City, Mizrad-Rhodessea
1st Mizradian Strike Response Fleet, 1st Naval Theater Group
Operation Royal Removal

Six men and four women sat around a large wooden table in a conference room in one of the many floors of Diamante's Government Tower. It was just after midnight and most of the people in the room were quite tired despite the fact most of them also had the ability to sleep the prior day in. Those who weren't so lucky were clearly jacked up on whatever remedy they could find to keep them awake. The lights of the new born and still growing city shined bright outside the room's windows which were located on the 50th floor of the building. What they were going over was quite literally how Mizrad would contribute to saving the world. Standing at the head of the table is Admiral

Patrick Talden, commander of the famed 1st Mizradian Strike Response Fleet. He would also be placed in command of the much larger and recently revived 1st Naval Theater Group in only a few moments. What was also about to happen was his two cents upon the Mizradian reaction towards Ausitoria's request to blockade Lara and her forces. Yet first something equally pivotal had to happen. The quiet in the the room is broken up by a young intern heading in with a document in his hands before giving it to Talden.

"What is this?"

Asks the admiral.

"Sir this is an intercepted message from Emperor Titus of Alderann to Lara. One of our naval patrols based out of Naybra discovered a small vessel bypassing Ausitoria's exclusion zone so they boarded and recovered it. I would suggest you read it before you say anything here."

Responds the intern as Patrick then speaks up.

"This is an interesting development. Thank you very much, I appreciate this."

As the intern leaves the officer clears his throat to start off the conference after reading through the revealing letter.

"My colleagues I come to you all with one request."

The ageing man said, starting off his proposal.

"This is to let the 1st Naval Theater Group set sail at full speed to aid our allies with not only the siege of Heilanor but also the attack against Alderann's ships. President West himself along with the Union have already issued the order to help Ausitoria once they requested our help but whether or not we attack the fleet from Alderann is a decision that has been left for us to make as we have just now discovered their true intentions. CA Recon reports show there is a naval task force of significant size bearing down upon our friends and if they are not stopped they may just cause the entire operation against Lara to fail. What I ask is that with the massive fleet we have on hand, we destroy the Alderannian presence in the conflict. While the nuclear threats from Lara are more than apparent she never directly said any action against her allies would cause that to happen and I'm sure that if we give off the message we're not here to play around it should show them that if they so much as dare to bring nuclear fire to the table again we'll surely be the ones delivering it to their door. Even better is that they'll all have no idea we are in on their plan. When Lara realizes we're ahead of every move she makes then we might just gain the upper hand."

One of the men speaks up, a commander of one of the lesser fleets in the NTG.

"Are you suggesting that we start a war the likes of which would wipe us all out? Mutually assured destruction does not mean the destruction of just the enemy I do hope you haven't forgotten that."

As the level of noise in the room goes from dead silent to nearly everybody speaking one of the women speaks up. She, Rebecca Maree was a trusted political adviser who Ryan West was known to go to for help. If she wasn't on par with anyone in the room it was because she was far above them when it came to thinking up a good answer. Sure enough when she spoke no one else would.

"While a nuclear war is in fact preposterous what I believe the admiral is saying is that we need to show we're the dominant force here. While actually starting a radioactive holocaust isn't on our agenda we can always just make it look like it is and that will hopefully take it off the agenda of our enemy. If you give one man a weapon he'll abuse it and take control of the other man. When the other man takes the weapon and then turns it on his oppressor then the tides will turn. Just as they hopefully will here. What we should also take into consideration is the fact we are a force far superior to a group of sword wielding, throne driven sociopaths. The men and women in our finest military units along with those who serve our allies can without a doubt pinpoint where these WMDs are being stockpiled and take them out of the equation. It's a risky move but we have done it before and we can do it again. If somebody

disagrees with me speak up now."

Another admiral speaks up, this time it is Mark Holland of the 8th MSRF. This man was a well trained and highly experienced figure who was considered a great tactician when it came to naval strategy thus how he'd gotten so far in his career.

"While I agree with you Mrs. Maree there is a massive flaw in that plan. The issue is that if assault the Alderannian naval force before we take out the enemy's nuclear capability then they will have a massive window to decide whether or not they want to launch those weapons and then also enough time to act out their decision. We're already within striking distance and even if we weren't our friends in Ausitoria are more than capable of sending teams to disrupt enemy communications if not also take out their nuclear weapons sites. My suggestion is that if a joint force of special operations groups is sent from all countries participating then we can all strike at one time to cripple Lara's ability to retaliate with nuclear weapons all while taking out her only hope of reinforcements by having our fleets send Alderann's ships to the bottom of the ocean."

The room goes silent for a few moments before Admiral Talden starts to talk.

"That is why this man is an admiral and that woman is a trusted adviser. All in favor of the plan please stand up."

All but one person gets up from their seats, the woman sitting down is of the southern Mizradian government and her political stance against breaking out and fighting even after the war with Maverica was well known. With a 9:1 vote the plan would be put into action once all the ships had come together in the Diamante's man made bay, which would not be very long. As the meeting draws to a close all the people in the room get up and exit with the knowledge of what was soon to come implanted in their minds. This Lara had certainly messed up. For she had now truly made the wrong move.

A Few Hours Later

"Fuckin' Beautiful, isn't it my friend?"

Asked Admiral Patrick Talden to the much younger Ensign Griffin Mathison. He was referring to the massive amount of ships that had gathered just off the coast of Mizrad-Rhodesea under the banner of the 1st Naval Theater Group. Rarely was this group ever called into action for it was made up of a seemingly impossibly high percentage of the Mizradian Navy and the need for it was almost never present. Three MSR Fleets, well over one hundred combat capable ships not including their logistic, submarine and transport counterparts had been brought together. The last time an enemy of the state had the unfortunate experience of seeing what these men, women and ships could was years ago in the first Mizrad-Maverican war. In the time it had taken to assemble the meeting and discover what Alderann was up to, fleets from Mizrad's various international bases had gathered in Diamante to go on the offensive.

"Indeed sir. It's good to be back."

Said the ensign with a serious look on his face as the rising sun began to put the anti-glare measures put into the bridge's windows to work. At last the final ships to be loaded up were finally ready to set sail as a massive crowd of civilians stood watching in awe at the fleet. With the escort frigates moving out along with a few squadrons of planes to help guide the 1st NTG out to sea the admiral begins moving his ship as he calls through her radio to every man and woman with the Mizradians.

"Ladies and Gentlemen this is Admiral Patrick Talden, your commander for this operation. I know most of you may be scared right now but I also know a lot of you are feeling something else as well. Since the Ausitorians asked for our help I knew what we would be doing here and that's delivering a fatal blow to the evil bastards who put the country we call home in flames. As we crawl out of the depths of despair and rebuild one thing is blatantly obvious. We are once more at the full power we once achieved and as the wars at our borders come to a close every bit of anger we've pent up over these past few months becomes directed down upon one sick, sad, unlucky son of a bitch who is in for one of the greatest multinational coalition ass whoopings ever given."

He begins to get louder, his message becoming ever so clear and the motivational power behind it far more menacing.

"I want the heads of Emperor Nathan and Empress Lara impaled on a fucking stick to let rot beneath the Mizradian flag as it waves proudly above Government Square! We will push onwards with our brothers and sisters in the Capitalist Association, we will push onwards unto the sands of Heilanor and onward to victory! Hoorah!"

The admiral screams, in reply getting an "Hoorah!" from everybody else with the fleet. If there was one thing you didn't want to do, it was anger every super power in a multi-region coalition especially when one of those superpowers was a vengeful and motivated military superpower, an imperial economic superpower with a navy God himself would appreciate and the final being a military power so advanced and so intelligent that they would be ten steps ahead of every move you make while wielding a nuclear arsenal capable of blowing up everything ever made. Mizrad, Libraria & Ausitoria and The New Lowlands were about to wreck everything that Lara had tried so hard to build in one swift motion. In the words of one Mizradian Marine,

"It's going to be biblical"

Pulling together as one massive group of ships to exit the bay the naval task force begins heading out to sea. On the decks of the carriers, early warning AWACS planes along with their fighter jet escorts begin to soar up from the decks. The sounds of engines blasting off as four squadrons of aircraft take the sky after ascending from one of the many different ships is still somehow drowned out by the noise of everything else. Over the radios requests to take flight, set sail or do whatever was needed were constantly coming in along with all other sorts of reports. However once the 1st NTG was to reach waters closer to Heilanor then the answers every man and woman wanted so desperately would come in. Radar and AWACS along with satellite scout reports were all beginning to come into play with three goals. One, find and track the fleet from Alderann. Two, find the safest passage to Mizrad's passage to the blockade and three, ensure the safety of all allied forces through providing an early warning and detection capability for anybody in the area against an enemy retaliation.

Meanwhile on board the ships, Talden had given the order to prepare all weapons both offensive and defensive. Almost instantly the crew which had been stationed on general quarters began to rush to do their jobs. 5" Guns on the destroyers, 40mm Bofors cannons on board the frigates, the mighty 22" guns of the seemingly invincible MNS *Avenger* along with other sorts of cannons all swung to life as their loading mechanisms railed rounds into their chambers. Lower calibers gunpowder projected firearms such as M242 Bushmasters located at the sides of the ships or various Quad .50's and lone M2 HMG's were strewn about every ship with sailors manning them. In the control rooms of the missile boats, arsenal ships, destroyers and any other craft capable of carrying an anti-ship or long range missile the tubes the weapons had been loaded into were ready to burst open at any moment as the need for their use could be very soon. The unguided rocket launchers on board some of the smaller boats or aircraft carriers were already being uncovered to whirl about ready to fire. If somebody was dumb enough to try and send aircraft or a projectile weapon then the ungodly amount of CIWS guns emplaced on every ship were more than ready to handle it along side short to long range SAM's, MANPADS and even friendly aircraft. Below the surface, wolf packs of submarines were ready to launch a nuclear blow in the event Lara decided to pull the WMD card. Even if she didn't, most subs would be capable of delivering a devastating blow with their highly accurate torpedos, tomahawk and anti-ships missiles. These ships and subs were now dashing through the water heading straight for Heilanor at full speed. It would be a matter of most likely two to three days before they arrived. In the meantime, Mizradian forces stationed in Naybra would have to do the trick.

In the bellies of the transport, assault and aircraft carrying ships waited tens of thousands of Marines all poised to strike. Every weapon in their arsenal was loaded on to ship or plane to be sent with the fleet and either station in Naybra or help make the push into enemy territory with Ausitorian forces. They were all motivated to do their jobs despite the nervousness and tension of the situation so most passed the time through maintaining and cleaning their equipment. After all, their journey was going to take quite a long time. One

particular man, Sergeant Dre Fargo was busy stripping his rifle and cleaning it's interior to the point where it would shine. Dre was a 5'11, short haired black man with a symbolic scar left over from severe burns covering most of his right arm. He had received fighting in the jungle nation of Xong Pong a year earlier and still had nightmares about the moment he received it. While the burns from the fires and chemical bombs could be seen, the sight of watching six thousand of his comrades massacred and desecrated along with one of the bloodiest battles in Mizradian history burned into his mind wasn't something that could be seen. Despite all the things Fargo had gone through the man remained with the Mizradian Marine Corps and maintained a sense of offensive humour.

"Alright Forest you can cut that out now, not like it collects dust and dirt in the seconds that you're not holding the damn thing."

Jokes one of his platoon mates Private Manuel "Forty" Cuarenta.

"At least my last name isn't a number, how the hell is letting this baby sit and rust in the ass end of the ship going to help it in any way?"

Snaps Dre before being interrupted by Corporal Brian Swenson.

"I've always wondered why they call you guys the minorities, all you do is argue and that seems to be something the majority of the world spends their time on."

Fargo grins as he wipes a cloth down the polished inner barrel of his AR Scorpion assault rifle. It doesn't take too long for Forty to butt right back in.

"They call us minorities because of our skin color ese, you and your people spent their time locking us up."

The other two both stop and look at Manuel laughing before Dre can put together a sentence.

"Wow you're fuckin' stupid, didn't you ever discover what sarcasm was ese?"

The group finally begins to laugh altogether rather than at each other as the ship they are on sways back and forth. The sergeant watches as both the corporal and private begin stripping and cleaning their weapons as well. Using all sorts of field equipment from their cleaning kits the rifles begin to shine inside and out. As they sit against the side of an AAV on boxes or just on the floor a silence drapes over them all for a little while. Acrid smells of exhaust fill the hold due to all the mechanics cleaning up and maintaining the vehicles. Talking over the ambient noise of the other people on the ship Forty asks a question.

"So what do you think we'll even do when we get there? Roll in, kill a bunch of people then sit and wait for them to say they don't want to play anymore like we're in preschool? There has to be something deeper than that right?"

Swenson and Fargo pause to look at each other. Fargo is the one to reply.

"There is something deeper. There is an evil out there being run by that sword swinging bitch and we'll be the ones ending her."

Swenson then speaks.

"Forty you seem to be forgetting something else, we get paid to do this and we signed on for shit just like this. We get orders and we follow orders, 'nuff said. That should be a pretty good answer if you need one. Now I'm like you Dre, 'cept I ain't a faggot and I don't talk all educated and shit."

The three laugh as they continue to maintain their weapons. It was going to be a long journey and a far longer mission but passing the time was the only thing men like them were focused on at the moment. War is a wild storm and right now was the calm before it.

Diamante Aiport, Diamante City, Mizrad-Rhodesea
Governor Dylan Quintero
Meeting With General Kruger

Dylan had just exited the meeting about what Mizrad was going to do with Lara and the 1st NTG and he was already exhausted. The only thing keeping him awake at this point was can after can of redbull, mug after mug of coffee and dropping tobasco sauce into his eyes. Each one was rather unorthodox for a politician but anybody who needed to stay up for days at a time came up with their own rituals to stay up. Taking shots of tobasco sauce to the eyes was one of them despite how much it hurt it still worked well. Sitting in his office going over some last minute message and checking up on what Kruger had said, Jake Miller walks in.

"Dylan it's time, Kruger wants us in Albicant for the meeting soon."

He was right. Kruger had just recently taken Albicant and it was in fact time to go and meet with him. Hopefully this would be the last time he had to deal with that stereotypical military dictator asshole. Coming up with names for him was just about the only other thing that Dylan was killing his time with aside from political issue and trying to keep himself up. Getting up and heading down the hallway next to a pair of guards and Miller as they all straighten out their suits or body armor. Taking an elevator to the parking garage floors beneath the building they are met by a large convoy of black Suburbans and police Chargers. Most of the SUVs were filled with either politicians, advisors or military officers. Everybody else in the convoy was a trained guard with only the mission of getting everybody to the airport. Taking a few minutes to sleep in the truck as they make way to the airport ignoring the interesting different sectors of the city under construction, supporting Mizrad or saying they want Kruger in power.

Arriving at the airport to a private jet and two C-130's flanked by a squadron of F-25's. Loading up into the cargo sections of the two C-130's were a handful of Maxxpro MRAP's and even LY129 AMTV's along with their crews and two platoons of infantry. Such a large presence was going along for the meeting for a few reasons. The first being as a show of force, sort of a *"There's plenty more where this came from"* kind of threat. The second being to show Kruger that Mizradian support would be an absolute must for his campaign and the troops coming along were more than enough to show him that. The third and final being that Albicant was still technically in the middle of a war zone and protection to the utmost level would be a must.

Boarding the plane in a hazed state of exhaustion, Miller helps Quintero into his seat as everybody else sits down and the planes begin to take off. The first ones up are the seven F-25's, which quickly barrel off into the sky. Then the C-130's and the private jet ascend to the air as a crowd of reporters watches taking note of the presence and what they were going to do. Before stumbling off to sleep in his seat, Dylan manages to send a message to Kruger as they speed towards their meeting destination.

TO: General Kruger

FROM: Governor Dylan Quintero, Diamante, The Republic of Mizrad

ENCRYPTION LEVEL: Level Five, Highest

Good Morning Mr. Kruger,

I hope this message finds you in good health and prosperity. It's been a long time since we first said we would start working together and after a long and bumpy road full of obstructions I'm happy to say that I am currently on my way to Albicant to meet with you. With me is a large group of political entities and military advisers along with a company of troops and equipment for both security and to show where Mizradian weapons and aid can get you. We'll be arriving shortly.

For A Brighter Future,
Governor Dylan Quintero

1st Naval Theater Group ORBAT

Last edited by [Mizrad](#) on Tue Jul 21, 2015 10:36 pm, edited 5 times in total.

"No good decision was ever made in a swivel chair" -George Patton
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Mizrad
Senator

Posts: 3789
Founded: Jan 02, 2013
Ex-Nation

"Deception"

by **Mizrad** » Fri Oct 03, 2014 5:13 pm

QUOTE

OOC: Part Two

Over the Valmese Sea, International Waters 1st Mizradian Special Detachment Group, 2nd Squad Operation Royal Removal

"What do you think we got ourselves into this time Ross?"

Asks Master Sergeant Allen Greene to his friend Matt Ross in the Mizradian Department of Intelligence. They sit alone in the back of a small commercial Cessna rented out by "Private operators". Outside the shine of the Moon glistening off the water and the Moon itself would be the only things bright enough to be seen. In a short amount of time a porty city in Naybra would be added to that list. Sipping away at a glass of water Matt looks up to Allen.

"Something pretty deep. To be honest what we witnessed and uncovered in Loufe is child's play compared to what we're about to do, keep in mind I'm even taking Turner's loss into account when I say that. Lara is a crazy bitch if what happened when we met Nathan is still the way she acts. Judging by what she's done to an entire continent that psycho is probably much worse. The Emperor is a different story though. He probably won't recognize us for we were masks or concealing our faces for most of the time we had been with him. John was the only person who had a continued conversation with him so I'm praying we won't have a problem especially if this Juan character is as good as we're told. If we can pull this off it will change the course of the war. Lara will be cut off from the outside world and we'll be free to put the rest of the world back in order while she sits and rots in a continent that might as well be her prison cell."

Greene looks out the window.

"I agree, let's just hope to God we don't get caught. Things feel different without John here though.... we might have not even been in this mess if he and that prisoner got out alive. Who was he anyway?"

Ross sighs.

"Some Rhodesean or so I'm told."

Allen turns away from the window to question Matt.

"Kruger? Anybody important?"

Ross gets up to grab himself another glass of water.

"Not Kruger but he must have been important if he was the only person the Loufians wanted out of that conference. It is not our fault that Turner isn't here right now it's just the way the world works and we can't let it get the better of us especially now."

Allen leans back in his chair reluctantly agreeing. It would only be a few more minutes before Naybra would become visible. Taking note of this Ross gulps down the last of his water and the pair packs their things. Greene dresses himself in a black coat, dark tan cargo pants and a pair of black boots. His shirt was a simple grey t-shirt. Ross had grabbed a brown leather coat, a black sweatshirt and dark blue jeans along with a pair of work boots. He just had his hood sticking out if he wanted to wear it. They had dressed this way to act as the "Grey man", somebody no one would notice and have a hard time remembering. Josez was told to do the same and their safe passage would be guaranteed through the seal of Titus and other things they had discovered on the ship. An Alderannian military uniform was far too suspicious and out of place for only Lara herself would know why somebody was dressed like that. An everyday civilian on the other hand wouldn't stick out.

Through the door the two can hear the pilots making contact with the air port. Knowing this meant that the plane was about to land they sit down. As it begins to descend the captain tells everybody they were about to land. Feeling his ears unpop Greene looks out the window to the bustling city at night. The city begins to seem bigger and bigger until they go behind the buildings around the airport blocking the rest of the view. Feeling the landing gear touch down hard the Cessna smoothly comes to a halt and pulls up to a terminal. Allen and Matt thank the pilots before stepping off and heading inside the building.

Stopping at their designated meeting point, a coffee shop inside the packed terminal around three in the morning the two order drinks to get themselves up. Gulping away at them for a short while their "Guide" eventually arrives. Sitting down at their table is a Hispanic man in a Carrhart coat, a red shirt, blue jeans and boots.

"Hey do you guys happen to know what day of the week is my favorite?"

He asks. It was the challenge phrase for the operation, meaning this was most likely Juan. Matt quickly replies back.

"Why it would be Saturday of course. Let's get going."

Ross and Greene finish up their coffees before dumping them in the trash and heading off with Juan. Outside waiting was a white Ford Transit Connect. After taking a brief walk to a parking lot that wasn't as cramped as those around the airport the men climb inside to find a driver waiting for them.

"It's them."

Say Juan to the driver. He then sits down in the passenger seat as the other two sit in the back of the van. Josez then goes on.

"Open the crate in the back. Everything you need should be in there. We'll be at the dock in a few minutes, from there we can take a boat to eastern Zathalon and make our way on a train to the where the Alderannian ship would have arrived. If they get suspicious we're to tell them that we had to dodge a naval patrol and take a different route. If questioned by Lara's men inform them we work for her and if you somehow are caught by her pull the Alderannian card and tell them you're Imperial Guard. All in all the trip there should take seven to eight hours."

After taking note of what the Warrant Officer had said the MSDG operator and MDI agent crack open the case. Two concealed vests capable of stopping minor stab wounds and pretty low caliber bullets along with seals of Titus, some of his letters and the one that the mission relied upon. Also in the box were two HK USP Pistols, the standard issue pistols of the Alderannian military. They had been lifted off the dead Imperial Guard operators along with other documents stating who they were and that they were to be given safe passage to Lara. Enough food, water, money and clothing was also packed into two different back packs for Allen and Matt. Both men put everything together and put on the bags, vests and tuck away their pistols. The letter was to be carried in one of their bags as Juan didn't have one.

By the time they were finished with passing through the lively and beautiful urban landscape they arrive at the rancid smelling docks. Driving the Transit up next to a very small ship capable of going pretty fast a group of armed guards appears in all grey and black gear with rifles posed menacingly against the small van.

"What's your business here?"

Asks one of them. Then another man comes over and speaks to the person who had originally asks the question before walking away. The van is then let in without further question. Juan, Matt and Allen get out as the driver then takes the van away. Once on board the ship almost immediately begins to pull away as Juan directs the men to the bridge where they meet with a sailor, presumably the captain of the ship dressed in a pair of grey BDUs.

"Hello, my name is Constantine Earlenberg of Black Shark International. Your government hired us to get you to Zathalon. We should be arriving in a few hours so get some rest. I've already explained the situation to Mr. Josez so if you have any further questions be sure to go to either him or me. It's a

pleasure to meet you both."

Says Earlenberg, Ross is the one who replies.

"You as well sir thanks for the help. We'll be preparing for the operation if you need anything."

The captain nods after they all shake hands. All three Mizradians then head down to the crew quarters to catch up on sleep or prepare for landing. In a few hours they would be in front of Lara herself. It was going to be a long job and it had only just begun.

"No good decision was ever made in a swivel chair" -George Patton
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New title author every 1000 posts



Destinado Tierra
Political Columnist

Posts: 5
Founded: Nov 06, 2013
Ex-Nation

"The Game Changer"

by **Destinado Tierra** » Fri Oct 03, 2014 7:05 pm



Independencia, Destinado Tierra
12:30 HOURS, 10/23/13, DAY 8
Lieutenant Walter "Walt" Garcia
["Los Vaqueros"](#)

"Viva el Destinado Tierra!"

Screamed a young boy at a massive passing convoy of humvees while waving a Destinadian flag. Rolling through the unpaved yet hard packed dirt of the outer coastal ring of the nation's capital known as "The Strip", Lieutenant Walter Garcia leads his line of eight vehicles through the hilly favelas of the city. Looking over the horizon to the leviathan skyscrapers poking into the atmosphere the lieutenant straps on his helmet. To their north lay an open ocean and an unforgiving jungle and to their south lay an equally merciless urban landscape.

"Welcome to the heart of the jungle Walt."

Exclaimed the soldier sitting in the turret behind Walt, in a heavily Hispanic accented tone. Garcia was the son of a white mother from Mizrad and a Hispanic father from DT so being made fun of by his comrades was a common occurrence. Yet today was different, this was the first time Walt would see anything more than an isolationist patrol hundreds of miles away on the other coast of the country. Now he was seeing what he had signed up for, Destinado's richest yet most ghetto city. The murder rate where they were driving had remained at least multiple per day where as only a few miles inland it was only a small hand full per year. Needless to say, crime was the nation's biggest issue and the gangs weren't afraid to pick on anybody.

"Just watch the road you spear chucker."

Joked Walt back to his friend, Corporal Jose Manuela who was scanning the buildings around the convoy for signs of a threat. Ambushing government convoys was a dumb idea but the pay off was too large for some gangs to ignore them. Unfortunately the latter was about to occur.

"RPG!!!!!!!"

Came the ominous scream of another humvee gunner. It was the acronym every Destinadian soldier hated the most yet seemed to hear the most often. Suddenly the convoy was now being lit up with gun fire. From their sides, the roof tops and from their front and rear. The smoke trail of an RPG whizzes by Walt's truck and drills a building right behind him causing the lean-to to collapse and block the rest of the convoy. Not letting this hold them back, the second HMMWV which was now trapped pulls back a bit and then slams the gas. Bursting through the rubble with their gun blazing the truck rushes to Garcia's aid. Stuck in a state of shock, Walter was finally tasting combat. Feeling a warm, wet liquid drip down his leg the man is suddenly knocked out of his stare by blood splattering all over his face. Somebody had blown his driver's face clean off. Not wasting time Walt immediately pushes the slumped body off the wheel and takes control. A soldier behind him pulls the fallen man into the back seat as Walt climbs in to drive. Up above, Jose was battering the enemy's position with his high powered machine gun. Not feeling the humvee

moving he yells down to his friend.

"Walt! What the fuck are you doing!?"

Snapping out of his trance Garcia punches out the smashed up front windshield and slams his foot on the gas. Seeing the rest of the convoy close behind him the man continues to speed down the hill towards the section he knew -a wide open soccer field. Dodging through alleyways and through poorly maintained streets he comes to a drop off. A retaining wall thirty feet high blocked him from the field, however it did give him a clear view of everyone below and the road it ran along also had room for each remaining hummer. Pulling up into position as he's peppered with bullets Walt dives out of the passenger door and springs back up with his rifle. Railing back the charging handle on his '416 Garcia begins picking targets as the other men in the convoy either flee or take up position with him.

Spotting a sniper sprinting along the roof tops he looks down his sights and leads him as he continues running. Pressing his finger down on the trigger, the gun rocks and sends a 5.56mm bullet from the barrel to the man's throat as the force throws him off the roof killing him. Quickly transitioning to a man with a machine gun firing down at Jose, Garcia aims at his chest and squeezes the trigger in quick succession. Absorbing the recoil and keeping his aim steady as he fires, the man on the receiving end slumps over and falls down as well. Knowing his job was to be the commanding officer of the convoy, Walt begins a head count. Out of the forty men they began with only thirty three weren't dead or gone. Most of those thirty three had however suffered minor or severe injuries. After the head count he heads for his humvee's radio and begins making a desperate call.

"Protector 1, this is Whiskey team! We have seven men down and many more wounded! Requesting immediate casevac and air support on our position! Danger close!"

After a few moments of static a response comes back.

"Whiskey team this is Protector, we can't provide support at this time you're going to need to hold out on your own."

Punching the dashboard Walt screams back.

"What fuck do you mean you can't provide support!? Where the fuck is everybody else!?"

Little did Walt know what he was dealing with was happening all over the country. An uprising of sorts was occurring due to reports of the Ghish emperor taking over Zathalon and promising his support to nations like Destinado Tierra. Added to that was the issue of Maverica literally telling the people of Destinado Tierra they'd be saved from poverty in return for taking over. Of course, the public hadn't realized that didn't mean either side would support Destinado Tierra itself and the nation was now full of violent supporters of the Maverican president and Ghish emperor. Destinado was now dealing with what seemed to be the beginning of a full blown civil war.

"Whiskey team all other assets are tied up elsewhere. There's fighting all over the city we suggest you hunker down and prepare for the worst until we can get you support. Good luck, out."

Came the voice over the radio.

That was it. They were stranded in the poorest district of the entire country all alone. Yet Walt knew he couldn't panic for he had trained for this exact situation too many times to fail now. Running over to each individual humvee he makes sure to check up on each team. Making his way to the second gun truck he runs into his old friend, Sergeant Diego Cortez.

"Dee, how's everything over here!?"

Yells Walt over the gun fire.

"About as good as you can be while getting shot at sir, move on to the next victor we're all set here."

Cortez yelled back. He was an experienced and professional soldier unlike most of the Destiniadian military. Having fought as a private contractor deep in the jungle against the best trained and equipped insurgent groups he had no problem taking on the weekend warriors charging at them now. The man's "Icon" was a Mizradian SRR-1 customized for urban combat. The rifle packed a punch and could easily tear an enemy clean in half -body armor or not. Before running to the next truck Walt would see the stone cold sergeant's brutal efficiency as his opponents dropped like flies in a cloud made of mustard gas.

Arriving at the next gun truck, a far more grim scene would be spotted. Propped up against the rear wheels of the humvee were two dead soldiers and firing back next to them were two heavily wounded rifleman. Up in the turret, the humvee's squad leader had taken the gun after watching his gunner take a round to the chest. Nothing would stop him from mowing down his enemy's so Garcia simply asks one of the rifleman.

"Hey ese, how you doing over here?"

The scared soldier would lock eyes with Walt and respond.

"Not very good LT. Could you possibly get us some bandaging? My shirt is doing much to stop the bleeding but we've got plenty of ammo."

Patting the man on the shoulder Walt replies with a nod before running down the rest of the line of trucks seeing varying results each time. Ushering ammo and medical supplies to the men who need it Walt then finds himself back up at the lead humvee laying down fire once more. Hearing a call for Whiskey team over the radio he jumps to it and responds.

"Goliath 4-1 this is Whiskey team, go ahead over."

Goliath was the call sign for mechanized units in the area, and if they were calling for help Walt knew some serious shit was going down all over the country. Praying for the response not to be for assistance his prayers are answered.

"Whiskey we've set up a safe zone about a mile south of your position. It's going to be hard to respond to your distress call because maneuvering a tank through roads that we'll fall through isn't a good idea. We suggest you haul ass over here ASAP because your convoy won't last long all alone. Look for the hospital with the massive parking lot, it's like the only structurally sound building for a long distance in any direction you can't miss it. Good luck man, out."

Knowing that call may have just saved his life, Walt thanks the man and stands up behind cover to yell to the rest of the convoy.

"Whiskey team, mount up we're moving!"

Suddenly another twist occurs and an RPG slams into the fourth victor sending it over the retaining wall. Watching as it's tossed like a rag doll over the edge and then witnessing it burst into flames and explode Garcia can only run away. That truck had been equipped with a Mark 19, and every grenade that was going to be used in it had exploded due to the fall and rocket. Nobody in that humvee would ever come out of it alive and everybody knew it. Not bothering to sit around and waste time, the lucky man who had been thrown out of the door and didn't go over the edge is tossed into another truck and the now seven strong convoy rushes down the hill side. Seeing a large group of insurgents converge on the soccer field where the humvee was burning Walt decides to make sure his comrades wouldn't be used as propaganda.

"Whiskey this is Walt, we're taking a short cut. Follow me and fan out!"

Storming past the entrance to the field Walt breaks a hard right and smashes through the chain link fence. Pushing the truck well past the speed considered "Safe" the adrenaline filled officer yells up to Jose.

"Light em 'up jungle boy!"

With the seven humvees fanned out across the field they begin charging forward gunning down the helpless rebels and driving right over them. Smashing through another fence the convoy lines back up on another road.

Taking a left and gunning it down the hill towards the hospital the gun fire begins to die down. In the brief silence Jose speaks up.

"Walt, what the fuck just happened?"

Not taking his eyes off the road, the lieutenant answers the question.

"The city's favelas are having an uprising trying to overthrow what little government we have. I don't know why, and I'm assuming it's happening in other places too but we must have just left their territory. We're heading to the hospital now, the tread jobs got a safe zone set up there."

"Tread jobs? Haven't worked with one of those bastards in a while. Must be nice getting a 120mm gun and four inches of armor."

"Tell me about it."

The two joked. Yet the joking would soon end as they converged on the hospital. Thousands of civilians were flushing towards it or into the inner sanctum of the city looking for safety. Walt and his convoy could only look on in hopes they'd survive. Gaining more and more ground they then begin to run into check points with other units similar to their own running them. The looks on their faces clearly showed horror and hopelessness, and the blood staining their uniforms and bodies showed it far better than words ever could.

"It's a fucking shooting gallery and we're on the wrong end. Poor bastards."

Said Jose, knowing very well a last stand at the hospital was inevitable.

"Ain't it a bitch, there's only so much we can do brother."

Replied Walt as their convoy pulled up into the parking lot. Quickly dismounting, the sight would be overwhelming for almost all of them. The Mizradian aviation unit stationed just outside the city was now evacuating everybody they could while attempting to provide support for the Destinadian's helpless effort on the ground. Parked behind hesco barriers and sandbags in defensive positions, T-72M's and T-80A's would provide most of the heavy support along with their manned machine guns. All around them, other humvees and troops were set up to take on a massive force of enemy troops. Around the hospital, some of the only high rises and well built structures in the favela still stood strong and would make up the outer defensive ring. The shanty buildings around them were already being knocked down so the enemy would be seen coming. All around, choppers circled waiting to land and pick up more refugees. Little did anybody know but there was also a Mizradian AC-130 silently waiting far up in the atmosphere for it's chance to rain explosives on rebel forces. On the roof tops snipers and more positions had been set up while down in the parking lots below tents and cargo containers were being used to house and register both troops and refugees while also providing medical care and acting as resupply depots.

Being approached by a man in Mizradian uniform, Walt shakes his hand as they begin walking towards a command tent. The rest of Whiskey team simply dismounts and looks for whatever help they needed be it medical or seeking more ammo. Entering the large green tent Garcia sits down covered in blood, dirt and ash with his tattered uniform and equipment. A scratched up HK416 hung from his shoulder. All around the room Walt noticed most of the people looked just like him. They were all from his unit's sister platoons and groups. The "Alphabet Battalion" as they were nicknamed consisted of roughly thirty convoys of eight humvees each under a callsign starting with a different letter or using the military alphabet. They were also the unit which had rotated in to police the Strip for the next few months as a regular police force would be slaughtered. Watching the Mizradian man stand at the head of the table with a dusty and bloody uniform eye the room, Garcia waits for him to speak up. Eventually he does so with a heavy eastern European accent.

"Gentlemen, I come to you with urgent news. If you have yet to notice the world is in turmoil. Everywhere from my home country, to yours to Ghant war has broken out. However we must stand together in these times of need for a house divided will fall. But I'm sure none of you wish to hear my useless pep talk so I'll get right into what's going on. Hours ago, the president of Maverica issued an order to the people of Destinado Tierra. If they were to rise in rebellion and give Maverica partial control of this country they would help you

all reach riches. I also don't need to tell you this is a lie. What I do need to tell you though is help is on the way. Destinadian mechanized divisions are converging on the city as we speak and talks of a quick reaction force being sent from Mizrad have already begun. Yet we need to focus on the current situation."

He rolls out a map of the surrounding area on the rickety table.

"We're here, and this is how far out the ring of security goes."

He points to a dot on the hospital and a red square going out a mile in every direction from said dot.

"This square gives us four square miles of land to make a last stand. We are one of the last surviving safe zones in this sector of the city and the rebels will undoubtedly go through hell to see this place burn. It's up to us to make sure that doesn't happen. If worst comes to worse we'll evacuate but we can't do that until every civilian is pulled out. That may take a few hours even with Mizradian help. So it's hold out here or die. If you're not willing to fight until your last breath for the people here, yourself included, to get out then please leave this tent immediately."

Nobody moves.

"Good, I knew I could trust you men. So here's the plan; we'll take four humvee platoons and station them at four separate high rises. One in each square mile will give us a commanding view and the ability to rain hell on the rebels. Remember, they'll be rushing at you with whatever they have with only the thought of killing you but there is good news. You have trained for this very moment since the moment you signed up for the military and you've been given the means to do so. As far as we know Maverican support has yet to arrive and help from Mizrad will surely arrive first if we can muster it quickly. This means you will have the advantage. With a platoon spread out in a reinforced line stretching out for two or more city blocks we should be able to hold the insurgents off long enough for sniper teams and air strike designators to get into position. A Mizradian AC-130 is on call for tasking on the designators your platoons will be tasked with protecting are the only people capable of guiding her into a firing position so don't take your jobs lightly. This isn't a suicide mission either because you will have the wrath of a pair of little birds supporting each group. You all know this area far better than anybody else so navigating it shouldn't be too hard but as you know maps are here for you. You'll also be one of the first lines of defense. Only two blocks ahead of you is the outer most ring in our many defensive layers which is made up of BTR's, M113's and more humvees. Protecting their flanks and rear will also be a main objective of each platoon. Now unfortunately I don't have any more time to explain things to you so if you need assistance call in over the command channel for instructions. Now get to your trucks and get moving, time is of the essence gentlemen. Good luck."

With that, the average height Mizradian with a dark brown beard and hair cut rolls up the map and sits down at the table for the next group's briefing. Taking the hint to get out the four platoon commanders exit the tent and rush out to their vehicles. Most of their men had already been there waiting for them and the others who weren't were now returning. Garcia quickly jumps into the driver's seat of the first humvee as the rest of his platoon gets together. Over his radio he begins calling out orders.

"All Whiskey team victors mount up and follow me, we're heading out to protect a recon team directly behind the front line. Strap in and get ready for one hell of a fight because we're in this one for the long run."

Quickly getting in to what HMMWVs remained the platoon sets off. Already two men had deserted and multiple more were dead or wounded. It was rag tag group of soldiers but they were the only ones left to get the job done. Moving out beyond the safety of the hospital they push through the streets. Most were completely deserted aside from being dotted with defensive emplacements or abandoned cars, clothes, items and dead bodies.

"Fuckin' pitiful. Why we gotta' live in a world like this dog?"

Asked Private Manuel Cortega, one of Garcia's men through the radio.

"Because humans are a fucked up race of people. We get paid to put them in line so please try and do your job."

After the short drive out to the line the team comes across a group of three soldiers guarding an M35 parked out side the target building. They had set up a tiny sand bag emplacement, barbed wire and pushed two cars in to the road as a defensive set up. Beyond the line was a pile of dead rebels. The streets were soaked with the blood of both sides.

Pulling up behind the wall the troops get out as Walt barks orders.

"All gunners stay with your vehicles, Cortez take your element and help these men hold the streets we'll head into the tower."

The troops quickly do as they are told as Walter meets with one of the recon operators.

"I'm Lieutenant Garcia, we were sent here to help you defend those laser designators. What's the current situation?"

The two shake hands and the recon man responds.

"I'm Sergeant Chang pleasure to meet you sir. Sadly we've run into quite a bit of trouble. We started with ten men, three deserted, two are dead and there's us down here with the other two in the tower either providing cover or using those designators. It would sure as hell be helpful if you split your men up and had some help us down here."

Cortez arrives.

"Not a problem, my group and I can hold the streets if everybody up in that tower can do what they need to do."

The sergeant of Asian descent nods and orders everybody to get into position. Cortez and the gunners line up along the street as Garcia takes a small group of soldiers and rushes up to get to the top floor. The building was empty aside from a few dead office workers and the equipment they had left behind. Taking to the roof far, far above the street level they meet with the two snipers. Rushing through the hand shaking what they need to do becomes obvious as one of the snipers looking down his scope pokes his head up and looks at his partner.

"Sir, we've got a massive group of hostiles moving down the street. I suggest you take a look at this."

The lead sniper takes a look through the scope and Garcia stalks the target with his binoculars. The sight wasn't helpful. All the civilians fleeing to the evac zone attracted a parade of rebels. They packed the road from end to end with seemingly no room in between.

"There's got to be a thousand of them down there!"

Yells Walt.

"Get on that designator now!"

The platoon quickly fans out along the roof and prepares to fire as the sniper team locks in a target for the AC-130 from the Mizradian Air Force. After some chatter through the radio a red beam bursts from the green box and heads towards the crowd. It was the main road coming in to the square and fortunately it was the only one that had been that filled with rebels but the side streets had groups of insurgents pushing down them in hefty numbers as well.

Then suddenly from the clouds a huge burst of orange lines rains down like a fire from God. This was no rain however, this was a hail storm of 105mm rounds and 40mm shells. Upon reaching their target they begin to burst and explode sending the rebels flying. Fires broke out and they all began to scatter. But they pressed on and it turned into an all out charge. Picking up the fire the gunship uses everything it has to try and slow them down. Multiple 20mm gatling guns, 40mm Bofors cannons and a 105mm gun all bear down on the insurgents. Smashing the streets, crumbling the buildings and thinning

their numbers. Extending on for miles the line continues to push inward until they reach the outer line of defense. BTR's, M113's and other vehicles unleash hell combined with their protector in the sky. Raining down every bit of ordnance they have the push finally begins to slow. Now the group, still hundreds if not thousands strong fans out and converges on the Destinadian military.

Over head two UH-1 Hueys whiz by the roof top and begin blazing the streets with their miniguns. Suddenly something emerges from the crowds and ascends into the sky then rails itself into the belly of one of the hueys. Upon contact it explodes and the chopper bursts into flames and snaps in half. The other helicopter quickly buzzes away and dodges the other incoming missile before turning back to the hospital. Behind the tower the remaining evacuation helicopters take flight and storm away from the square. So on this process continues as the government desperately attempts to usher out the civilians.

Taking up aim with his rifle Walter begins pelting the stragglers who made it through the outer line. The other soldiers quickly follow in as the snipers try once again to get the AC-130 to help them out. Then not too far off in the distance, maybe a few blocks away something horrifying occurs. The outer laying skyscrapers become engulfed in an explosion and crumble to the ground. It quickly turns into a chain reaction bringing down three massive buildings in total and killing hundreds in seconds.

"Shit! Hold on they're coming down!"

Yells one of the snipers as the ground begins to rumble and dust bursts throughout the streets. Over the radio the AC-130 comes in.

"Recon Element this Overwatch, be advised we can't tell who is who down there and we're running low on ammo and fuel. Sorry but we've got to bail. Good luck gentlemen we'll be back as soon as we can. Overwatch out."

And with that their biggest hope of survival flies away. Down on the streets two BTR's rush by and head for the safety of the inner circle. Realizing this scene would be playing out everywhere and that his objective was technically completed, Garcia orders all of his men and the snipers to head down to the streets to pack up. On his way down the stairs he makes a call to command.

"Whiskey Actual this is Whiskey 1-1, we are being surrounded and have lost gunship support. Please advise over."

The commander replies back in a rushed and worried tone.

"Whiskey 1-1 hold the line as best you can we're trying to evacuate all wounded and high ranking personnell. There is a road out of here and most of our forces are convoying out on it because the choppers aren't ferrying everybody out fast enough. Just hold on son."

"Yes sir, I'll see what I can do."

Reaching the street level to find his men were still being surrounded yet only taking a light amount of fire, he takes up a position behind the wall and reloads his weapon. The platoon wasn't ready to give up without a fight.

**"El Diablo's Villa", Northwestern Destinado Tierra
Hours Before Martin and Turner's Escape
Zakkhar Anatoly
"Bullets are the Beauty of Our Sky"**

Waking up in a small adobe house in El Diablo's Villa, the tall former field surgeon looks around as his eyes adjust to the early morning. The sun had yet to rise and the crudely put up lights in the village along with the massive light show up by the main villa mansion were the only things providing light. Getting up off the mattress he had set up on the floor Zakkhar Anatoly makes his way over to the bathroom. Pushing open the thin wooden door he turns on the old porcelain sink and splashes water on his face. Quickly brushing his teeth and then turning the water off he heads for the shower. Making sure to scrub himself up he's out in about two minutes. Drying off the tall Loufian and Destinadian mixed doctor pulls a grey v-neck t shirt on over his tanned Hispanic skin hiding away his fairly muscular build. Tossing on a dark blue pair

of jeans and black combat boots he gets ready to head out the door before stopping to grab himself a pair of sunglasses. Black, "frogskin" Oakleys to be exact.

Walking up the hard packed dirt road towards the main villa mansion under the dark sky Zak looks towards each little hut and house as he moves by them. He was fortunate enough to hold a rather high position within the cartel; acting as one of the Boss' right hand men as well as being his go to doctor. Anatoly was never great with a gun and never really liked most types of people but what he was amazing at was anything within the medical field from fixing a brain injury to curing a disease this man could help to accomplish it if not do it entirely alone. The Hispanic had also picked up quite a few hand-to-hand combat skills throughout his life and remains a highly trained and great fighter up close whether he is wielding a weapon or his martial arts expertise. Those two things were what got him to the place he was and that was why he was given a small house on "The Hill" where any of the Boss' lead men resided. Anybody below the hill was most likely living below the poverty line and was considered expendable.

Starting at the less fortunate reminded Zakkhar of his past as he could connect to it so well. Armed men roamed the streets and sat on roof tops, some times they would push around the civilians but that was discouraged in public. Everybody knew rape and murdering occurred so often at night that people just stopped caring. That evoked Anatoly to almost always view the enforcers of the cartel badly. Almost every single one of them was an evil person through and through. Zak was stuck in the wrong place however and now the only thing he needs is money, thus why he'd begun working for the cartel.

Eventually Zakkhar would find himself standing in the courtyard of the Boss' villa after being let in by the guards. There he was. "El Diablo", "The Boss", "Overseer", he went by many names but only one of them was official. Pablo Juarez. A Destinadian man through and through Pablo was also quite short. Pablo, or Paul in English in fact meant "Short" in Latin. Pablo referred to that as a lucky guess. He had light and cloudy blue eyes with extremely tan skin and greasy black hair. His chin was cleanly shaven down to the skin. Dressed in a white suit and expensive black shoes he shakes the hand of Anatoly before they begin walking throughout the courtyard together.

"Zakkhar, I've know you for a long time mi amigo. I can trust you, no? There is a man that helped get me to where I am today. You have met him before. A tall soldier with a heart of iron. John Turner, we were much younger when he became acquainted with me and in that time he sheltered me from harm. El es an amigo. Nosotros ayudamos amigos."

He says in Spanish showing he was serious.

"Head down to the airfield and pack your things. You must head to Loufe to retrieve him. I owe him one, this cartel will repay their debts."

Anatoly nods. Loufe was his home country and this would be the first time in a while he had to head back there.

"I understand Pablo, I'll get it done. How will I know where they are?"

The Boss laughs.

"The pilots will get you there, just make sure he or our equipment isn't hurt. Be on your way."

They shake hands again before Zakkhar exits the perimeter of the villa. In a matter of minutes he would gather his things, lock the door to his small house and head down to the air strip. A lone little Aviocar sat waiting for departure. Stepping on board while pulling on his parka Anatoly glances at the pilot. Knowing Zakkhar would be sent down to him, the pilots quickly start the plane and make way for Loufe. In a few hours they would be arriving to rescue Martin and John. Little did they know, the world may also be at stake.



Libraria and Ausitoria

by **Libraria and Ausitoria** » Sat Oct 04, 2014 5:36 am

QUOTE

Admiral Lord Arthur Lea, HMS Panda, somewhere near Ghant

"I think we'll call that a success," said the Admiral, for successful gunboat

diplomacy only required the visible presence of a gunboat.

From: Admiral Lord Arthur Lea, HMS Panda, Ausitorian Navy
To: Acting Prime Minister Maeson Margela

Dear Sir,

Thank you for your detailed reply. If you need assistance, we shall not hesitate to give it.

I have the honour to remain, etc.,
Admiral Lord Arthur Lea,
HMS Panda
Ausitorian Navy

He returned to considering unlikely threats.

Sir Alistair Smiles, B Tank Company, A/B (Southern) Theatre

“So much for stopping for elevenses.”

While it was the individual private and the Generals and Marshals that got all the credit, it was the lower officers who were the real backbone and glue of the army: the gallant Lieutenants and courageous Captains that scouted along with their troops, executing plans as best they could, when they could; and improvising all the rest of the time to defeat the enemy. And this was not exactly the war that Ausitoria had planned for, as this particular Tank Captain, Sir Alistair Smiles, knew well.

The Ausitorian handbooks said *“Ideally, provided civilians have been evacuated, loss of land is not important per say provided that there is still room to maneuver and bases to maneuver from; with only valuable strategic points worth defending. What is much more important is concentrating firepower and destroying the enemy.”* It then went on to talk about area defence, which is of course quite different from point defence and much more fun for a naval power that still liked to call its tanks ‘landships’ and regards anything moving at less than 60 kilometers per hour as ‘a sitting duck’.

But civilians had not been evacuated. This was allied territory that they were trying to liberate, and that meant fighting over a great number of points that were not really so strategically important: practically every town that the enemy was in, for instance.

By 9 am, they were meant to have travelled 200 kilometers, including a half-hour break to reorganize (and eat breakfast) in the early-morning.

They had not travelled 200 kilometers.

No, they had just finished a fierce fight for the half-way point; no doubt giving the enemy time to dig in in the cities to the north and continue to mine everywhere. And now his B Tank company was in the position of scout.

Sir Alistair Smiles’ announcement, while bringing a smile to his four companions sitting in the back of the command tank as it motored along, was interrupted by a howling sound, the quick-firing of automatic point defence systems, an unexpected explosion which sounded horribly like an unlucky Ausitorian tank somewhere on the right, and helicopters appearing all over the place.

“I thought the air force was defending us!” was what the young captain felt like saying, but it was a little obvious, so instead he said “get the air force” to the air liaison lieutenant by his left, “retreat” to the lieutenant on his right, and “we must get some drones up now to see if the helicopters are supporting enemy vehicles” to the lieutenant behind, all of whom jumped to it. He still remembered his first day at staff college, where his forces had stood their ground - to be destroyed by wave after wave of attacks; and he had learnt of maneuver warfare: It is the easiest thing in the world to retreat and then advance when you know what you’re dealing with.

“Our Fighters ETA 2 mins.” “Forces withdrawing.” “Drones away.”

"Helicopters retreating, but we'll catch them." "1 tank lost, 1 immobilized, 1 cannon faulty, six of twenty helicopters destroyed." "A company of soft-skinned vehicles coming up ahead."

The last caught his attention. They would probably be tank destroyers; and that meant potential trouble - although, if he had the element of surprise...

"Request artillery support. 3 pronged-assault positions to attack in flank," he ordered.

No doubt the helicopters had been expected to be able to hang around, but perhaps they had lost their leader, or he had panicked; for Ausitorian tanks had an unusual quantity of organic anti-air support, as Lara's forces were slowly discovering.

But even then, it could be a trap. "Continue to check for mines as flanks advance," he commanded, and ran a line directly to his air counterpart. "Can you get that fighter squadron to scout around?"

The Air Commodore had had the same idea. "Can you check for anti-air installations?"

"None observed yet, likelihood c. 30%," said the lieutenant who was monitoring the drones, "but if we close up much more we're going to get spotted."

"Let's spring a bigger trap then. Commodore, advise proceed with caution, forget the scouting. We'll pull back ourselves and let them get enveloped. If they're trying to trap us, we'll find out by drone..."

"Yes, a company of infantry on the left," said the lieutenant, looking at the drones on the left with admiration at the predictive ability of his Captain, honed by years of practice and creativity.

Sir Smiles smiled. "Then let us swing around on the far right. Ask the Marshal for A IFV company to advance on their flank's flank and we will pincer their entire trap; we'll need full support -"

"A tank company and support advancing," reported the HQ liaison.

"Good."

"There were AAs, but they've located the helicopter base and it's getting bombarded," reported the air liaison.

"My thanks to the squadron."

"Enemy vehicles ahead have stopped," reported the drone commander.

"Wondering why we haven't advanced."

Wmph, Wmph barked the rockets as they flew against what was now almost a front-line helicopter base.

"Evidently the enemy rear-guard trying to delay us by this trap," suggested the other lieutenant.

"Well, they've certainly slowed us down. The infantry is catching up..." said the Captain, looking at the map.

"Their right is surging forward towards our left," said the drone commander.

"Trying to find us. They really need to move into the 21st century."

"Our left flank has been sighted by an enemy drone," reported the Platoon-commander on the left - an alert that he noted with satisfaction had gone straight to the Marshal as well.

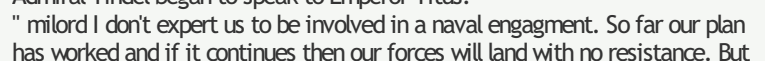
"Ah well, the Marshal will order an attack then," said Alistair, as he checked the map again. Overwhelming forces being marshalled behind him, enemies located...

"From the Marshal: General signal 32. *Engage the enemy more closely.*"

And then he was in the thick of it as they passed over a ridge into their firing sequences. “Get Tank 14 further to the right. Left platoon use ridge GV for cover... Let’s have some artillery here-” he pressed the touch-screen to mark the position-

Last edited by [Libraria and Ausitoria](#) on Fri Aug 28, 2015 3:33 pm, edited 2 times in total.

Disclaimer: Notwithstanding any mention of their nations, Ausitoria and its canon does **not** exist **nor** impact the canon of many IFC & SACTO & closed-region nations; and it is harassment to presume it does. However in accordance with my open-door policy the converse does **not** apply: they still impact Ausitoria's canon.



just in case I have a plan to the Navy travel in three separate groups each spaced 15 miles from each other. Now this will ensure the safety of each group and also allow us to reinforce each other if needed. The second part to the plan is each group travels in a diamond formation."

Admiral Tindel went on explain some more.

"and also milord there is 15 Akula attack submarines 50 miles ahead of our fleet. If there is any activity out there we will know about it."

Titus shook his head in agreement.

"Admiral you have done a great job. See to it that the fleet is placed into formation immediately."

Titus scanned the room.

"I want a report on the second fleet."

for that Admiral Hardwick spoke up.

"milord last report I received was second fleet was mobilized and would fail in one weeks time. Reinforcements will arrive in one month."

Titus now had a huge smile across his face.

"perfect, all of you have done well. Now general how are the soldier's?"

General Munk snapped to attention in his chair.

"milord all soldiers are equipped and ready to serve the empire!"

Titus just smiled.

"perfect you all have done your duty. Now dismiss except for Admiral Tindel and General Ashland."

The room quickly emptied except for the two officers. There Emperor Titus spoke about the upcoming war.

"I need you two to be honest with me, what are our chances of success?"

General Ashland was the first to speak.

"milord we have a force of 48,000 soldiers. even if we experienced resistance when we first landed, there would still be a large enough force to turn the tide of the war."

Titus turned and faced Admiral Tindel.

"Admiral and what are our chances of success at sea?"

the Admiral took a moment to clear his throat.

"milord the only real threat we have at sea is the Mizard fleet, which is huge and currently blockading the coast line. They have numbers on Their side. Now I believe we can win for awhile but eventually the combined effort of the alliance will over power us. We need a decisive victory quick."

Emperor Titus sat back and took what the Admiral had just said into consideration. There was a lot at risk but the Alderannian fleet that had been assembled was huge and more then capable of holding its own.

Titus calmly spoke to Admiral Tindel.

"Admiral we will continue with our plans. How long before we reach Heilanor?"

Admiral Tindel answered the emperor with a sharp reply.

"milord we will be entering Valmese sea in the morning. And within the week we will be landing the soldier's in the northern part of the country."

Emperor Titus then turned to General Ashland.

"General how are the soldier's?"

"milord your soldiers are prepared to due your will. Also milord we have divisions of the second army mobilizing and will be shipping out in the month."

Titus was very pleased with his officers and dismissed them. After they had departed the room Titus sat at his computer and composed a message for Lara.

Dear Lara,

we have entered the Valmese sea and will be landing within the week. All

preparations are in place and I look forward to seeing you. Once I arrive we may put our plans into action. First I would propose that we eliminate Nathan as he had no longer of use. Everything we need Alderann can provide.
Sincerely yours,
Titus I



Ghant
Minister

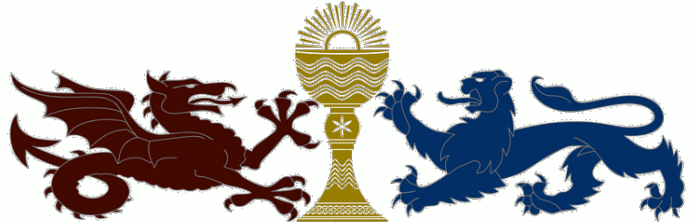
Posts: 2457
Founded: Feb 11, 2013
Civil Rights Lovefest

by **Ghant** » Sun Jul 19, 2015 6:15 pm

QUOTE

OOC

War of the Two Empresses



Part III

*Like as the waves make towards the pebb'l'd shore,
so do our minutes, hasten to their end.*
-William Shakespeare

Mature Content Warning

Part III, Ch. I
"An Empire Reborn"
Leto's Palace
Letople, Zathalon
Seven months later...

"All governments suffer a recurring problem: Power attracts pathological personalities. It is not that power corrupts but that it is magnetic to the corruptible. Such people have a tendency to become drunk on violence, a condition to which they are quickly addicted." - Ormond Bortidoc

Zathalon Map

The campaign took seven months...*only seven*. The enemies of Lara's venture were divided, while those loyal to her were united. *Imagine that*. The course of the campaign led them through all of the contested territories, and internal dissent and anticipation in each one led to their eventual defeat.

First came tiny Carpalan on the coast, overwhelmed by superior forces and firepower. They had hoped that the more powerful nations to its north that were next on the warpath would come to their aid, but instead they cowered in their own borders and left Carpalan to the wolves. It was annexed as a province of "the Empire of Zathalon," which up to that point only consisted of half of Heilanor and Carpalan.

The first true test then was the mighty Kingdom of Clorusan, where Queen Julia ruled with a generous

hand yet with a vengeful fist. She had previously attacked Lara's fleet, in the hopes of killing her, which proved to be a bold endeavor indeed. In fact, it led to Clorusan being the only country to attack Lara outright before she even reached the continent. Alas, the surprise attack failed, and Clorusan was taken by storm.

Queen Julia soon found herself without a country and without a crown, as Clorusan was revealed to be a paper tiger. She was taken prisoner, and had it not been for politics, she would have been executed for high treason against Lara...even though at the time of the attack on the fleet, Lara was nothing more than a would be usurper. *Best not tell her that though.* Lara was content to keep Julia as her prisoner while she went up against their most difficult target...the Republic of Gilesholm.

Gilesholm was formidable, to say the least, and required all that Lara could muster, not only from her home in northern Heilanor, but also whatever remained to the newfound provinces of Carpalan and Clorusan. The bulk of the several months that it took to unite the continent, was spent trying to subdue Gilesholm, but sure enough, Rosestad did fall eventually, but not without a great loss of life. The battle was pyrrhic in nature, and Lara found her forces depleted by its end. The Ghantar especially sustained heavy losses, and by that time had grown wary. Malibar's prophecy that all who joined Lara's campaign were cursed and would die seemed to be coming more true with each passing day.

In any event, with Carpalan, Clorusan and Gilesholm under Lara's control, she issued ultimatums to the other two northern states...*join or be conquered.* While Lara might not have had the forces necessary to conquer both the Republic of Tenebros and the Republic of Junitos, the threat was enough, and both submitted rather than assume the risk of invasion. Although, it seemed reasonable to assume that their allegiance to Lara was tenuous at best. Whatever the case, it came to pass that within a matter of months, the entire northern half of the continent went from consisting of seven different countries to just one. That being the Empire of Zathalon, in all of its ancient glory.

Lara was affirmed as Empress of Zathalon with Nathan as Emperor (as Nathan I), while Martina Tangerine went from Prime Minister of Heilanor to Prime Minister of Zathalon. Lordships were given to her loyal commanders and followers, and Julia was allowed to keep her position in Clorusan, although now as *Grand Duchess*. Despite her best efforts, Lara was unable to bait her brother Constantine away from the south, which consisted entirely of the Empire of Heilanor which still acknowledged their sister Selena as Empress, with Constantine as Regent. So the continent was effectively divided in half (Zathalon had more territory at present...*the conservative parts, incidentally enough*), while Lara was left to contemplate how best to take on Heilanor and its allies from her imperial seat in Letople, once the capital of the old Empire of Zathalon, and now once again.

It just so happened that Constantine was also aware of his situation. In anticipation of Lara's strength, he apparently decided to send an emissary to Letople to negotiate. Lara was reluctant to accept, but

Nathan, for his part, was quite willing to entertain potential words of détente. *Fat chance of that happening.* With Rhodesea in a position of power in Hermania and Albert and his quasi-fascist friends in power in Ghant, there wasn't like to be any peace coming from anywhere, he knew as much.

Lara sat at a table in the meeting hall, her belly swollen underneath her lavish court dress, black and red silk. She was wearing a tiara, and was never seen without it. Silver and gold inlaid and encrusted with diamonds to signify her power and position. *Well, that and the heads mounted on spikes outside the Palace walls.* The Heilanorians were hardly impressed, and their emissary sat at the opposite end of the table twiddling his thumbs.

The Empress was joined by members of her inner circle...and mine too, for what it's worth. These included Prime Minister Martina Tangerine, her generals Marcus Sloom, Abraham Zotwel and Louis Gogh, along with Nathan's own Rodrigo Viseu, Zara, Atticus Voor, Princess Sula, Fendulias of Gaemar, Kukavanger and Hemlock, his trusted captain of the guards.

The emissary's greeting was curt. "Lady Lara."

"Empress Lara. You should be mindful of your manners, Joachim Wiljas. My father would have expected nothing less," Lara said to the man dryly. "Unless my little brother doesn't care for respect."

"Your brother the Emperor would hope that you would put an end to this madness before we meet in battle," Joachim countered. "We know what you are capable of...and we know you wouldn't use weapons of mass destruction."

Nathan said, "Let us hope there will be no battle. "We can all walk away from this whole thing without anymore bloodshed."

Lara studied her husband, unsmiling and seemingly with scorn. "The continent belongs to me by rights. All those who deny this are enemies waiting to be destroyed as traitors."

"The world denies it, Lara," said Joachim. "By all the laws of Heilanor and those nations that you have *conquered* and brought under your yoke unlawfully, you are the one that is a traitor. And a terrorist. The world closes in around you Lara...what will you do with this great sandcastle you have built for yourself when the tide comes in?"

The Empress didn't like that, and she clenched her jaw, her face growing taut. "You know what I am capable of, and that is destroying you. The reason why you haven't attacked me yet is because we have adequate means of retaliation. Look around you, Joachim. The people flock to my cause, because it is just, and righteous. Had your leftist, democratic progressive governments not been so corrupt and inefficient, eroding the ways of Zathalon perhaps none of this would have happened. But the people yearned for the wholesomeness of the way things once were, and now they have it. Constantine is desperate, his back against the wall, that's why you are here, to *beg* in between insults. It's pathetic."

"This is the last chance you are going to get, Lara,"

said Joachim. "Her Imperial Majesty Empress Selena proposes that surrender, bend your knee, and swear her your allegiance."

At that, Lara choked back rage. "That she shall never have. And she is alive? I had heard she befell a tragic fate in Loufe at the conference during the bombing."

"Her Imperial Majesty spent some time undergoing treatment, and has returned to Heilanor to help oversee war efforts." Joachim smiled as he spoke...a sad sort of smile.

Lara wasn't pleased. "Such a pleasure to know that she survived her accident at the Loufe conference, then. How fares her wife Krania?"

"Dead, I am afraid to admit," Joachim said with a sigh. "Poisoned at her own coronation feast, if you can believe that. She languished for a time...Selena was there. Now Krania's younger brother reigns as Emperor. As for Princess Arietta...well...she was beside Krania when the poison was consumed. There are those that wonder if she was involved, or if she was the actual target."

"I can assure you, I had nothing to do with that," Lara began to explain. "You would do better to look towards Ghish, and the ill work of those apes Albert and Margela. I wouldn't put such a foul deed past them."

"You speak as if you have clean hands," Joachim pointed at Lara. "Yet yours are the dirtiest of all."

"Hardly...in fact, I would argue that my hands are sanctified," she countered. "All I see here are insults and no practical solutions for peace. And here I was hoping that you would have at least shown a willingness to negotiate."

"...We don't negotiate with terrorists," Joachim responded with a firm tone and narrowed eyes.

Lara snorted at that. "Terrorist? I am the Empress of Zathalon! The Prime Minister and the people of the continent support my claim. I have the recognition of foreign governments, their backing both diplomatic and material. You need only look to Alderann and Rhodesea to see evidence of that."

"...Rhodesea might not be as strong an ally as you think," the emissary proclaimed. "They have been treating with Mizrad."

"...Indeed they have been. It is my hope that Mizrad shall come around to our line of thinking," Lara spoke smugly, pulling a message from her dossier on the table. "Our friend General Kruger was kind enough to even forward me this," she said as she slid the message down the table. Joachim squinted as he picked it up, and began to read it's contents.

Message to General Kruger from Governor Quintero

"...This proves nothing," Joachim said with widened eyes.

"Actually, dear Joachim, this shows that Mizrad is willing to collaborate with Rhodesea, who is willing to

collaborate with us. Doesn't that mean that Mizrad might be able to back us as well? Silly, silly man. You speak as if your false government is in a position of strength, when in reality you are merely living on borrowed time...that I give you." Gripping the table, she continued in a louder, firmer tone. "Your allies are scared to take action against us, because they know that we are in the real position of strength. Why would they waste valuable men and resources to fight for a lost cause...propping you up like a falling sandcastle? You are fortunate that I am forgiving. I only require acknowledgement of my rightful position."

"Your sister is willing to pardon you and your people so long as you surrender," Joachim more or less repeated. "Surrender and allow the rightful government of Heilanor and the other countries to resume their status from before, and all shall be forgiven. Otherwise, you will be held accountable for your crimes, which you should know warrant consequences most severe."

Lara couldn't help but laugh as she leaned back into her gilded cushioned seat. "You paint me as some sort of monster, yet I am not without mercy." Tapping the table with aggressive fingers for a moment, she stopped and then leaned forward once more, her eyes boring into the emissary. "For the sake of family, I will give Selena and Constantine thirty days to reconsider their positions. They are to surrender to me and shall come to me in person, at which point I shall grant them pardon and the ability to live out their days as their rank and station befits them. Otherwise, Heilanor shall be taken by force, and they shall suffer a traitor's fate. Take that message back to my sister, and leave me be now...I am done with this."

Joachim, for his part, could merely bite his lip as he stood up, inclined his head and took his leave, with his people and Lara's guards in tow. After he was gone, she turned to Nathan, who was still sitting down with a blank expression on his face. *Oh God, now it's my turn*, he thought.

She didn't speak right away, preferring rather to take her wine glass and throwing it against the wall, whizzing past Nathan's ear. "Those motherfuckers, stubborn and foolish to the point of fault. They still hide behind their corruption and their decedent system of government. Selling out to private interests and foreign scum like common whores, spreading their legs for a quick dollar. If they want blood, I will paint their lands with it. I will, mark my words, break them."

Atticus Voor posed a question, despite hesitating, gulping first. "Why not attempt to sue for peace? Let them have theirs, and we can have ours?"

"Never," Lara snorted aggressively, her face flush with anger. "There was a dream that was Zathalon, whole and united. One continent, one empire, one church, one ruler. I will not relinquish what is mine by rights. Those lands are beholden to the one true church, but the taint that infects those lands is so great, that the people have fallen away from the light. It is my duty to bring the light to them, so that they might bathe in it, and be cleansed once more. This is my mission...my destiny. The Sword of Sanctification shall wipe away all the filth, and leave

the land clean.”

She truly is growing mad. As their conquests progressed, Nathan could tell how she grew more aggressive, more power hungry and more religious with each passing day. She prayed regularly and observed all of the ancient rites of her creed. The conservatives loved her for it, heralding her as their savior, the prophesized reincarnation of Empress Leta come to restore the realm to rights, to the pinnacle that it had once occupied in days of old.

“We must be careful in any event,” Nathan chimed in cautiously. “Our enemies are great in strength and number, and they wait for any opportunity to take advantage.”

“I would expect nothing less,” Lara agreed, tapping her fingers on the table. “Your uncle and his minions are not making matters any easier,” Lara began to scold him. “I want them dealt with...I want them out of Ghish, before they can find a way to bite me in the ass.”

So your minions can walk right in and set up shop. Nathan was aware of Marius and his men attempting to seize power in Ghish in their three way fight with Albert’s northern brutes and the foreign troops. “...If there was something I could do I would. Albert is Lord Protector now and rules by right while I am here. He cannot be...displaced.”

“One would think that he would have been displaced after he got shot,” she snapped back coldly. “But the stubborn mule wouldn’t die, apparently. I can’t send you back...I need you here to ensure the loyalty of your men. They fight for you, not me, that much is obvious. I thought I could use Ormond Bortidoc to ensure Ghant’s loyalty, but that hasn’t worked. I still have him confined to quarters though, if only because he more useful to me in there.” The Prime Minister of Ghant had arrived in Letople before Lara and Nathan, and upon taking the city, she imprisoned him to use as a hostage. Apparently, Margela and Albert didn’t care much about him, one way or the other. They hardly batted an eyelash when the Deputy Prime Minister was assassinated in Loufe, anyway.

“With all due respect, your Imperial Majesty,” Fendulias began, “we fight for the both of you. You on your own account have inspired the loyalty of Ghantar and Zathalonians alike. Bortidoc was part of the problem...just another one of your sister’s collaborators.”

“That is very good to know,” Lara said with a smile. “Now, what should we do about Heilanor? Those lands are not like to come over willingly. On the contrary, I expect that they will require force to subdue and bring under my rule. Since they are blind to the light, like depraved creatures of the night. They won’t come into it on their own...it must be brought to them.”

Kukavanger shook his head. “The foreigners pose a grave concern...the Ausitorians and their ilk circle around the continent like wolves. Alderann will not be enough to contain them. If we focus on staving them off, and then on Heilanor, perhaps we would fare better, since Heilanor is crippled as it is.”

“I say that your sister the greatest threat to you,”

Fendulias declared. "Should you leave Heilanor be for much longer, Selena may be as strong as you ...or even stronger. For the more men we lose, the weaker we become and the stronger they become by comparison."

Lara rubbed her chin as she placed a hand on her swollen belly and stretched out of her seat. "...And where will our...secret weapons be come thirty days from now?"

General Sloom was quick to answer. "They will be nearly ready by then. Once the Sword of Sanctification is online...endgame."

"And Project Seraph?" Lara pressed with a clear interest.

With a grin, General Zottel said, "according to your sister Sula, that shall be ready too...pending a few tests. She has taken a great interest in the success of the secret weapons projects."

"Excellent. In that case, this meeting is adjourned. While we sit and wait to see what my brother and sister, we only need to hold our enemies off and bide our team. Also see to it that our forces are properly resupplied, freshly equipped and well enough equipped to attack Heilanor come the end of my offered grace period. By then we should be ready, eh?"

"Of course," responded General Gogh. "We shall deliver the entire continent, and unite it for the first time in centuries."

"Good, very good. Forgive me Generals, but I must needs prepare for this baby shower. It will be one for the ages," Lara smiled as she strode down the hall with guards surrounding her, her court dress dragging across the marble floor behind her.

The rest dispersed, with the Generals going their own separate ways with only a cold regard towards the so called Emperor of Zathalon. Nathan was the Emperor who's claim to all of Zathalon gave Lara legitimacy, but the people embraced her wholesale as one of their own. *I might as well be some trophy consort*, he sighed as he walked off. Of all the rest, Lord Atticus Voor continued to walk with him.

"...Well, that was an interesting meeting," Atticus said softly, a hand on Nathan's shoulder. Now doubt the Imperial Champion Hemlock took note of that. "Can't say I am unsurprised by the outcome. Heilanor like some liberal democracy is all caught up on rule of law, while Lara...is playing realpolitik to the bone, it would seem."

"Lord Voor...did I make a mistake?" Nathan beseeched his late father's old friend. "Was this all truly a folly that shall doom us all?"

"...That is too soon to tell," the older man responded thoughtfully as he stared out the window into the somber cityscape, that in some ways it had seen better and worse days. "For the most part, you have accomplished your goal. You have reunited a shattered empire despite the odds or the difficulties. Although, between you and I...one Empire should be enough for any man. I couldn't imagine trying to rule more than one."

Did I accomplish that, or did Lara? There was no doubt in the Emperor's mind that she had used and manipulated him, slowly draining him of his strength, one battle after another. The number of men loyal to him was shrinking exponentially it seemed like, while Lara's power and influence on the continent only grew. His greatest fear now was in becoming obsolete, having outlived his usefulness...*arguably*. "Is it too late to do anything...to change things?"

"...Change what?" Atticus asked with a raised eyebrow. "You can't change the past, Nathan. Only the future."

Nathan leaned in close to his ear as they walked along, pulling him off to the side. "There is something sinister about what is taking place here. This research facility underground...they are working on something big. We need to find out what it is. If it is...something terrible, we need to stop it before it is too late."

"...Are you suggesting betraying your wife? To what end? Things would go back to the way they were before...then there wouldn't have been a point," Atticus countered.

"She is due in a month," Nathan pointed out. "After the child is born it can rule here, supported by trusted advisors and loyal men."

"In case you haven't noticed, loyalties are fickle, transient things," Atticus gave a faint grin, hinted with a tinge of sorrow. "Do you think all these turncloak generals and politicians will remain loyal when Heilanor, the Lowlands, Mizrad and the Ausitorians converge upon Zathalon? Fat chance."

"You heard what Lara said to Joachim about Mizrad and the Rhodeseans," the Emperor said with a puzzled look. "That they met in Albicant to discuss... terms."

Atticus chuckled at that despite himself, so it seemed. "Yeah...the Rhodeseans are all about the Rhodeseans. They are playing their own game and certainly won't go down with a sinking ship. If anything, the Mizradians sweet talked them into joining their side, knowing that Selena isn't in a position to make good on her promises. At least, not as well as Mizrad can. They want that land back... Mizrad can do that, Lara can't."

"What difference will any of that make when the secret weapons come online?" Nathan stopped in the hall and looked at Lord Voor. "I don't even know their purpose...or their function. I only know that Lara's sister Sula worked on them for over a decade, and that it is very expensive, and valuable...and right here in Letople. What if...Lara took this city first and defends it vehemently in order to use it?"

"...That is entirely possible," Atticus said softly and with a sigh, his hands on Nathan's shoulders. "It is reasonable to assume that she used you and your men to secure this secret weapon for her eventual use."

Nathan felt a sense of anguish then. "We must find out what they do."

"Aye, we do...I do not doubt that they are powerful. How much though...that's the question." Atticus bit his bottom lip and looked around, Nathan's guards casting their eyes upon them both, Hemlock especially, with one hand always on his holster.

"...I should have listened to Malibar. He is always right," Nathan lamented. "Maybe then Sophia would be alive, and well and safe besides. Maybe...we could have been together. I..." Nathan began to choke up, "...would give up all of this, just to be with her again. I am sorry," he finished before embracing Lord Voor.

Almost out of instinct, Atticus embraced the younger man, and held him tight. "I know, Nathan, I know. I once loved a woman myself...fair and beautiful she was. We were both young, and naïve to the world. She came to me a maiden, but she didn't leave as one. We were happy for a time, and I thought I loved her, and that she loved me. Alas, it didn't work out... she left me for another young lord of higher social standing. For years afterward, I asked myself, 'what did I do wrong?' Could I have done things differently so that she would still be with me today? Maybe, but those questions will rip a man apart inside. And you will never know, Nathan...you can never know. So all you can think is, 'maybe in another life. That there is another place and time where things turned out the way you wanted them to. All you can do is focus on making this life the one you want to have, hard as that may seem."

In another life, Nathan thought. *In another life, things are different*. Atticus was right, though. This wasn't that life...this was this life. Nathan was here, and now, in this place and time. What was he going to do about it? How would he make it the life he wanted?

"...Do you think we should consider *betraying* her while we still have a chance of making things right?" Nathan asked then. "Would that be the right thing to do?"

"I don't know, Nathan. We are pretty far gone," Atticus said sadly as he released Nathan from his embrace. "Let's find out what these secret weapons are about, then we can figure out what to do. Sound good?"

"Yes, that sounds like a plan." For the first time in a long time, Nathan smiled...at last having something to look forward to that didn't involve death and despair. "I should go lie down for a while...and think."

"Aye, I should do the same." As Atticus Voor departed, Nathan began walking again, with Hemlock beside him.

Nathan looked up at his Captain of the Guards. "Why is it that I come to regret most things I commit myself to?"

Hemlock was quiet for a few moments. "...Because, no man can see the future. It is merely a void...we attempt to understand the consequences, but we can never know what they will be truly until we enter it."

"So it's like death then," Nathan looked down at the floor. "We can think we know what it consists of, but won't truly know until we die."

"...Something like that, I suppose." With a large hand, he pushed open the door to Nathan's chambers in the Palace. "But such things are not worth worrying about. Life is meant to be lived, not regretted. Understand your actions, so that you make the right ones."

"Thank you, Hemlock." With that, the door was shut behind him, and alone in his well furnished chambers that felt as much a crypt as a bedroom, Nathan closed his eyes, and breathed deeply, but not so deep as his thoughts just then...

*On the precipice of a lonely mountain of despair, I
sit looking expectantly
Listless eyes, once full of the spark of life sweep
across my tattered empire, searching for miserable
company
From my throne of isolation I watch forlornly
As flames openly rebelled against bleak skyline,
sparing not a thing*

*Long absent are the images of fleeing people,
leaving only lonely streets
Ethereal voices are my only companions offering a
misleading solace
A non-existent audience watches on with me as the
morbid spectacle unfolds
As silently the vain city is consigned to Oblivion*

*I am truly Sovereign of the nothingness and the
mocking silence is my domain
Seconds pass by as if they were eternities in my
boreal realm
and perpetual nightfall forever smothers the mortal
day
Slowly, I too fade into the emptiness as the last
shred of sanity is pried from my frost-bound fingers*

*Now apart of the dark contagion I wait for something
that will never find me
Broken and forgotten like the rest of my hopeless
empire*

Ghant

Factbook | RP Resume | IIwiki Admin

Commended by **Security Council Resolution #450**

Recipient of the **Greater Dienstad Roleplay Reward**

"Look on my works, ye mighty, and despair!" - Percy Bysshe Shelley,
Ozymandias



The New Lowlands
Postmaster-General

Posts: 12498
Founded: Jun 26, 2011
Ex-Nation

by **The New Lowlands** » Tue Jul 21, 2015 4:38 pm

QUOTE

OFFISJEEL BERIXT VAN HET BURO TER BUITENLANTSE ZAAKEN

IN NAAM VAN HAARE EKSELLENSIE, DE STATHOUDER



OFFICIAL COMMUNIQUE FROM THE OFFICE OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

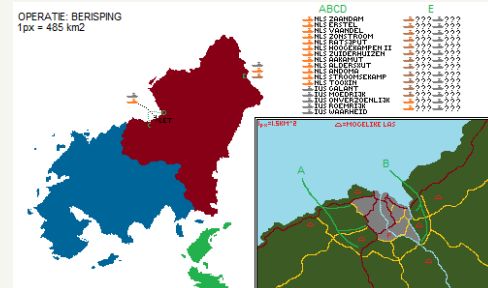
IN NAME OF HER EXCELLENCY, THE STADTHOLDER

ADDRESSED TO: Algemeen Hoofdkwartier van de Krijgsmacht der Rijksfederatie

Daames en Heeren,

[Dit bericht is uit het Neerlands tot het Imperiaans vertaald.]

Zie hierbij de huidige plannen voor Operatie: Berisping.



A = Landingszone Alpha.
B = Landingszone Beta.
C = Landingszone Ceta.
D = Landingszone Delta.
E = Landingszone Epsilon.

T = Landingstijd.

P = Paleis te Letople.

Operatie: Berisping kan in vier breede delen verdeeld worden;

Operatie: Zielskracht betreft de aanvankelijke acties in voorbereiding tot Operatie: Berisping.

Operatie: Epsilon is het huidige plan voor een landing op de oostkust van Heilanor.

Operatie: Echo is het daadwerkelijke plan dat Oost-Heilanor betreft.

Operatie: Berisping zijn de daadwerkelijke landingen ten noorden, oosten, and westen van Letople.

Ten eerste zullen Zielskracht and Echo tot werking gesteld worden. Met Operatie: Zielskracht word bedoeld een grootschalige infiltratie door eenheden van het Anfibisch Verkenningkorps (AMVERKOR) van de Neerlandse en Imperiaanse Marine om vijandelijke luchtafweer installaties te vernietigen. Vervolgens zal een peloton van het Neerlandische AMVERKOR een poging maken om de vijandelijke leiding binnen het Paleis te Letople te betrappen en zo mogelijk te vernietigen. Hierna zal Zielskracht vooral de onderneming van de luchtmoot zijn, waarbij zij vijandelijke lucht afweer systemen horen te vernietigen en om transport routes ten zuiden van de stad, zowel als vijandelijke eenheden, te bombarderen. Dit project zal drie dagen voor T beginnen.

Het is de bedoeling dat Operatie: Echo de vijand verder onklaar zal maken voor een aanval op the noordkust. Daarom zal die zeven dagen voor T beginnen, hopelijk met de hulp van de Ausitorische en mogelijk ook de Mizradische zeemacht. Voor veiligheids redenen zullen zij niet verteld worden dat Operatie: Epsilon niet een daadwerkelijke landing is. In toevoeging zal de Neerlandse en Imperiaanse Marine proberen om hun grootte in de oostzee grootschalig te vermenigvuldigen met gebruik van elektronische middelen, zodat the vijand denkt dat het doelwit in Gilesholm ligt.

Uitendelijk zal Operatie: Berisping op T beginnen. Hierbij zullen elementen van het Imperiaanse en Neerlandse leger proberen om all toegangswegen tot the stad te blokkeren, en zullen groep Alpha en Beta de stad zelf verzekeren. De vernietiging van het hoofdkwartier van de vijandelijke terrorist Heilanor heeft de hoogste prioriteit, zowel als de vernietiging van Lara en haar staf. Nathan van Ghant is bedoelt om als invloedmiddel voor Ghant te dienen. Hiervoor zal hij hopelijk levend gevangen genomen worden, hoewel dit niet noodzakelijk is.

Adi De Meer,
Liaison der Krijgsmacht, Buro ter Buitenlantse Zaaken,
Verenixde Provinsies der Nieuwe Neerlanden

Buro ter Buitenlantse Zaaken,
Regeringsplein 18,
Batavia,
B01 RPD3

OFFISJEEL BERIXT VAN HET BURO TER BUITENLANTSE ZAAKEN

IN NAAM VAN HAARE EKSELLENSIE, DE STATHOUDER



OFFICIAL COMMUNIQUE FROM THE OFFICE OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

IN NAME OF HER EXCELLENCY, THE STADTHOLDER

ADDRESSED TO: General Headquarters of the Ausitorian & Mizradian militaries
ENCRYPTION: Diplomatic Vernamcipher (OTP)

Ladies and Gentlemen,

[This message has been translated from Lowlandian to English.]

We would like to request your assistance in a particular military affair.

As you well know, Lara Heilanor remains at large at the head of the Zathalon terrorist faction. In order to combat the Zathalon threat, we intend to deliver a final blow against her security apparatus with a general amphibious offensive on the east coast. Of course, the losses incurred by Ausitorian and Mizradian forces during previous offensives may well prove politically unpopular, especially when compared to the relatively light losses endured by the Lowlandian Army (mostly due to their general lack of involvement in prior operations.)

In order to repay this debt, we would like to offer both your nations our assurances that the current amphibious operations will be undertaken exclusively by the Lowlandian and Imperian armies, so as to prevent too much political fallout in your own countries. The exceptional cultural circumstances of Heilanor make the current conflict much more "sellable" to our public than it may be for yours and thus it is for less concern for us. We cannot undertake this operation completely independently,

however, and would ask that both Mizrad and Ausitoria provide the planned landings much-needed naval and aerial support.

The designation of the current plan is Operation: Epsilon. Since the warfighting capabilities of the northern republics remain largely unaffected due to their rapid surrender, in summary it is largely intended to sweep into the country, rearmalied elements of the military, and seize control of the northeastern coast before Zathalon forces are capable of reacting. A large contingent of soldiers from the Lowlandian and Imperian militaries has been made available for this task, but the necessity of other overseas commitments and containing Zathalon's concerning although small naval threat means that we cannot bring our full force to bear.

In summary, then, we would ask that Ausitoria and Mizrad deploy a number of carrier groups to assist in reconnaissance, SEAD, and air support operations at least for the initial phase of the offensive. When the landings are complete, the Joint Task Force should prove to be largely independent through the importation of land-based aviation and the seizure of allied anti-air assets, although naturally further assistance would be appreciated.

In the interests of commencing this operation as soon as possible, elements of the Lowlandian Navy are currently moving into position in Naybra in order to ensure control of the east Zamathi Sea.

Kind Regards,

Adi De Meer,
Liaison der Krijgsmacht, Buro ter Buitenlantse Zaaken,
Verenigde Provincies der Nieuwe Neerlanden

Buro ter Buitenlantse Zaaken,
Regeringsplein 18,
Batavia,
B01 RPD3

Last edited by [The New Lowlands](#) on Tue Jul 21, 2015 5:01 pm, edited 1 time in total.



Libraria and Ausitoria
Negotiator

Posts: 7099
Founded: May 30, 2011
Ex-Nation

☐ by [Libraria and Ausitoria](#) » Sat Aug 01, 2015 12:10 am



*Except from Report on the Progress of the War,
Ministry of Intelligence and Statistics*

There have been a number of complaints that previous reports on the War, circulated beyond the Analytical X-Circuits, have been too technical in nature for the generalist to follow. Therefore this time it has been decided to preface the report with this, more widely accessible, abstract.

Note that for the purposes of this document, except where otherwise stated, Heilanor is used to refer *pars pro toto* to the entire subcontinent claimed to be part of the Empire of Zathalon.

The War in Heilanor, started seven months ago, has settled into the containment phase. This phase was first mooted in the aftermath of withdrawals following the political fall of Gilesholm, and continued despite

the disruptions by the defection of conservative elements in the lesser eastern Zathalon states, all of which lost some portion of land in the initial onslaught. Strategically it has been determined that it is too expensive (particularly in terms of manpower), also unsustainable in the long term, dangerous from the view of nuclear deterrence, highly controversially imperialist, and finally not at all in Ausitoria's diplomatic interests to wipe out Lara's forces by a counter-offensive until an end-game has been decided in consultation with Herithean powers, due to the current state of diplomacy in Heritheia and the likelihood of chaos should Lara's regime collapse.

In spite of these decisions, the Free Zathalon forces based in Alexandria created as a political counterbalance have been a propaganda victory, and have also, by their role and social functions within the ballooning refugee community (now numbering in excess of 400 million in Ausitorian-controlled areas), ensured Ausitorian ideals will be at the heart of such post-war governments. However war-weariness is growing even as the debate polarizes with a clamour to go onto the offensive, despite urgent efforts at cultural integration.

On a tactical level, a number of different objects have been pursued, varying by branch. For ground forces, despite propaganda by both sides to the contrary; a largely defensive footing has been assumed, with an emphasis on local infantry, and there are still no more than 250,000 regular Ausitorian forces in Heilanor, plus 600,000 local recruits. Despite the expense, the regular forces are presently rotated in and out on a fortnightly basis, such that the entire Ausitorian army has now received two week's worth of valuable combat experience.

On naval affairs, while it is not a frequent occurrence that Ausitoria besieges half a continent, Panessos forces have been turning an iron vice on first the surrounding seas and more recently the Zathalon coastline; with increasing use of submarines, in particular the missile submarines hastily converted for such littoral purposes and close blockade in the much-propagandized 'Terror of the Deep' programme. A great deal of experience has been gained by all parts of the navy in the process, particularly on the subject of acoustic submarine communications, subsurface drones, sensor networks, and anti-submarine operations. The economic and trading blockade has undoubtedly had a profound effect upon the (still unrecognized) Empire of Zathalon, although disruption to Ausitorian-allied trade has been minimal.

On aerospace, after establishing superiority over the front-lines, incursions over enemy territory were initially limited to avoid losses. The increasing use of drones for surveillance has mitigated combat losses and enabled superior warning systems at the tactical level. With the systematic obliteration of enemy radar installations, and increased stealth tactics backed by electronic jamming, the air force has been able to become far more offensive. With regards to enemy anti-satellite missiles, immediate efforts were made to secure endangered low earth orbits with defensive intercept platforms on the edge of the atmosphere (c. 50 km altitude, where energetics become the primary consideration over drag); and space supremacy has since been assured. The development of such platforms and their wider implications on

missile interception has acted to degrade the effectiveness of such deterrence methods, to significant worry amongst the international strategic community, but attempts to communicate Ausitoria's adoption of non-interventionist policies, made current in the political manifestos, and by Ausitoria's 'break' from interventionism for the past year, has soothed nerves.

Special forces have also been highly active, particularly in freeing notable individuals by daring coastal and helicopter rescues. In addition our intelligence forces have been increasingly active, building up a third column, making contacts, sabotaging enemy lines of communication, and assisting in personnel rescue. The use of primitive nanobots, nanofabricators, and high-altitude space-drops to supply our agents with weapons has been particularly valuable in trialling new ideas. Creation and oversight by the Heilanorean Special Operations Committee has been highly valuable.

From an economic standpoint, the war has been somewhat expensive, with total aid (including special refugee welfare) dispensed as a result of the war having reached \$732 billion (0.33% of GDP), accounting for a third of Ausitoria's aid budget, with a per-refugee spend of c. \$4000. Military expenses by comparison have been muted, with the cost of the war - excluding non-munitions capital spending and upgrades - accounting for only \$714 billion (0.35% of GDP), of which transport costs have accounted for a third. However our presence and spending has allowed Ausitorian companies to comprehensively crack into the markets, with funds being preferentially used to make purchases in Ausitorian companies on behalf of Heilanorean companies, widening Ausitorian market share; and aid also being used to provide an export subsidy to Heilanorean companies trading with Ausitoria. As a result, helped by geographical proximity and the number of Ausitorian servicemen and administrators present, Ausitorian-Heilanorean trade has increased fourfold in spite of the war; a sum that may be hoped to continue.

Within Ausitoria itself, the war has resulted in a significant refugee community. Expensively aided, such immigrants have been raising Ausitoria's attractiveness to many labour-intensive industries that until recently were planning on further overseas expansion. The participation of these generally young and liberal refugees is expected to raise long-term GDP by 1.5-2%, and has markedly raised the profile of the increasingly international class. "The Isleonor City-State", on an island between Heilanor and Naybra, has a population of 100 million, of whom half are Ausitorians; and is currently being effectively administered by the Panessos government as its capital. However across Ausitoria downward pressure on wages and upward pressure on house prices has been a cause of significant concern, particularly in the de-industrializing areas, and racial tensions between Bvordxans and Heilanoreans was a cause of considerable concern and unrest until Bvordxa's independence.

On the wider political and strategic level, Ausitoria's muted response in Heilanor and Bvordxa and to interventionism and 'imperialism' in general has acted to defuse tensions, in spite of the development of the Batavian-Filingrad (Lowlandian-Mislau) Axis as a

result of the civil war in Naisaira. However a long-term agreement on resolving the war has yet to be found.



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*Article from the New Alexandrian Courante online
version
Subsidiary of the ABC*

Bvordxa Granted Transition to Independence



Fireworks set off over Bvordxa in celebration. From *Oak Manor*.

In a stunning move, devoid of niceties, the Ausitorian government announced that “in light of the latest polling evidence, showing that over three-quarters of the population of Bvordxa is in favour of independence, we will immediately be granting Bvordxa the right to self-determination”, a move greeted by fireworks and celebrations across the Bvordxa.

The move was greeted by a rise in share indexes in both countries, and a jump in the value of the Bvordexan Phaler, bringing to an end months of striking and squabbling over the Bvordxan state government’s attempts to bail out companies that the Imperial Central Bank regarded as insolvent rather than illiquid, with the unlawful revival of the Bvordexan Phaler witnessed.

History

Rumours had been floating around of secret discussions even before the Bvordxan government called for calm last month, ending six months of intermittent riots and strikes over the deindustrialization and effective annexation of their nation as an Associate State. Bvordxa, widely believed to have suffered unusually from the free-wheeling Chattakang style of globalization, elected a nationalist government last year which has been agitating for independence.

Having been thrown into a state of constitutional limbo, the industrialized northern Bvordxa has never

fitted into either the Chattakang System or the Imperial Commonwealth. The Bvordxan economy has been in a recession for two quarters, ever since the start of the rioting, and unemployment has soared to 24% as people have been laid off from inefficient industries in line with the relaxed standard of Ausitorian labour laws and the use of cheaper immigrant workers. The Bvordxan National Bank and scores of industries have been allowed to fall, despite the Bvordxan government's attempts to issue debt to prop them up, and the resurrection of the Bvordexan Phaler three months ago, which promptly fell by a third on the black market. There have even been a few terrorist outrages in the region, although these have generally been regarded as lone-wolf attacks.

New Deal

Bvordxa has already completed negotiations to simultaneously remain in the Decis Confederacy, enjoying access to the single-market, and will be opening three-party talks to enter an association with another nation to gain access to an international credit line, ideally a ten year interest-free loan on \$20 trillion or equivalent. The deal will also include a decade-long bailout programme by the Imperial Commonwealth to directly aid the Bvordxan government to the tune of \$12 trillion, covering a significant part of Bvordxa's national and state debts and liabilities.

Bvordxan Economic Prospects

In spite of the deal, economists warn that in the short-term at least, Bvordxa still has little cause to celebrate. A recent report on brain drain found that large portions of the nascent Bvordxan middle class have already fled, and more are expected to follow, taking advantage of the still open borders to seek employment as the country rebuilds.

As a net recipient of Commonwealth funds, Bvordxa is expected to continue to face a cash crunch in the short term, and the government expected to introduce austerity measures, hopefully countered by loose (but not ultra-loose) monetary policy. Bvordxa has yet to decide what currency to adopt as legal tender, although the Bvordexan Central Bank has cut interest rates on the Bvordexan Phaler from 0.01% into negative territory, -0.25%. However they have not decided on further Quantitative Easing.

Despite the cut, investors believe that should the Bvordxan government manage to improve its competitiveness, the long-term future of the nation, with its industrial infrastructure and work ethic, should be bright.

Boundary Disputes

In addition, boundary demarcations in line with disputed 'long term polling' have ensured that what the Commonwealth government calls the 'Outer Valexian Cultural Area' (as opposed to 'Outer Bvordxa') will remain in the Imperial Commonwealth. In spite of expectations of a revanchist movement, and clear evidence of cherry-picking of the brighter spots of the economy, the Chattakang government has defended its decision on the twin grounds that there must be somewhere for loyal Bvordxans to live, and that those areas which have seen more significant Ausitorian investment will have their

interests best served by Chattakang. Worries of militarization of the border have however been dampened by the alliance with the Imperial Union, and the Imperial Commonwealth's commitment of \$12 trillion to the bailout programme, conditional on Bvordxa's approval of the demarcation.

International Effects

While whichever party funds Bvordxa would need to provide a large interest free loan or equivalent, the acquisition of a friendly protectorate-style-arrangement with Bvordxa would represent a major step-up for their power and reach, and also increase carry trade with the Ausitorian and Panethean economies. With Bvordxan assets estimated to total c. \$40 trillion, and post-agreement net liabilities of c. \$20 trillion, Bvordxa - once stabilized - is a prize worth having.

The independence of Bvordxa prior to the upcoming elections has also noticeably raised the likelihood of the return to power of the Liberal Free Traders in Ausitoria, leading to allegations from the opposition parties that there was a strong political motive to the expulsion of Bvordxan voters, who could reliably have been expected to vote for them. Bvordxa accounts for about 6% of the popular vote and seats in Parliament. However the Prime Minister, Henry Taylor, responded by asking "whether the opposition parties would prefer to try to rule Bvordxa as a colony?" and defended the deal as the most "liberal pragmatic" option, and the Imperial Commonwealth as voluntary.

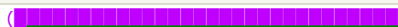







A surge in demand for houses in and around 'Outer Bvordxa', on top of the surge caused by the immigrant communities, has seen prices rise and the announcement of hundreds of new construction projects, particularly in the port cities of Havograd, Eikir, New Alexandria, East Chattakang, and Beaufort. Investment flows, until recently wholly away from the area, have stabilized, with investors in search of higher returns expected to return.

Last edited by [Libraria and Ausitoria](#) on Fri Nov 20, 2015 12:16 pm, edited 5 times in total.

The Aestorian Commonwealth - Pax Prosperitas - Gloria in Maere -
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Disclaimer: Notwithstanding any mention of their nations, Ausitoria and its canon does **not** exist **nor** impact the canon of many IFC & SACTO & closed-region nations; and it is harassment to presume it does. However in accordance with my open-door policy the converse does **not** apply: they still impact Ausitoria's canon.

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( ||  []     )



Gbant
Minister

Posts: 2457
Founded: Feb 11, 2013
Civil Rights Lovefest

by [Gbant](#) » Mon Aug 31, 2015 6:13 pm

QUOTE

Part III, Ch. II
"Homecoming"
Dakauregia
Dakar, Dakmoor

"Of all creatures that breathe and move upon the earth, nothing is bred that is weaker than man."
Homer, *the Odyssey*

Of said was that a journey of a thousand miles

began with one step. For far too long, Martin of Dakmoor had been away from home and all its pleasantries. *Seven years...* his journey had taken him to Rhodesea, where he fought in the last Rhodo-Eprarian War, to Loufe, then on to Destinado Tierra, where he had to wheel and deal before eventually securing passage for himself and his Mizradian comrade to Ghant, where he had heard of troubling events befalling his homeland.

From what he had fathered, the arrival of Lara Yaraslov from wherever she was hiding had caused a ripple effect that threatened the peace and stability of the world. Lara resorted to manipulating the Emperor of Ghant into marrying her and providing her with the initial strength that she needed to begin her vision of reassembling the defunct Empire of Zathalon from the existing constituent states. War had broken out on that continent between Lara and her sister Selena, the legitimate Empress of Heilanor whom she sought to usurp.

Oh, my dear sweet Selena. Martin had grieved for her, yearning to go to her in her hour of need, but knew that he could not. He had heard how she fell from that balcony at the conference in Loufe. He wished that he had stayed with her...perhaps if he had done so, she wouldn't have been injured. She was better now, but her throne and her country were besieged. There wasn't much he could do if he went to her directly. *No...the best that I can do is what I can do here,* he understood. If he could find a way to compel Ghant to intervene on Heilanor's behalf...but that was a tall order, seeing as how Albert was ruling as Lord Protector of Ghant and was not like to budge. Albert was content to let the rest of the world burn while he kept his head buried in the snow.

The Crown Prince of Dakmoor who returned from presumed death looked around with wary eyes upon his hometown of Dakar. It hadn't changed much, of that much he could discern when the private plane from Destinado Tierra landed on the outskirts of town. He was nearly unrecognizable as well, or so he thought, having grown out some facial hair once more. Martin wasn't quite sure what he could expect, but was under the impression that until he knew that he would be safe, it was best to travel incognito.

For safety is no guarantee, even in my home. No doubt the Rhodeseans were looking for him, and would have anticipated him returning to Dakar. Martin wouldn't put it past the Rhodeseans to stake out the capital city of Dakmoor in the event that he turned up there. So he had to proceed with caution, or he wasn't going to get very far at all.

The plan then seemed simple enough, if not potentially hard to pull off. He would only reveal himself to his parents within Dakauregia itself, and not a moment sooner. He knew it well enough to know all of its nuances, content to enter the palace through a secret passageway that was for all intents and purposes unknown to all except for the family itself.

So it was that Martin emerged nonchalantly from the plane to no fanfare, and no one paying any mind to Martin as he disembarked down the steps unto the tarmac. He was dressed in a black trench coat with black slacks, which concealed a pair of pistols, clips, and a dagger, for just in case it got hot. He was also

wearing a black vest, which combined with his black facial hair, made him look quite menacing...which was the goal, since usually Martin appeared quite approachable, that being what he was known for.

Not wanting to draw anymore attention to himself then necessary, he endeavored to approach the large marble and sandstone palace on foot through some of the less frequented avenues of the city, which wasn't hard to do from the private airfield he arrived to. It was evening, and so people were focused on their routines and activities, be they eating and drinking, entertaining the company of others, so on and so forth.

The city of Dakar began as a farming and fishing village, established by the local Dakmoorans along the fertile banks of the Morea River, upon a sheer cliff overlooking the Sea of Ghant. The area, criss-crossed by the river's many tributaries, was suitable to permanent construction and quickly grew in size. When Marcel Dakmaran became King of Dakmoor in the early 16th century, he established his capital there, replacing the old capital city of Moro which was further up the river. As a result of Marcel's keen eye for architecture and defenses, he instituted strict planning regimes and extensive building projects, which resulted in the city taking on a unified and harmonious architectural style of sandstone block buildings with purple shingles on the roofs. The sophisticated culture which emerged was suitable to the cultivation of politicians and statesmen, all of whom trained and study the art of politics and public service in the city's many fine universities, rivaled in prestige only by those in Ghish and Onmutu.

But it wasn't for any of this that Martin had a keen eye for. It was for the series of underground tunnels that were built in the city's porous surface, all of which had been meticulously maintained for generations. There was one that passed underneath Dakauregia by way of the cliffs, and it was there that he would enter the palace, under the veil of darkness. *If I am but a shadow, then I might as well play the part...*

Martin walked softly and slowly, his eyes looking ahead from his purposely grizzled guise. People glanced at him now and then as he made his way down the sidewalk, some looking away quickly, others, girls especially, occasionally offered him a look of adoration. In any event, he avoided making eye contact, and stayed focused on the task at hand. *All I have to do is reach the palace grounds.*

...Easier said than done. Martin's father was a man who highly valued security and knowing all things at all times in and around his seat. As he walked through the allies, closer and closer to Dakauregia, he began to notice that something was amiss. People began to appear tense, almost afraid of something. As if something quite near to them was potentially dangerous. If anything it calcified a sense of resolve in Martin's heart, and so he continued to venture boldly yet surreptitiously.

The closer he got to the palace grounds, the faster he began to realize that security seemed unusually high. Even more strange was the fact that it wasn't Dakauregia guards that were on patrol..it was what appeared to be imperial soldiers. Strange looking

though, for they...seemed different from ordinary imps. *Perhaps they are mercs*, Martin thought upon examination from his shadowy hiding place. *Mercenaries with imperial standards on their persons*. Something was certainly amiss. *Hmm...*

Martin didn't doubt that he would find out once he was within Dakauregia itself. As it were, Martin bypassed the palace plaza and courtyard which appeared to be under heavy guard, and followed the alleys to the edge of the cliff beside the palace. It was there that the sun had begun its final descent in the west, casting the purple glow of the Dakmooran dusk upon the city.

Shit. Martin had to remember the exact whereabouts of the secret entrance, and be sure to recall his footing, lest he fall down upon the rocks below the cliffs as they were pounded by the tide. The city ended a few meters from the sheer cliff, allowing for some trees before a wooden fence lining the way to prevent people from casually walking off the side of the cliff. If Martin's memory served him correctly, the way he needed to go was near a tree with a root sticking out of the cliff. That would yield a series of protruding stones that one could climb, down and down to a cave hidden in the cliff below, concealed by a crag.

He made sure he wasn't being followed, sure to crisscross his way through the city. After a few minutes he found the tree, looking over to see the root. Then with great anxiety, he took a deep breath and began to climb over the fence. He used his feet to probe for the stepping stones, careful to maintain his grip, for if he lost it, he would fall and die. With great care, he found one of them, thankful as he was considering the darkness and his own racing heart and sweaty palms. *Thank God*. After all of those years, he remembered the way.

With sure feet he climbed down, poking another foot out and finding another stone, and soon enough he was on the cliff with his hands and feet. He was exceedingly careful and took his time with it, content not to rush the descent. After what seemed like an hour, he could hear the crashing of the waves upon rock closer and closer, until he was sure that it was only thirty feet below. He was concealed by the crags that emerged from the sea below the cliff, and in that void, his foot found a ledge.

One foot was followed by the other, and that was when he knew he had found what he was looking for. Martin began to step sideways, until he arrived at the entrance to the cave, just large enough for one man to enter. Relieved, he exhaled and entered the cave, quite glad he wasn't outside on the cliff anymore. Although, now a new challenge faced him, which consisted of finding his way around all in pitch black darkness. Fortunately, he had been down there before in his life, as a boy with his brother and sister. There were times when he was afraid of it as most children were, but Martin had learned that *one must face and overcome their fears*.

The cave had many forks and winding paths, and despite Martin having a flashlight, he didn't feel as though he could use it, lest he give himself away in case it was being patrolled by one of those imps. So he relied upon his memory and his hands and feet to guide him through the underground expanse, until he

noticed a dim glow ahead of him after a few minutes of inching his way along.

It was the palace cistern, much to Martin's elation. 'Twas a massive underground chamber built in part as a foundation for the palace above, but also serving the purpose of storing fresh water, as it was large enough to hold an excessive amount. The ceiling was supported by a forest of tall marble and granite columns, of which there were roughly four hundred arranged in rows spaced apart evenly. Each column was styled with engravings, featuring the faces of men and beasts, both real and imagined.

Martin looked around the cistern, and by whatever dim light was being cast by bulbs set into the alcoves, he saw no movement and hear no noise. He followed the stone walkways, careful not to fall into the water and cause a splash. It was during this sojourn that he realized the old saying, *the journey is never as perilous as it is towards its end*. Close was he getting, and danger was near...or so he suspected.

Ascending from the cistern upon a set of wide stone steps, he entered the lower levels of the palace, which contained the dungeons, crypt and storage areas. Long, wide hallways intersected this area, and also were dimly lit. Passing through the dungeon, he couldn't help but notice that there was someone in a cell, sitting in the middle of the floor cross-legged as if meditating. Martin looked around once more, and then he approached the bars.

As if sensing his approach, the man looked up. "...Martin?" he asked softly. "It can't be...you're dead...I must be delirious, yes...that's it."

It didn't take long for Martin to recognize the man in the cell...it might have been many years, but he couldn't forget. "...Zandor? It is me, Martin...back from the dead...although I never truly died," Martin grinned, still keeping an eye out.

"Aye, my Prince." It was none other than Zandor Haroka, Master-at-arms of Dakauregia, who had served in that capacity since the days of Martin's grandfather Miraxes. He was older now as one might imagine, approaching sixty, with black hair thoroughly peppered with grey. He was dressed in rags, possessed a scraggly beard and was gaunt from his imprisonment, so it seemed.

Horried, Martin gripped the iron bars with his hands, and continued to speak softly. "What happened, Zandor?"

"...We received a guest from Ghish," Zandor began to explain, "to discuss the situation unfolding in Zathalon. Your father received him, courteous a lord as he has always been. They met privately, and shortly thereafter your father fell ill and bedridden. He was unable to rule...you and your brother and sister were gone, Baldakar and Ben were gone, and so..." Zandor gulped, "Dakauregia was placed under the protection of Ghish, or at least that's what the official story was. In actuality, it was a coup by Albert to neutralize Dakmoor as a threat, with your father becoming a prisoner in his own palace, used as leverage for cooperation."

It all made sense to Martin, who knew that the enmity between Albert and Malibar ran deep. Yet,

Martin never thought that Albert would stoop so low as to take control of Dakauregia by proxy...unless he was missing something. "Who are these imps that are patrolling the city?"

"Soldiers of fortune that answer to one of Albert's minions...Silverworm, I believe his name to be. Albert didn't want to dirty his own hands on this foul business, so left it to Silverworm to do the dirtywork for him. Albert is a fool...this Silverworm fellow, from what I have gathered, is merely pretending to be Albert's creature, when in fact I doubt he is anyone's but his own. In any event, it would appear as though containing the power and influence of Dakmoor at present is in their mutual best interests," Zandor explained to his old charge as he stood up and placed his hands on the bars. "We protested this blatant violation, and for our protestations we were imprisoned...myself along with Jori and the other guards. If we are freed, and with you by our sides...we could regain control of the palace."

"...And once we do, we will call the banners," Martin spoke with firmness. "Something most wicked is afoot in Zathalon and it concerns us all. What's happening here in Ghant...it is tied to that."

Zandor nodded, although he sighed heavily. "So it would seem. Let's cross that bridge when we go to it. The turnkey patrols the dungeon halls...we just need to get the keys from him, and then we can free everyone who has been confined to cells."

"Leave that to me," Martin grinned. "I am on it already." For this, Martin got his combat knife ready, and he began to move stealthily through the cavernous expanse of the lower levels. It didn't take long for him to find the turnkey, who was sitting at a table under a light, watching television on some small flatscreen...completely oblivious to what was going on around him. Martin crept up behind him and put his knife away. With a swift movement, he reached out and used his large, powerful hands to break his neck. *Well, that was easy.*

There was no one else around, and Martin bent over to fumble around the dead man's belt for the keys, which he found. He carefully dragged the body to a closet to keep it hidden, and then he went back the way he came. When he returned to Zandor's cell, he opened the cell door and handed the keys to him. "Now what?" Martin asked the now freed Master-at-arms.

"We need to get everyone free and take the armory...then we can make this a fight," Zandor said. "We need to be quick about it...and strike fast. We can't risk anyone catching on or someone is going to let the cat out of the bag."

"Alright...let's get to it then, shall we?" Martin asked rhetorically as he went to help Zandor free the other captives and prepare for their venture. In all there were roughly a hundred guards confined, all of whom seemed to be beyond words when they learned of Martin's return. Zandor and the Prince both encouraged the men to remain quiet, and they along with Jori Asagui, captain of the guards, began to sneak their way to the armory which was further down the hall.

As was the case with the dungeons, the armory was

only lightly guarded, this time by three men, sitting at a table within a side room, playing cards. As was the case previously, Martin snuck in, this time with the other two men, and knowing what needed to be done, moved quickly. They covered the mouths of their quarries and went to snap their necks, although there was a struggle to that end. Fortunately, not much noise was made, and the deed was done. *So far so good.*

...Too easy, Martin thought as everyone snuck into the armory to grab weapons. Martin opted to keep his pistols, while the now freed guardsmen went for their old weapons, which also consisted of pistols. Some of them went for larger weapons including assault rifles, with Zandor going for an AK-47. "Do you know how to use that?" Martin asked the master-at-arms humorously. "I figured you would have gone for a pike."

Zandor was readying his weapon, and at Martin's word he let out a chuckle. "No sense in doing that when the enemy has guns. It would be like bringing a knife to a gunfight."

Martin nodded as he looked around the armory and took a deep breath in anticipation. "Yes...that it would be. Where are my mother and father, anyway?"

Looking at his feet for a few moments, Zandor then answered. "Your father is in his chambers bedridden, and your mother...is in the gardens."

That always was her favorite place to be. When the time came, Zandor Haroka and Martin went up the marble steps, with Jori Asagui and the guardsmen in tow. The plan was to cut off the power and then to pick the mercs off in the dark. *Will be easier said than done.* The power was on the lower level, so it could be easily accessed without trouble. Near the top of the steps ascending into an antechamber of the main floor, the power went out, and it fell dark. Then it was on.

The Dakmoorans advanced using sweep and clear tactics, and with their silenced weapons and some dim moonlight shining through the large windows, the mission was underway. The mercs were spread out and seemed to be dropping with ease...that was until somewhere in the expansive great hall, there was a shout...and then the mercs knew that they had hostile company. *I knew this was too easy...*

It happened very fast, as there was an exchange of fire in the great hall, prompting Martina and Zandor to take cover behind some of the tall, thick marble columns. Martin laid down some suppressing fire so that his men could fan out to take other positions around the hall, behind other columns and in alcoves. The mercs were outnumbered, and quickly found themselves pinned down while the Dakmoorans circled around them. Zandor turned to Martin and told him, "we need to go to your father's chambers, before the mercs up there get any idea of what's happening." Nodding, Martin waited for his opportunity, and went in that direction with at least a dozen men in his company.

Always in a run and gun. Whether it was Rhodesea, or Loufe, it always seemed to follow him like a specter. His heart was racing, blood pumping,

adrenaline flowing...he didn't know how much more of it he could take. They had to move fast, that much Martin knew for sure. Even though his men had control of the lower levels by now, and the great hall, the mercs were in all other places, and out in the city. It was most likely only a matter of time before they started pouring in from the city proper. If Martin and Zandor could get to Malibar quickly, maybe they could earn some leverage...

Martin was forced to fall back around a corner in a corridor when a bullet flew out and bit into the sandstone wall. The unseen assailant and Martin exchanged fire back and forth, until Martin saw him lean forward out of the corner of his eye, at which point he leaned his gun around the corner and fired it, hitting the other man in the chest. The prince moved forward while reloading, eager to begin climbing up the steps to the upper levels.

There were more men up there, partially illuminated by the glow of the moon, juxtaposed silhouettes wielding deathly guises. Martin was pinned once more behind cover only able to shoot suppressing fire, while his ears rung with the echoes of shouting, screaming and gunfire. The Prince lost all sense of time, his world being reduced to a gunfight in the halls of his home, almost a dream, surreal as it was.

Men would drop to the ground, dead or maimed, on one side or the other. Martin crept along, one corridor after another, one alcove followed by one room, so on down the line...sweeping and clearing to the point where it felt routine. There was a time in his life where he would have mourned a man that he had to kill, but now he didn't. It felt like pulling weeds, or doing chores. Martin was desensitized to it. In that moment, he did feel sorrow...but not for the men he was killing. But for himself...a man caught up in the games of more powerful men, battling against a tide that could sweep him away. *Should I let it?*

There it was at long last, after how long he couldn't tell. Ahead lay the double doors to his father's chambers, flanked by two armed men on high alert. Martin, Zandor, and four others took up positions down the hall, and unloaded on the two men at the end of the hall, who went down in a flurry of bullets and blood. The Martin took a leap of faith, tired of the killing. He ran for the double doors and didn't stop, didn't look away or back. Then he arrived, and slammed his shoulder into them, forcing them open. Inside was his father lying in the bed sleeping, sickly looking and unshaven. Standing above the bed was another man, with a gun pointed at Malibar's head. The man was clean-shaven with short black hair, clad all in black. "You're not supposed to be here," the man said to Martin, apparently not knowing who he was.

"I am Martin, Crown Prince of Dakmoor, returned from Rhodesea at long last," Martin said firmly as he held his pistol out towards the man. "This is my home...where else should I be?"

"Dead and buried," the man snorted. "The world thinks you are dead. So if I kill you, no one would know that you died here. For how can a dead man die again?"

"How do you plan on killing me?" Martin asked,

knowing that the man had his gun pointed at his sleeping ailing father.

"Easy, my Prince, for it is always what you don't see coming that kills you." As he said that, Martin thought with horror about what might be behind him, or hiding in the room beside him. Suspecting that, he fell down just as an unseen gun discharged, and the room descended into a hailstorm of gunfire.

From the ground, Martin aimed his gun up and shot the man in the chest, and then laid there for a moment to catch his breath. "Martin," Zandor called out from somewhere in a raspy voice. "Rooms clear."

Martin jumped up to his feet and found Zandor behind him, slumped up against the door, bleeding out from the chest where he was shot. "Zandor," Martin muttered as he rushed to him.

"Don't worry about me," Zandor coughed up. "Go check on your father, and that man...he...might...know something."

The Prince nodded sadly, and then stood up and walked over to the man bleeding out on the floor. Martin stepped on his wrist, and heard him groan. "Start talking," Martin commanded him as he kicked his gun away. "Who are you, and who sent you?"

The man flashed a bloody smile, coughing up blood. "I am a dead man...same as you, Martin of Dakmoor. We came from Silverworm, to make sure Dakmoor didn't disturb his plans. It is too late...you are too late. The world is going to end, and you get to watch it burn. The Sword of Sanctification will be drawn from Letople, and not even Ghant will be able to stay the blade."

"...We'll see about that, dead man." Martin stood over him as he watched him bleed out, until finally he died. Malibar, despite Martin's disbelief, was still sleeping, and past the windows on either side of his bed, the sun began to rise, signaling the dawn...and the other dead men in the room, slumped over on the floor and against the shelves and dressers, Dakmooran and merc alike. Zandor was still alive, but barely, and once more Martin rushed to him.

"Hold on," Martin said as he knelt in front of his old teacher. "Don't die now...you are the toughest man I have ever known. Fight it...you must."

"Martin," Zandor murmured. "It is alright...my time has come. It was worth it, from start to finish," he told him as he turned his head slightly to let the light of dawn shine up on his wary face. "I was there when you came into the world; I was there when you took your first step and said your first word. I trained you at arms and watched you grow. You were like the son I never had. For many years I thought you were dead, and I grieved for you. I can die knowing that you are alive, having seen your face once more, and for that I consider myself very lucky. Not a better way to die..."

Then the aged master-at-arms slouched over for the last time, having drawn his final breath and witnessed his final dawn. Martin fought back the tears, and ran his hand over his eyes to close them. It was then that Jori and more palace guards ran

down the hall, at least a dozen strong. Jori dropped to one knee before Martin and the recently deceased man, and inclined his head. "Your Highness...the palace is yours. The signal for reinforcements has been given, as ordered."

"Good," Martin said as he rose to his feet. "Call the banners, inform the lords of Dakmoor that we prepare for war. We make for Ghish, and then God willing, on to Zathalon...hopefully before it is too late."

Jori nodded and rested a hand on Zandor's shoulder. "Understood, your Highness. We will stand vigil over your father and see to his care."

"Thank you," Martin responded with a faint smile as he returned to his feet and clasped Jori's shoulders. "Let me know when my father awakens. I will want to speak to him." Then, he remembered what Zandor told him earlier. "If you will excuse me, I need to check on my mother. Zandor said she is in the gardens."

"Aye, that she is," Jori said with a somber face. "She's been waiting for you for quite some time. She always knew that you were alive...she refused to believe that you had died..." it seemed like there was more that he wanted to say, but didn't.

With that, Martin turned on the balls of his feet and ran back the way he came, down the hallways and the steps of marble and sandstone, past the ornaments, portraits and statues, past the windows letting in the light of dawn. His mother was waiting for him in the gardens, and didn't even know what he was going to tell her. How much he missed her, how much he loved her...how sorry he was for not appreciating her before he went away. He knew he was going to cry.

Martin paid no heed to the dead bodies or to the blood that stained the marble tiled floors, or to the bullet holes and marks all around the palace interior. He fixed his eyes on the double glass doors that went from the great hall to the gardens outside, and pushed them open gently. The light was growing bright as it shone from the east where the sun was rising over the Sea of Ghant, with the flowers and trees of the garden glistening with morning dew. He couldn't hear anything, aside from the sounds of the sea in the distance, and the sounds of birds chirping as the day ushered in.

"Mother," Martin called out. "Mother...it is I, Martin. I have come home!" Martin spoke loudly, but received no response. "Mother, it is alright, you can come out. It is safe...and I am home. Mother..."

There was nothing...where was she? Was she hiding, was she in disbelief, alone and afraid? Martin had to find her, and hold her close, for he never loved his mother more than he did then, in that moment in the gardens. He had to find her...what if she was hurt? He didn't see any blood though...

It was in the orchid with white and violet and amaryllis flowers that came a fountain with birds fluttering in it, singing a song of the dawn, when he saw something that made his face drain of color and his heart sink. There among the white flowers he saw a slab of stone set amongst them. Martin approached it and dropped to his knees, feeling the grief

overwhelm him finally. Upon it was a poem...

Elizabeth Mutu
1964-2012

We had a wonderful mother,
One who never really grew old;
Her smile was made of sunshine,
And her heart was solid gold;
Her eyes were as bright as shining stars,
And in her cheeks fair roses you see.
We had a wonderful mother,
And that's the way it will always be.
But take heed, because
She's still keeping an eye on all of us,
So let's make sure
She will like what she sees.

Martin's body went numb and he couldn't stop the tears from pouring forth from his eyes and down his cheeks into the soft soil below. For the first time in he didn't know how long, he screamed and pounded his bloodied fists upon the ground, as the blood, sweat and tears mixed upon his bloodied shirt. He wailed, like a grieving child, burying his face in the dirt, letting it smother his head, coat his hair, and sting his eyes. He trembled and shook, as he learned for the first time that his mother had died before he could see her again, and tell her how sorry he was... for never telling her how much he loved her. *Such is the misery of my homecoming.*

— Ghant —

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Commended by Security Council Resolution #450

Recipient of the Greater Dienstad Roleplay Reward

"Look on my works, ye mighty, and despair!" - Percy Bysshe Shelley,
Ozymandias



Ghant
Minister

Posts: 2457
Founded: Feb 11, 2013
Civil Rights Lovefest

by Ghant » Mon Sep 14, 2015 9:52 pm

QUOTE

Part III, Ch. III
"The Janus Project"
Janus Research Facility
Letople, Zathalon

"Janus am I; oldest of potentates! Forward I look and backward and below I count as god of avenues and gates the years that through my portals come and go." Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, *the Children's Longfellow*

Nathan had waited a for quite some time to see what was taking place at the Janus Project, and soon enough he would get his chance. His party consisted of the usual set of companions, those being Rodrigo Viseu, Zara Thrall, Atticus Voor, Barrin of Arrautsa, Fendulias of Gaemar, Kukavanger and Hemlock. The nature of their visitation was far too classified to allow regular guards inside, and so the Emperor outfitted his security with high caliber individuals of noted trustworthiness. Whatever secrets the project contained, it was best not to let anyone who would... misuse that information within its inner depths.

The facility, as it were, was on the outskirts of the

city, to the south. They departed from the palace in the early afternoon following a hearty breakfast of steak and eggs, before traveling to Janus by way of limousines. Empress Lara, perhaps unsurprising, travelled in her own, while Emperor Nathan went in yet another. The city was still practically a warzone under military administration...there hadn't been much time to get everything normalized, given the ongoing war. Buildings were in various stages of ruin, some in better condition than others, and the people appeared wary. *Which is understandable*, Nathan conceded as he looked out a tinted window.

Janus was secluded in a forest, which was under heavy military patrol, complimented by jeeps and armored vehicles. There was a barbed wire fence around the facility's perimeter, with warning signs to the effect of *trespassers will be shot on sight*. Fortunately security knew that they were coming, and so when they had arrived, the gates opened, allowing the vehicles to pass unhindered into the facility grounds.

There was a parking lot, and a building that wasn't much to look at. It was quite regular, a square shaped building with rounded edges in colors of steely chrome and dark blue. "So, this is Janus," Nathan commented to his companions. "Doesn't look like much...I thought it would be bigger."

"It probably is," Kukavanger observed as he scratched the stubble on his chin. "When it comes to a place like this, there is probably more to it than meets the eye."

Once their limo came to a stop, Nathan and his personnel got out and grouped up with Lara and her party, who led the way forward. Security stood at the entrance, and ushered them inside the building. It looked on the inside about like what it looked on the outside. Very futuristic, sanitized and small, featuring some bathrooms, security desks and monitors, some furniture, and some elevators, the sight of which finally made it all make sense in Nathan's mind. *Underground, of course.*

Security officers wore jumpsuits, with the Janus symbol on the front upper left side. The standard hand weapon was odd looking...nothing like Nathan had ever seen before. The ID cards used in card slots for the doors and elevators had the Janus symbol above the ID photo.

Sitting down on one of the couches was Lara's sister Sula, who promptly got up and rounded around the couch to greet her sister and her company. Sula was dressed as per the usual, in a lab coat and dark slacks, her hair bound behind her head and her eyes heavy with the stresses of her work. "Greetings, Lara, Nathan, Prime Minister Tangerine and company," Sula said with an incline of her head.

"Hello," Nathan responded to his sister-in-law. "Are you to show us the project?" he asked, not without apprehension.

Sula nodded, affirming his inquiry. "Yes, if you would follow me, I will show you to the project."

"After you then." Nathan watched as Sula reached for a keycard dangling around her neck and used it to swipe a slot on the elevator control panel, seeing as

how there were no buttons. After a few moments, the elevator doors opened, revealing a thoroughly lit, rectangular elevator as polished and sanitized as all the rest. "If you don't mind, only the Emperor, Empress and Prime Minister may enter. For security reasons."

Nathan gulped in his hesitation before turning to his companions. They all shrugged, or nodded, while Martina Tangerine, Lara and Sula entered the elevator. "Coming, your Majesty?" Martina asked him, before he relucted. Sighing, he joined them in the elevator, and watched his comrades before the doors shut, and they began to make their descent into the depths of the facility.

From the looks of it, there were *at least* nine levels on the panel. His curiosity piqued, he asked Sula, "what happens on the different levels?"

Sula looked to the Prime Minister and the Empress, who both nodded, before Sula turned back to Nathan and began to explain. "The first level is security and communications. The second level is staff housing. The third level is executive offices and laboratories. The fourth level is for mind control experiments, the fifth level is for weapons research, the sixth level is for genetic experiments, the seventh level is for cryogenic storage, the eighth level is for the Janus Project, and the ninth level is for the Sword of Sanctification project."

Well then. Nathan certainly didn't know what to say to all that, other than give Sula a blank stare. "Sounds like a lot," was all he could muster for a response.

"After the Second Level, everyone is weighed, in the nude, then given a uniform. Then visitors are given an 'off white' uniform as well, but for you lot I am sure we can make an exception," Sula grinned.

How thoughtful. Nathan really wasn't feeling comfortable in this place...it seemed off to him, ominous even.

Sula continued to explain some of the various security aspects, as if she were bragging about the features of some new car. "In front of sensitive areas are scales built under the doorway, by the door control. The person's card must match with the weight and code or the door won't open. Any discrepancy in weight over three pounds will summon Security. No one is allowed to carry anything into or out of sensitive areas. All supplies are put through a Security conveyor system. I am afraid that applies to everyone. I hope you don't mind, Lara."

"...Not at all, dear sister," the Empress responded with a smirk, taking pride in whatever was going on in this place. It seemed almost sadistic on her part...*not an endearing quality.* She wasn't like that when Nathan had first met her...*not at all.* Lara Yaraslan was the demure, dogged princess, jilted by her country and kin and eager for vindication and glory. Then, she slowly began to turn into something else, gradually at first. Once she had Zathalon within her grasp, she became nothing short of tyrannical, and it fell upon the Emperor to temper her ferocity. *Which I get no credit for.*

Nathan kept quiet and still, before they arrived at

the 9th level. The elevator was silent as it made its descent, and more silent still as the doors opened, revealing a hallway nearly as sterile in appearance. It was clean, and smelled like sanitization, as if masking something foul. It reminded the Emperor of a bathroom in a government office building. As the four of them began to walk forward, he noticed that there were no frills about the place, nothing fun or fanciful. *It is all just plastic and steel.*

They approached a door with a security mechanism that scanned fingerprints, which Sula used by pressing her thumb against the scanner. Then it opened, the door splitting in half by going into either wall. The next room featured a low humming noise, and people lurking about in lab coats, not paying the visitors any mind.

"It took us many years, but we have finally created the serum," Sula informed them as they approached a door leading to a walk-in freezer room. Signaling towards one of the scientists, Sula looked on as the scientist, a female, walked inside and took a container out, containing a vial within. Inside the vial was a pink liquid, with an eerie glow. "Behold, the serum," Sula proclaimed enthusiastically.

...I must have missed the memo, Nathan thought as he looked at it with a cocked head. "A serum for what?"

"For Rosea sickness...but it is so much more than that! We were able to backwards engineer the Rosea genes to create something new and exciting. When this serum is introduced into the bloodstream of a Rosea, it identifies and amplifies those genes... causing a mutation that..." Sula's voice trailed off when Lara gave her a cold stare.

Nathan's curiosity was far too great to leave it unsated, mixed in with the bitter taste of fearful anxiety that began to permeate his being like a thousand little pins sticking into his flesh. "...a mutation that results in what?"

"...We are not sure...tests have been somewhat limited," Sula confessed. "But we have reason to believe that it could bestow certain...powers and abilities upon introduction into the bloodstream."

"What sorts of powers and abilities? Are we talking about climbing up walls or something?" Nathan asked with exclamation.

"...Enhanced perception, strength, agility...and the ability to survive the detonation of the Sword of Sanctification," Sula answered cautiously.

Nathan, dense as he was, stood still for a moment while he processed what was just said, before a look of sheer horror crept over his face...then he responded with a certain swiftness. "Are you telling me that the Sword of Sanctification weapons project is a superweapon designed to destroy anyone that doesn't carry the Rosea gene?"

"Of course!" Lara beamed with enthusiasm. "What do you think the name Sword of Sanctification meant? It is the sword by which the world can be sanctified...cleansed of all impurities and brought into the grace of the one true God of all mankind. All that will remain are our people, who will fulfill the

prophecy.”

“This is preposterous! What about your non-Zathalonian allies that have served you so well?” Nathan asked, trembling a bit now and with shaking hands.

“They will be granted a place in my new world to serve the master race,” Lara shrugged in response. “Provided they obey. Otherwise their fate shall be sealed with the rest of the stains set to be washed away.”

“Lara, this is madness! Our goal was to resurrect the Empire of Zathalon, not to destroy the world! This is far more than I ever agreed to!” Nathan countered with a quivering voice.

Lara laughed in his face, before telling him “the world is ours, dear husband. I will conquer it and turn all those pure strain humans into my master race. They will give me the army I need to bring peace to the entire world, and snuff out all traces of its past corruption.”

“Is that why you wanted to capture Letople and forge this Empire? To use it as your launching pad to reshape the world in your image?”

“..A means to an end. The Janus Project will bring about the master race, united in a single purpose. One world, one empire, one god..you get the idea. Imagine all the troubles that would cease to be!”

“..And you think Rosea are the chosen race?”

“Of course. Who else? Zathalon is the chosen country, the Zathalonians the chosen people. It is we who are tasked with carrying out God’s work, so that we shall. All who are not us are our enemies, sooner or later. They shall be purged like vermin.”

The Emperor shook his head and winced as if he were just jabbed in the gut. “You can’t mean to destroy the rest of the human race, Lara. That’s not how it works.”

“All that resist, yes. I am changing the rules. You have a choice, dear husband. To have a place by my side in the new world order, or you can perish with the rest of your kind. That I leave to you.”

The course that the conversation went naturally filled the Emperor with a sense of unprecedented fear and horror. Everyone he ever cared about..ever loved, dead, or reduced to a life of fear and persecution. It was then and truly at that point, which he believed he had made a mistake. *If only I had refused her when she first came to me in the throne room of Ghish.* It was too late now, the path was set. Looking down at the cold lab floor, he began to nod.

“You are right, sweet wife. I swore a vow, and I will stand by your side, now as I have already. You and I can change the world..from this moment on we share the world,” Nathan encouraged her in spite of himself. *Gods forgive me.*

His response caused Lara to smile. “Good..for a minute I thought you were going to hesitate. Can’t have that, dear.”

Nathan felt as though he was going to be sick. He could feel the bile building in his throat, his stomach queasy like he just ingested something toxic. "If you don't mind I think I would like to return to the surface. This is...a bit much, if you don't mind me saying."

"I will accompany you," Sula told him, to which Lara shook her head.

"I think not, sister. Give him a master key so he can return to the surface. This is more than many a man can stomach at all once. Best let him soak it all in while the Prime Minister, you and I continue to go about our business."

"...As you command, your Grace." With that, Sula gave Nathan a master key. "Just remember to swipe it to gain access to the doors."

After accepting the keycard, the Emperor nodded, before turning on the balls of his feet. As he did so, Lara said one more thing to him. "And remember... speak of this to no one. No one can know of our plans. The weapon will be ready in less than two weeks. Then the world is ours. It won't matter where our enemies are, what territories they hold, or how close they are to us. So long as we have this facility, we can draw the Sword of Sanctification. And then the corruption can be cut away, once and for all. The world that comes from that will be brighter than anyone could possibly imagine, one of never ending peace and prosperity."

And death. Nodding after merely turning his head, he began shambling on noodle-like legs back towards the hallway and subsequently the elevator. It felt like the longest walk of his life, his body numb and tingly, his legs like tree trunks that took all of his strength to move. He felt like he was going to have a panic attack, a sudden fit of difficulty breathing or functioning properly. Yet somehow he made it back to the elevator. *...What the fuck is going on here? Is Lara really going to attempt to eliminate the majority of the human race in order to fulfill some ancient Zathalonian prophecy regarding the apocalypse?*

He took a deep breath, perhaps the deepest he ever took, and swiped the card in the slot, causing the elevator doors to open. Inside he stepped, before looking at the control panel. The sixth level beckoned to him...*genetic experimentation*. That was probably where these weapons were engineered from, so wanting to learn more, that's where he went, aided by the master key. When the door opened on that level, he found a small room with a scientist at a panel. 'Twas a man, and when he heard Nathan step out of the elevator, he turned to greet him.

"...You're not supposed to be here, your Majesty," the scientist told him. The man was tall and rangey with short black hair and beady hazel eyes.

"Well, here I am nevertheless...why don't you tell me what goes on here?" Nathan asked with folded arms.

"...We conduct research on live specimens."

"You mean experiment on living things. Like what?"

"Everything, your Majesty."

“...Including people?”

“Of course. How else would we be able to develop the sort of scientific advancements that we have otherwise?”

...This is seriously fucked up. “Are you telling me that you are experimenting on human beings?” Nathan’s voice was tinged with outrage.

“...the subjects being used for genetic experiments are hopelessly insane and the research is for medical and humane purposes. Beyond that, everything is on a need to know basis.”

“Tell me more why don’t you?” the Emperor demanded, standing quite near to the man who could sense his growing rage.

“There are severe threats of punishment for being caught talking to any of the ‘insane’ or engaging in conversations with others not directly involved with one’s current task. Venturing outside the boundaries of one’s own work area without reason is also forbidden and, most of all, discussing the existence of the research with any outsider will generate severe and, if necessary, deadly repercussions for those involved.”

“Unfucking believable. This is too much.” Nathan certainly had his fill of fucked up for one day, and began to back his way into the elevator, before using the keycard to return to the surface. Strange, how his body was suddenly so cold, yet he was sweating. It was rather unsettling, but the sight of sunlight put him at ease. His companions were sitting and standing around inside and outside, talking and keeping themselves preoccupied. When Nathan returned, they stopped and stared at him, for clearly he looked a mess.

“Let’s go. *Now*,” he told them as he made his way back to the limo. His walk to the door and to the vehicle was a blur, and he became disoriented as he arrived with his companions in tow. Before long it began to drive off with everyone sitting inside, and Nathan felt quite ill. After a few minutes, he spoke up. “Pull over, please...quickly.”

It didn’t take long for the limo to pull over on the side of the dirt road there in the forest, and the Emperor climbed out began lurching into the woods. He almost fell a few times over some roots, and then he leaned forward with his hand against a large tree. In a sudden fury he began to throw up, retching unto the bark and coarse vegetation of the wilds beneath. His companions were not far behind.

“What’s a matter, your Majesty?” Lord Voor asked as he came running. Hemlock and Kukavanger stood guard, while the Kings of Gaemar and Arrautsa came to stand nearby with Zara and Viseau.

Nathan continued to throw up, feeling the sickness swell within him. After a few moments, he pushed himself up and leaned against a tree, breathing hard and sweating. “...There’s a superweapon down there...one that could destroy everything. Lara plans to use it. We can’t let that happen.”

“What are you on about?” Barrin pressed him. A man

in his mid-fifties, Barrin was a hearty and seasoned man. He seemed alarmed. *That's a rare sight.*

"Lara plans to bring about the Sunshard prophetic apocalypse...the golden age of Zathalon and the rosea, but using a biological weapon that will kill any who don't possess the gene. We were duped...she used us to get control of Letople and the rest of Zathalon, but as a diversion to gain access to this weapon. We don't have much time to stop her, but we must, otherwise everything we know is gone."

"Well then," Lord Voor stroked his chin. "How do you suppose we do that then?"

"...This weekend, there will be a baby shower for Lara and the unborn child," Nathan explained. "A grand party...and it will be then and there that we must stop her before these plans can come to fruition. We have no choice but to capture Lara and give aid to the allies. I mean to surrender the city to them, and tell them about the weapons project. They will be well enough equipped to deal with it properly."

"...Why don't we tell the allies about it now?" Kukavanger asked. "We tell em now, they can respond."

"...And so can Lara if she suspects anything," Nathan pointed out. "If we act like we don't know, she won't have any counterattacks that she can plan. I mean to catch her unawares. We just need the men to seize her."

"I have a thousand good men available," Fendulias suggested then. "Let me have the honor. We will kill her household guard during the baby shower, and take her afterwards. None of them will see it coming. Should be quite easy."

Doesn't mean it will be. "Good, then. Let us get ready for that then. I will gladly let em have Zathalon if it means saving the world. Besides, I need to head back to Ghant anyway...things there are fucked up badly enough as is." Nathan suddenly felt reassured...his play to betray his own wife in order to put a stop to the Janus Project. As he finished speaking, he looked around the trees, and felt the heat from the sun poking through the trees. "Let's get out of here."

As his companions inclined their heads and made their way back to the limo, he paused, thinking about what was coming. It made him think about Janus...and perhaps what was on that eighth level that was supposed to be *super top secret*. If it was anything like the rest of what was going on in there, he didn't want to know. Besides, if everything went to plan, he would never have to find out either.

*Janus who sees what is
And what was
Who sees both life and death
Simultaneously,
I wonder what you see
When you look on me.*

*What is and what was
And all that marks the change,
Though little time is had
Great distances are moved*

Just as the Potter
Who twice marks the spinning clay
Is wont to write
That he may prove
That even stars
May not teach a man
All that was and will yet be.

If then condemn'd to see
What comes
As it comes
How should man—or I—
Face life?

Janus who sees all of time at once
From birth to death
What would you have
Of man who only looks back
With certainty?
For if only with eyes cast back
Is certainty found,
Why the other direction look?
And if that be so
How should he live—
For life is lived forwards
Though it may only be known
Backwards.

As wind blows spirals
Upon the globe
How should we upon it
Look on it?
All life is cyclic
But that of mans'
Whose is curst with temporality.
The immortal song
Of Keats' nightingale
Is still heard today
Though Keats the man is not
(His great despair is realized.)

O Janus
What of we
Oft twitterpated men
Who so strongly look backwards
What we are blind to the other;
How should we make much
Of time
If we should show it no eye?
The love of the future
Is lost
Because of the eye
Looking on the past—
The guilt of the past,
And the joy of the past—
All distract
From the future.
So what of Love
Who by herself is blind;
How is she to live?
If man will not look
And Love cannot look -
What is left for us?

Through the gate I look
O Janus,
But guide my sight!
I often look back,
But one prays
To cast an occasional look
On the future.
O Janus,

*I pray you guide that look,
When it does occur,
And let it fall on Love,
For since blind,
She'll not find me,
But instead,
Is subject to my looking on her
And she, I weep,
Has never lived within my past.*

1001
Ghant
1001

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Recipient of the [Greater Dienstad Roleplay Reward](#)

"Look on my works, ye mighty, and despair!" - Percy Bysshe Shelley,
Ozymandias



The New Lowlands
Postmaster-General

Posts: 12498
Founded: Jun 26, 2011
Ex-Nation

by [The New Lowlands](#) » Sat Oct 24, 2015 2:10 pm

QUOTE

Operation Fortitude <T-3:16:32:55>

The bay was dark. There was no other way to put it: yellowish sand, stretched out before a shoreline of conifers, was barely lit by a moon hidden behind grey clouds. The stars were gone, and an inflatable boat- stacked to the rim with dark-clothed soldiers, bristling with rifles cradled in front of themselves, heavy packs on their backs, puttered quietly into the bay on a tiny engine.

They hit the shore soon enough, hopping out one after the other, watching the treeline warily. The world was quiet, as if indifferent to their arrival. A few words were exchanged by moonlight, before they started dragging the boat up to the forest. It was deflated, the engine taken apart, the whole assembly hidden under a camouflage tarp- just in case. From there they went on, marching deeper into the forest in the dark, cradling weapons and hurrying along a dirt path, pounded into the forest floor long ago by dog-walkers, horse-riders and innocent families taking walks.

This being a civilised country, they came up to a road soon enough. Silent, they marched alongside it, warily watching either way for anything the thin strip of tarmac might produce. Eventually, they stopped: their search had yielded results. The road was cut off by a simple fence, and a wrought iron gate cut off the road itself. Hurriedly, the squad leader produced a map, consulting his second.

"What the hell is this?" Sergeant Kami hissed, voice low. "This isn't supposed to be there."

Corporal Jiantri frowned, following his leader's gaze. "Hang on," he muttered, bringing up a small flashlight to illuminate the map. "Where are we?"

Kami gestured. "Kelet, take a bearing," he added, raising his head to look at another soldier, who nodded and hurriedly proceeded to do just that.

A few moments of quiet rumination. "The road's about forty-three degrees," Kelet announced.

"Damn, we're not on the B road," Kami replied, frowning further as he searched the map for any sign of a matching path.

"Over here," Jiantri announced, tapping the map. "Private road, maked with a fence."

"We're not far off, then," Kami confirmed, poring over the map. "Okay, right, cut the fence."

"Looks alarmed," another voice piped up. "Are you sure, sergeant?"

"We're not robbing the place, we're just passing through," Kami replied. "It'll be fine."

Their discussion over, the map and light were both tucked away. A bit of fuss and the fence was hurriedly cut, a hole made in the chain links to allow access. More marching, along the same simple tarmac road: in the middle distance, a house appeared among the firs, a neatly-cleaned tarmac driveway giving way to what appeared to be some kind of mansion-like home of medieval construction. The lights were on. Kami scowled.

"Think we woke them?" Jiantri asked, approaching the front of the column of soldiers. "Pretty fancy place."

"We're just moving around it," Kami announced. "Keep your eyes peeled."

They trudged onward among the trees, carefully making their way around a carefully-maintained back yard. A large terrace, dotted with tables, gave way to a wide expanse of green grass.

A golf course.

"Neat," one of the soldiers muttered as they passed a series of bunkers. "Always wanted to see one of these."

"Yeah, well, take it in," Jiantri muttered. They left the course quickly, once again heading into the cover of the trees.

Once again, they founded themselves interrupted by something in the distance. A dog barked, a light whirling on them. "Woah!" someone shouted.

The ensuing firefight didn't last long. A wild pistol shot found itself replied to by the loud rapport of rifles: the dog, off its lead, was shot thrice mid-charge. The squad fanned out, gathering around the two corpses.

"Keep moving," Kami ordered. The soldiers scrambled away in the silent night, deeper into the forest, past the two they left behind. Another fence, another cutter brought up.

They hurried through the gap in the chains, running into the forest, cradling their weapons as ever. Minutes passed as they pounded at the ground with their feet, the forest slowly starting to clear, another road, unlit, coming into view. They were halfway across the tarmac before someone called a stop.

"Shit, sarge," Kemet grunted, doubling over and clinging to his knees. "I thought-" he gasped "-we were supposed to be quiet."

Kami was still busy catching his own breath. He stood up straight, peering back at the forest they had just emerged from. "We'll be alright," he muttered, reaching up to cough into his hand. "They'll blame the mercs- we're using the same munitions. We just have to worry about how to get to the rendezvous point."

The road lit up, slowly. A car- a small truck- was speeding down the road towards him. Hurriedly, the troops scrambled off the tarmac, Jiantri and Kami staying in view. The dark red car came to a halt at the sight of the two armed gunmen, but Kami gestured at it to approach- which it did, slowly. With the window rolled down, the driver, a slightly pudgy middle-aged man, balding, looked even more pale in the moonlight that was slowly breaking through the clouds.

"You guys doing another roadblock?" he muttered, in Heilanorean.

"Get the fuck out," Kami replied, translating with the liberal use of his gun.

Operation Echo <T-2:21:17:36>

Vice-Admiral Teneri was not in an enviable position. With just two carriers under his command, he was faced with the somewhat instrumental duty of making it look like the United Provincial Navy was off of Zathalon's easternmost coast in force. To do this, he had a number of tools at his employ: the carriers which he *had* been given had been equipped with more AWACs aircraft, both for a greater degree of situational awareness and to simulate more sorties through electronic misinformation. Second, a very large

contingent of the Imperial Union's navy was present, both to support in being mistaken for Lowlandian ships, and to support the fleet in combat. Third of all, a number of support elements were busily moving up and down the length of the sea, both simulating maneuvers, and occasionally bombarding any large troop formations that could be safely identified among the ruins of the eastern coast.

Thus far he suspected that it was going rather well. Circumstances weren't making it very easy to tell, though: if only he could read the enemy commander's mind.

Teneri paced back and forth beside his bunk, mind racing with thoughts of maps and speeds and aircraft and transmissions. Right now, he had already issued orders. There was very little point in fussing over details: he could only react further when the enemy had made some kind of move in response, he knew, since the whole point of the operation was to make them draw their forces Eastward at short notice, and hopefully, with little time to prepare.

Teneri didn't pretend to fully understand the nature of land warfare, but if the enemy were to try and pack all those mercenaries in a bunch of trains, changing schedules, moving equipment away from the actual front- it would be a shambles. Easy to exploit, vulnerable to a sucker punch like the one that had been planned. But it all hinged on his success, which was rather a lot of pressure to put on the youngest officer in the Admiralty.

He took a deep breath, rubbing his temples out of habit. The gesture didn't actually do anything physically, but it seemed to help clear his head better than the spray of sea water ever did, and cooped up as he was on the destroyer that served as his flagship, he didn't have much time for long, pleasant walks.

Stepping out, Teneri marched hurriedly to the CIC. Sailors of all kinds saluted him, and he gave the same, sharp, monotonous reply, returning to his workstation.

"Any news?" he demanded sharply. They had been running sorties for about three and a half hours now, at most, testing the extent of the enemy's electronic intelligence networks, slowly trying to approach the minimum safe distance necessary to make the impending invasion seem all too horribly real, blasting listening stations with 'unguided' transmissions, encrypted so as to avoid suspicion but decrypted easily enough by a competent foe. It was like the old campfire ruse, except in reverse.

"No, sir," his aide-de-camp replied. This was the twentieth time the Vice-Admiral had burst into the room. At least.

"Very good," he replied. "Keep me informed."

Operation Reprimand

<T-1:06:25:27>

The maneuvers had to be quick, clean, and quiet. These were, to some extent, conflicting goals.

12 carriers, organised into 6 groups, 3 squadrons, under the overall command of 1 navy, had been instructed to quickly, and carefully now, sail around Heilanor's northern cape by the way of Naybra, continue along a northward journey keeping careful watch for any submarines, resupply in Nerod, and ultimately come back south again to escort a number of LPDs and LHDs and approach, at a great distance, Letople.

Special forces units had been deployed to the city's surroundings for three days already, their mission to rile up the local populace against the occupiers, destroy any electronic intelligence equipment they could find, and overall raise hell in the capital's logistics in a way that would not impede the incoming invasion.

The idea that they would fail to approach Letople itself was nothing short of preposterous. They had the mean and equipment: furthermore, they were backed by 5 of the Imperial Union's latest ships. This was the largest operation that the two countries would ever conduct in tandem at any point in their history, including the various times they had been in opposition, and it was a testament to the impetuosity of the new claimants to Zathalon that such

sheer fury should be assembled against them.

For now, the fleet steamed south, content to watch and wait as Heilanor burned.

ADDRESSED TO: General Headquarters of the Ausitorian & Mizradian militaries
ENCRYPTION: Diplomatic Vernamcipher (OTP)

Ladies and Gentlemen,

[This message has been translated from Lowlandian to English.]

We are pleased to report that Operation: Epsilon, as detailed earlier, has commenced.

Further details will be made available shortly as developments occur.

Kind Regards,

Adi De Meer,
Liaison der Krijgsmacht, Buro ter Buitenlantse Zaaken,
Verenigde Provincies der Nieuwe Neerlanden

Buro ter Buitenlantse Zaaken,
Regeringsplein 18,
Batavia,
B01 RPD3



Ghant
Minister

Posts: 2457
Founded: Feb 11, 2013
Civil Rights Lovefest

by **Ghant** » Sat Oct 31, 2015 1:32 pm



Part III, Ch. IV
"The Iron Eagle"
Imperial Palace
Ghish Ghant

"He made a pit and digged it. He was cunning in his plans and industrious in his labors. He stooped to the dirty work of digging. He did not fear to soil his own hands. He was willing to work in a ditch if others might fall therein. What mean things men will do to wreak revenge on the godly. They hunt for good men as if they were brute beasts - they that will not give them the fair chase afforded to the hare or the fox, but must secretly entrap them because they can neither run them down nor shoot them down. Our enemies will not meet us to the face for they fear us as much as they pretend to despise us. But let us look on to the end of the scene. The verse says he has fallen into the ditch that he has made. Ah, there he is. Let us laugh at his disappointment. Lo, he is himself the beast. He has hunted his own soul. The chase has brought him a goodly victim. So should it ever be." - Charles H. Spurgeon

Maeson Margela had his hands full. Not only with people like Lysander Lyzahn, Brigadier Demaes, Colonel Hasyim or Lord Protector Albert, but also with keeping a country on the brink of war from setting off like a powder keg. It gave him many a restless night, full of anxiety and dread. Yet, nothing happened yet as far as he knew, and for the most part things were good, although tense.

There was a big event taking place at Imperial Palace that evening, and Maeson was to be in attendance. Many lords who had not joined the Zathalonian expedition would be present, as would be

many a lady. Chief among them was Lord Protector Albert's wife, Princess Laena of Ziri. Their young son Prince Edward would remain behind in Ziri however, Albert loathe to have his only son and potential heir in the same place as he, with so many enemies lurking about, ready to strike at a moment's notice.

Maeson would be attending alone, aside from his guards. He had never married nor sired children, although he was no stranger to the company of women. He had several relationships over the years... just none that panned out. *Perhaps that is why Albert places so much faith in me*, Maeson thought as he adjusted his black suit and fixed his tie. *Because he knows I am not distracted by inconvenient things like a family. Wives and children always get in the way.*

The acting Prime Minister had taken the time necessary to prepare for the evening...shaving, bathing, having assistants tend to his luxuriant brown hair, and combing it professionally as though he were a movie star. Then he was ready to go, and hungry to boot. With his security detail, he departed his apartments within the Government Palace, and away he went in the direction of Inperiala, just down the street, although the walk seemed longer than it should have otherwise been.

A short walk seemed long because the city was in rough shape, clearly having seen better days. People were as anxious and tense in Ghish as he had ever heard of them being. Everything was shrouded in a thick cloud of uncertainty, peril abound. Military police patrolled the streets, and guards swarmed Inperiala like bees buzzing around a beehive. There was still rubble here and there, piled in dark gloomy alleys alongside stacks of wood, some of them burning with men standing around them, holding their dirty hands above the flames. *Like funeral pyres, for men to die on.*

Somewhere along the way he contemplated the gloomy sunset, its dull colors swallowing the light to cast upon the city their eerie glow. It was during a time such as this that he was almost glad that he had no family...after all, what kind of world would his children inherit, based upon the one he currently found himself in? *Nothing fit for a child*, he sighed.

The side entrance of the Palace near the courtyard was swarming with armed guards, grumbling amongst each other with severe looks on their faces. One turned to examine Maeson and his security detail, and snorted as he stepped aside for Maeson. The Prime Minister knew that Albert surrounded himself with fellow northerlings as abrasive as he was, and that they had no love for the south, or for things like *government*. Yet ironically, here they were, and in positions of power in Ghish, for better or for worse.

"This southern air stinks of seawater and smelly cunts," one of Albert's guards said to the other.

"Must be the mermaids then, splaying on the rocks," another said before laughing, causing the others to join in chorus.

"Either way they'd taste like fish!" Another exclaimed, causing the ruckus to grow even louder. That was the extent of what Maeson was able, or

willing to hear. He merely looked ahead towards the opened door, and walked in, feeling the guard's hot breath upon the side of his neck as he passed.

The Palace interior had changed drastically since the time when Emperor Nathan departed Ghish with Lara in her quest to restore Zathalon to its former glory. From what he had heard, it was back to the way it looked when Albert was Lord Regent. The Lord Protector had guards in nearly every hall, armed and on patrol, and it was quiet, still and quite drab. *Albert was never known for his fashion sense, Maeson knew that much. The Iron Eagle liked to make his nest in lairs devoid of frills and fineries. When one walked into his abode, one would find that it was as dour and expressionless as he was himself. It is oft said that the décor of one's abode reflects the principal tenant.*

As he walked down the halls with his security personnel on either side of him, Maeson could begin to hear the chatter coming from the distant feast hall. Then he began to notice lords and ladies flittering about the halls with guards following them. *Albert isn't like to let anyone walk around without being watched.* Ever since the Iron Eagle had been shot, he kept his talons sharp and his eyes on alert. The man was ruthless, and if he was like to take chances with his life before, that certainly wouldn't be the case anymore. Maeson had already heard of people being put to death in the dungeons over trumped up charges.

Maeson came upon the feast hall, with several guards hovering around the door on guard. Once again, one looked at him with a disgruntled expression and grunted as he stepped aside. Maeson nodded curtly and strode into the room quickly, not wanting to linger around the guards any longer than he had to. Inside, the feast hall was quite luxuriant in contrast to the rest of the palace that Maeson saw.

The first thing he noticed inside was the Iron Eagle himself perched next to his ugly wife, the crippled one with a fat lip and a lisp to go along with it. Although the Lord Protector himself was now cripple too from the looks of it, with his left arm gimp from where he got shot in the shoulder. He was unshaven, a thick black beard covering his gaunt face, tired bags under his beady brown eyes. The rest seemed happy enough in spite of the Lord Protector's menacing presence.

Albert yawned. Lords, ladies and lesser nobility were spread out before him, occupying feast tables as far as Maeson could see, filling the great hall. A servant offered a new cask of sweet summerwine; a helmeted guard sipped the beverage apprehensively, then waved the servant over to the Lord Protector once he was satisfied the spirits were not poisoned. Spread out before the Lord Protector were ribs roasted in a crust of garlic and herbs, strawberry sweet cakes, and honeyed duckling with turnips soaked in butter.

That looks quite good, Maeson thought as he walked around one of the carved mahogany wood tables and took a seat at the end, not that far away from Albert himself, although he did not notice Maeson either enter or approach to find a seat. When the Prime Minister sat down, his guards dispersed around the room, while he went for some of the ribs, honeyed

ducklings and sweet summerwine to wash them down with.

Maeson kept his eyes on Albert though, curious to observe him in such a setting. Nonchalantly, Albert took a sip of ice milk sweetened with honey to clear his palate, then waved over another servant, who was carrying a platter of baked apples fragrant with cinnamon, served on a bed of iced blueberries and sweet cream.

Beneath the dais, behind a retinue of greater lords and ladies, Lady Ysilla Yarudi was digging into a plate of sugar-frosted lemoncakes, oblivious to the crumbled bits of crust that stuck to her chin and the front of her corsette. To her left was her husband, Lord Orzibal Pazuzu, who was working a serrated knife into a plate of auroch joints roasted with leeks.

Albert, like Maeson, most likely considered the challenges before him -- the Gaemarians had become impudent, and Dakar had fallen to the pretender Dakmaran who no doubt coveted his throne. Still, Maeson mused, the Palace's wine cellars were filled with heavy casks of Gaemarian wine. He personally favored the sweet orange-scented vintage from the Voor orchards, but Albert himself preferred bold Gaemarian summerwine, with its hints of blackberry and pomegranate. The vintage was massive yet restrained, like a rhinoceros in a steel cage. *Or a chained mammoth in a Thulish dungeon*, the Prime Minister thought wryly.

A servant brought another aperitif, a bowl of cinnamon, nutmeg, honey, raisins, nuts, and dried berries in hot spiced wine, in the southron style. As he savored the spiced raisins, Maeson's thoughts wandered to the other Gentry across the world: Was he enjoying Gbantish favorites, or would the Zathalonian cooks serve him exotic dishes like honeyed leopard and roundels of elk stuffed with pan-seared ripe blue cheese?

Gbant was known for its own exotic palate, as the Gbantish were said to originate such unusual dishes as roast ox, capons stuffed with onions from the southlands, and chopped prunes marinated in goat's blood. The Northerners favored meats of various vintages, while hound testicles were famous throughout Thule, especially when served with bits of ham and fiery red peppers.

Lady Laena never agreed with the south...its food or its weather. The Lord Protector signaled the Zinpalak, and two knights were dispatched to escort her to the vomitorium, where she purged the cinnamon and sweets from her stomach. Wiping her mouth with a damp towel, the fickle lady walked with a renewed malaise in her step, anticipating with dread the next course: fowls roasted in their plumage, stuffed with dates and steeped in Gaemarian white sauce. The impudent Gaemarians weren't without their charms, and Laena was nearly delighted when her servants brought her a parcel from Gadra containing fresh white sauce, a gift from Lord Garamun Gadra himself. Laena had looked forward to garnishing her meals with the white sauce, with its comforting, chlorinated smell that reminded her of the laundry chambers of her castle in Ziri.

Easing herself back into her seat at the head of the

dais just beside her husband, Laena waved a servant over and beckoned him to bring the Gaemarian white sauce. Gently dipping a spoon into the container, she opened her mouth, and then made a face when she tasted the famed Gaemarian white sauce.

"It tastes of bleach," the lady said.

"Tis an acquired taste, my Lady Protector," Ysilla Yarudi assured her.

A train of servants emerged from the kitchen, and Laena clapped: it was time for sweets, cakes and pies. Laena certainly seemed excited, despite Albert's brooding. "Prince Marius and his leal lords are traitors who are lucky their heads aren't on spikes, getting their eyes pecked out by carrion birds. Had Marius lingered in Ghish any longer than he had, he would have been at my mercy. And for him, there would have been none."

Maeson looked on with amusement as Laena put her hand to her crooked mouth and gasped. "Dear lord husband," Laena explained with her lisp strands of her brown hair beating around her cheeks, "that is such impolite dinner conversation."

"I know," Albert snapped back. "I didn't mean for it to be polite, Laena. All these great lords and ladies here were true and loyal enough to respond to my summons, while the vermin in Gaemar and Dakmoor brood behind my back and plot my demise." That was when Albert turned to fix his gaze upon Maeson. "Ah, Prime Minister, I didn't notice you come in."

Like how you didn't notice that the Gaemarian white sauce your wife tasted was cum. "Lord Protector, I didn't wish to interrupt."

"Interrupt, you say. What's there to interrupt? Just a bunch of simpering lords tasting my wares. What news do you bring of my nephew, and of Zathalon?" Albert asked as he dabbed his mouth with his handkerchief.

"...The northern half of the continent is under the control of Lara, and the southern half under Selena. They are at a stalemate, although Selena's allies are posed to begin covert operations against Lara in an attempt to bring her down."

"What's taking them so long?" Albert asked dryly as he raised a wine glass. It was only then that Maeson noticed the iron crown of the Lord Protector atop the Iron Eagle's head. *How fitting.*

"...Lara has nukes, a formidable and loyal army and from what our intelligence suggests, special weapons projects that could turn the tide of the war in her favor."

"Secret weapons eh?" Albert's interest was peaked. *He would notice that first.* "What can you tell me of these secret weapons?"

"Only that she has them," Maeson shrugged gently... and carefully, before drinking some summervine. "I wouldn't put it past her to use them."

"Lara, Lara, Lara," Albert mused mockingly. "Where is my nephew in all this? I swear, the boy never does anything when he can just let some ambitious woman

do everything for him. I tried to warn the Imperial House that some strumpet would sink her claws into him and turn him into a puppet. But no! Nobody ever listens to me! I know the boy better than any man living. Had I had a presence in Ghish at the time, I would have given Lara twenty-four hours to leave the country before I had her in chains. Her game was obvious.”

“Our nephew is a sweet lad, but an idealist to a fault, and weak-willed. He clings to any who offer him comfort, and reassurance. Such is the type of man that is easily put under the spell of charming, ambitious girls,” Laena stammered with her lisp.

Albert nibbled on his lip, as though he were annoyed. “People say that is my fault, for taking the boy away from his mother, but I did him a favor by doing that. The woman was and still is a whore, no getting around that. I did what I could for the boy, but in the end he was just bad fruit born from a tainted tree. Such fruit will spoil no matter what you do with it.”

Lord Roika who was present further down the table, looked up towards Albert and said, in his husky northern accent, “Do you name her whore because of what she did to Lady Elizabeth Mutu, I wonder?” The idle chatter amongst the nobles stopped, as silverware was set down and the clattering of plates and bowls ceased. The room went silent as a crypt, and Albert glared with a scowl at Lord Roika.

“Elizabeth was betrothed to my older brother, and Caroline Zuria knew this. She seduced John to break his betrothal and marry her instead. The woman has no honor, and she climbed the social ladder with spread legs. Have I been harsh to the woman, and have I exacted retribution upon her? Yes, on both accounts, but on either it was less than what she deserved,” Albert spoke loudly and firmly, half risen from his seat before going back down. Then he turned to Maeson and said, “come, let’s take a walk. These lords wear thin on my nerves.”

Maeson nodded as he got up from the table, content that he enjoyed enough of his meal to feel satisfied for the time being. Lord Roika looked at Albert as the latter walked away, side by side with Maeson and with guards surrounding them, into the feast hall antechamber leading deeper into the palace. “Lord Roika was out of line to question you like that.”

Albert’s fat, pink lips stretched long and thin, looking at the floor before responding with, “perhaps, but Lord Roika at least has the stones to speak the cold hard truth, which is more than I can say for the rest of that lot. A hundred lords from most of the provinces, and yet only one can tell me what I don’t want to hear, but because I need to hear it.”

“...Forgive me for saying that I don’t know what part of that you needed,” Maeson smiled very faintly.

“That I am a bitter man inflicting my anguish upon the world. Now with my nephew in Zathalon under that bitch Lara’s spell, and me in Ghish to rule this land until he comes back...if he comes back, it is even more pronounced.” Albert ground his teeth, and clenched his fists.

“Oh, you are doing a fine job. We have peace, and unity now. The nation is united behind us, and we

work in unison. Our nation has one voice, one will, one goal.”

To that, the Lord Protector snorted. “Don’t blow smoke up my ass, Maeson. This land is torn apart by factionalism and fear. Marius is Lara’s pet who gathers his strength in the west, and Dakmoor is rising in the east. If it were only one or the other I would have moved against them, but I cannot move against either, for which ever I deal with, the other than moves against me. So I am forced to remain here like a sitting duck, waiting for whatever happens to come as it may. Were I Emperor, they wouldn’t dare conspire to remove me..”

Some steps were heard coming from around the corner down an adjacent hallway, and from around the corner stepped the massive Knight of Skulls, clad in his bone armor and with his helm fashioned from skulls, with many colored feathers sticking out from a hole in the top. “Your Highness,” the knight bellowed gruffly, “I have brought Silverworm to you, as instructed.”

Around the corner stepped Lysander Lyzahn, more commonly known as Silverworm. His appearance hadn’t changed much. He was still a short, skinny man with jet black hair, and a neatly trimmed goatee with beady silver-colored eyes and a matching velvet tunic. “Mr. Lord Protector, Mr. Prime Minister, so nice to see you both...as you might have assumed, I have some news you may find interesting.”

Albert looked at Silverworm with narrowed eyes, while Maeson inclined his head. “Out with it then,” the Lord Protector said with ice in his tone.

“...The baby shower for the unborn child is going to begin in a few days time,” Silverworm began to explain. “At a time when Nathan and Lara’s camps are at loggerheads over a number of issues, chief among them the political direction of Zathalon. My intelligence suggests that something will...transpire at this baby shower, and should that come to fruition, an opportunity will present itself. One too good not to take advantage of.”

Albert looked at Maeson for a few seconds, and then back to Silverworm. “What is this opportunity of which you speak?”

“The opportunity to kill two birds with just one stone.” Silverworm’s eyes flickered, and he smirked as he began to pace with his hands behind his back. “The nobility and smallfolk of Ghant will never accept you as their leader while your nephew is Emperor, and so long as Nathan remains in Lara’s clutches, she draws legitimacy to rule Zathalon via his lineage. So...if this baby shower results in conflict between Nathan and Lara, we will have the chance to...put an end to him before Lara has a chance to use him, should her faction prevail in a potential clash.”

“...You want me to facilitate the assassination of my own nephew?” Albert asked, pointedly, although he did seem a bit dumbfounded by the idea.

“...Well yes, if you want to call it that. I prefer the term ‘political expediency. It’s a win win for you, Lord Protector. You get to become Emperor, those in Ghant who do not submit to your authority will be branded as traitors, and Lara will suffer greatly

without Nathan to enhance her claim to all of the continent of Zathalon. The war would conceivably end, and Ghant would be stronger for it." Silverworm walked closer, and reached out to pat Albert on the shoulder. "You don't have to be involved...you don't have to have any participation or knowledge of the deed. Just sit back, and reap the benefits," he told him as his hand clasped Albert's shoulder.

Albert stood still for a moment, and then recoiled. "No."

Silverworm grinned, as if he understood the situation in earnest. *This man I swear always thinks he is one step ahead*, Maeson thought as he stood back. "I know...regicide and kinslaying, two things that are cursed in the eyes of gods and men. I am already a cursed man, Albert. So are you. Those people out there...you know their game just as well as I do. They pretend to be your friends to your face, act nice and put on a show, but in truth they are snakes, laying in the grass for you. What can a man do in a field riddled with snakes? Two things...a man can pretend they are not there, hope that it is not true, until the snakes have an opportunity to bite you, which they will. Or a man can expect the snakes and strike first. Make no mistake about it, so long as Nathan lives, these snakes will grow stronger and greater in number, until you cannot counter them. Then it will be too late, and you shall be laid low..."

The Lord Protector scowled as he turned to face Silverworm, standing quite close and with his eyes hard and steely. "Make no mistake, Silverworm. If you ever murdered my nephew, I would mount your head on a spike."

This caused the smaller man's face to light up with savage amusement. "Oh, Lord Protector, I would never do such a thing! I know how much your nephew means to you...how you always fawn over the boy as though he were some great achievement of yours." *Now he's just being sarcastic*, Maeson realized.

Albert began to pace then, and grimaced. "You have a sharp tongue, Silverworm. Yet, you speak of things you know little of. It is true that I regard the boy as a disappointment, that I think he wasted himself on liquor and whores, not unlike my own father. My father never wanted the Obsidian Throne, nor did Nathan. But I did...I coveted it with envious eyes when I first saw it. My older brother John was the only one in the way. I loved him, my brother, but a part of me always wished he would die. Eventually he did, but he left a son behind. A part of me wished that boy would die too...I thought, if I were Emperor of Ghant, perhaps she would love me."

"...Elizabeth Mutu," Silverworm nodded his head. "A great beauty, they say."

"That she was," Albert replied sorrowfully. "It was so idiotic, the fear that she would be stolen away from me when she was never mine to begin with. The distance between her and I was faint but near tangible in its magnitude. No matter how you look at it, it was painful. Not for her though. But for me, there was a bridge that I could never cross. I was forced to watch her through a mere friend's eyes, always wanting, always wishing. A slight movement, a slight sound, and she made me forget my troubles. I was always happy just to be immersed in that joyful

aura she wore so freely. But the moment she left, my worries came crashing down. I could only look at her through my mind's eye, which was the cruelest punishment. I was allowed to see her, but always I was prohibited to reach out for her. All I could do was gaze upon her as she was taken away by a man that didn't deserve her—or worse, someone close to me, one that I knew and despised. I knew I could never claim her as my own, but that will never stop the pain. All the glory that Ghant had to offer couldn't end my suffering. All I had to do was put a hand on my young nephew's neck and snap it, and the throne would have been mine.”

“...Why didn't you?”

Albert sighed at the Iron Eagle's inquiry, and looked to the floor. “It was late 1999, Nathan was little over two years into his reign, and I was his Lord Regent. In those days he spent much of his time with my mother, who still resided in the palace. The two were nigh inseparable, I doubt my mother ever loved anything quite the way she loved Nathan. I couldn't take him away from her...not then at least. I decided that I wouldn't end him until after my mother died. That came faster than I had expected, that winter. She began to experience blackouts, not knowing where she was, or what she was doing. She stopped functioning. I arranged to have her hospitalized, and they told me that she had a malignant brain tumor...that she only had a few months to live, at best. That was when I planned to have Nathan die in a hunting accident. Best way to do it, that way.”

“...What went wrong?”

“On the forth day of January 2000, I went to see her for the last time, having been told she was near death. The sight...the smell, was hard for me to deal with. My mother was the strongest woman I had ever known, willful and beautiful and loving as any woman could be. What I saw was a ghost...her once vibrant red hair turned wispy white and falling from her head, her body pallid skin and brittle bones, her eyes sullen and half-dead. She was barely breathing, and though for the longest time leading up to that she was nonresponsive and incognizant, she was very much alert then.”

Maeson had never seen the Lord Protector as choked up as he appeared to be then. “I sat down next to her and held her hand. Although I was confident I would be Emperor within the year, I was sad to see my mother go. Yet she wasn't ready just yet. She gripped my arm, and breathed steadily as she looked at me. ‘Promise me...’ she murmured. ‘Promise me you will guide him, nurture him...love him...make him strong...like I did for you.’ I didn't know what to say, I was stunned. I didn't want to promise her that...I wanted the boy dead. I just sat there and stared at her, speechless. Then she gripped my arm tighter, and she began to cry. ‘Promise me, Bertie. Always protect Nathan, like I protected you.’”

The Iron Eagle began to wipe tears from his eyes as he told the story to Silverworm, with a blank look on his face, and Maeson, with a stunned look on his face. “I couldn't let her die like that...the one person who always loved me. Told me I was her favorite, that I would spread my wings and soar higher than all the rest. So I took her hand, and kissed it, and told her ‘I promise.’ Then she smiled, the way she always

used to, and said ‘Oh, my Bertie, I always knew you were good...now I can truly be at peace.’ Somehow she always knew...that I coveted what my brother had, what my nephew inherited, and that I meant to take it away. She worried about it I know now, but I gave her peace before she died. She breathed a little longer, and then she stopped. I cried as I held her body in my arms, and it took a dozen men to remove me from the room.”

Looking back at Silverworm, he spoke assertively. “I tried to do right by my promise to my dying mother, but I failed. I didn’t guide him...I didn’t nurture him... I didn’t love him and I didn’t make him strong. I have to live with that...with knowing that I gave my mother a false promise as I watched her die. Yet I never killed him, and I won’t now. For then my soul would be truly damned.” Albert began pointing then, the tears evaporating on his hot, flushed cheeks. “Men think me a monster, a sinister manipulator and a right-wing ideologue. Men think what they will, and will say what they will...what I do will have little bearing on either. Slander is carried by the hateful, spread by fools, and accepted by idiots. Yet in spite of all of them, my mother was the one person who believed in me...she believed that I would do the right thing when it came down to it, that I would not harm the people important to me.”

Silverworm lowered his head, and bowed. “As you say, Lord Protector,” before turning and gesturing to his men down the hall. “I have...something else of interest.” Around the corner, Silverworm gestured with his arm, and out emerged none other than Sophia of Dakmoor herself, wearing a white gown and back to looking like her former self. “Sophia of Dakmoor, returned at long last...on her own volition I might add.”

“...I am so sorry,” Sophia muttered, tears in her arms. “That is awful, Albert, your story.” Then she walked up to him and gave him a hug.

Albert embraced her back, while Maeson raised an eyebrow and asked, “what brought you back to Ghish, your Highness?”

“...I couldn’t let this country be torn apart and sit idly by as it happened,” she responded softly. “I hope that my presence here can help restore the peace, and that I can help end the War of the Two Empresses.”

The War of the Two Empresses, Maeson sniggered. “Is that what they are calling it now?” After Maeson asked that, from behind him approached the northern seer Esmeralda approach in her robe black as night, like her hair, and with sparking violet eyes, stopped and pointed at Sophia.

“Beware, White Rose, of times gone by
And times yet still to come.
When Evils unite in anger and spite
Heroes will stand as one.

Time will pass and courage will grow
As the Dragon sets fire to the world.
The Heroes’ Hour in the struggle for power
Will see the tragedies unfold.

Friends and family, fire and ice

Combine and spread their wings.
A tiny spark of light in the dark
Will be yours when the witness sings.

When the stars are hushed, you will fall
The world will go to its knees.
Tears too will fall and though you call
Few will hear your pleas.

But fear not, White Rose, though times will come
When you do weep and mourn
Through your cries a golden sun will rise
And glorify the dawn."

The guards all looked at her apprehensively, and then she inclined her head and kept on walking, with Sophia looking on in bewilderment. Albert wrapped an arm around her shoulder, and in a rare showing, smiled to reveal his crooked teeth. "Come, Sophia, let me escort you to the feasthall..I am sure you are hungry. I have plenty of stories to tell you about your mother that you may find entertaining to hear."

"Thank you, Albert," Sophia smiled back, and the two began to walk back, while Maeson stood there with Silverworm, as the seer continued to walk in one direction, and the guards in Albert's retinue walked the other way. That was when Silverworm turned to Maeson and put his hand on the Prime Minister's shoulder.

"Come, let us walk together, you and I. No Iron Eagles or White Roses or seers. Just two ordinary northern men lost in a War of Two Empresses."

Maeson nodded, and went with him down an empty hall, lit by dim lights. "Was there something you wanted to discuss?"

"Yes. Albert isn't who I thought he was," Silverworm spoke softly. "I assumed he was a man as hard as steel who would do anything necessary to do what needs to be done, no matter how foul. But he isn't that man...just another man haunted by his past, who cannot run away from it. No matter how far he tries to run, it always catches up. What sort of man are you, Maeson?"

The Prime Minister paused in the middle of that hall, silent as a grave. "...The sort of man that does what needs to be done, and damns the rest. As Albert said, men will always believe what they choose to believe...what's convenient for them to believe, and see what they wish to see. So there's no point in doing anything on account of them, since their minds won't be changed anyway."

"...Precisely," the smaller man grinned. The Emperor of Ghant needs to die, otherwise all is doomed. Surely you realize that?"

Despite his better judgment, Maeson nodded. "Yes, of course. It should have been done years ago, and had it been, all of this mess would have been avoided."

"I knew you would agree...that's why I got you here, to be in this very position." Silverworm's face lit up, and he walked away, before turning around and walking backwards. "The Emperor will die, and I will see to that personally. I am headed to Letople, my

friend, and I regret to tell you that we shall not see each other again.”

Maeson seemed confused about that. “...But you are needed here!”

“That may be so, but if Nathan is to die, I must be gone from Ghant before Albert can mount my head on a spike. Perhaps you shall see me again, Maeson... in another life,” he laughed before bowing near a corner leading to another hallway. “So long.”

The Prime Minister looked after him, and inclined his head. *In another life*. Then he turned around on the balls of his feet, and walked the way he came, realizing that Silverworm was right. *It is for the best*. What Albert didn't know wouldn't hurt him, and Nathan's death could easily be spun as having been orchestrated from within Lara's camp to get him out of the way. Then, and for a longtime thereafter, *the Iron Eagle* would soar, just as his mother said he would...

Ghant

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"Look on my works, ye mighty, and despair!" - Percy Bysshe Shelley,
Ozymandias



Zathalon
Political Columnist

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by **Zathalon** » Tue Feb 16, 2016 7:53 pm



The Summer Palace Oshastad, Heilanor

With his feet up on the desk, Prince Constantine of Heilanor rubbed his forehead with one hand and held his cigar with the other. His position was one he wouldn't wish on anyone, and he certainly didn't envy himself for it. *Regent of Heilanor, leader of a nation at war for its very existence...how the fuck did this all come to pass?* More importantly, how the fuck was he would go weather the storm?

Emperor Tiberius of Heilanor had five children, of which Constantine was the youngest. The oldest was Prince Amadeus, the man who should have been Emperor. Yet, when war broke out in Rhodesea, Amadeus went...and though he fought bravely and served his country with honor and distinction, Amadeus died. Had he lived, much of the present predicament could have been avoided.

The second child, and the one who would succeed Tiberius, was Selena. Also a veteran of Rhodesea, she at least returned home, but did not leave that wretched country unscathed. She was a troubled woman, but one with a strong sense of duty, loyalty and an unrivalled good nature. Politically she was to the left, although not politically minded...two things that would prove to be a recipe for disaster.

In the middle was Lara. She was everything Selena was not...cunning, shrewd and ruthless to a fault. She had always been covetous of Selena, always feeling the weight of her older sister's shadow cast upon her. It reminded Constantine of an old story from the south, about two trees that grew together on a grassy knoll. One tree grew tall and proud, while the

other was shunted and twisted in the larger tree's shadow. This wasn't unlike Selena and Lara...for while the people loved and admired Selena for her charms, beauty and good graces, Lara often went under looked and underappreciated. *Granted, she was a middle child...*

Fourth in the family was Sula...always the rogue, always a renegade. Reckless and wanton, she did what she pleased, when she pleased it. She followed the others to Rhodesea, but with her wits and sharp mind, joined a military science program to work on advanced weapons research. Sula had always favored Lara over Selena, rebel that she was, and when war broke out, that was exactly which way she leaned.

Enter the final child, Constantine. Always a player, never a care in the world, they said of him. He traveled abroad extensively and spent more time in foreign countries than he ever did in Heilanor. Upon exotic beaches, VIP resorts, hard to reach a place... that's where Constantine liked to spend his time. Yet when he heard about the war between his sisters, he felt the need to come to home.

Alas, upon the fall of Selena in Loufe, it fell upon Constantine's shoulders to lead his country, and represent the Imperial Family...simply because there was no one else that could. All those lessons on purpose, duty and honor never meant a damn thing until he was thrust into the position, and it was then and only then that he felt the full weight of his responsibility. *Now I pray that I will have the strength to see this thing through to victory.*

"Your Highness," the secretary paged Constantine's desk. "The Empress requests an audience."

"Yes of course, please send her in." Constantine hadn't seen his sister since she returned from Loufe...she had been a recluse, and was now thoroughly damaged, he heard palace staff describe his sister. Anticipating her arrival, he stiffened his back, and sat up straight, dreading the thought of how his sister might appear to him.

It didn't take her long. The double wooden doors squeaked open, and into the office limped Empress Selena Yaraslan. She was wearing a blue summer dress...the sort that she hated, but now she didn't seem to care. Her face was tired and weary, making her look older than she really was. Her once vibrant hair began to show streaks of grey in it, and it was long and unkempt...as though she didn't give a damn.

Selena walked in without saying a word, and managed to limp her way towards a couch halfway between the doors and Constantine's desk. She sat down on it slowly, and helped herself to a pitcher of tea on the coffee table, pouring a glass of it listlessly. As she brought the glass to her lips, she stared off into the distance, her eyes glistening with a sheen that only those in the deepest depression had.

"...How are you, Selena?" Constantine asked softly, concerned for his sister.

She didn't turn to look at her brother, instead continuing to look ahead at the wall. "...My wife is dead, my country is destroyed, my sister is tearing the world apart, our former Prime Minister betrayed

us and tried to murder me by pushing me over a balcony, an old...friend that I thought died in the Rhodesian War is still alive, and I am broken. How do you think I feel, Constantine?"

"Like shit, if I had to venture a guess," Constantine tried to be funny, but it was out of habit..Selena didn't seem to be in the humorous mood. "Listen, Selena...I am sorry, I truly am. But this country needs you, now more than ever. Lara will *destroy* everything, you know that. If she could burn the world to rule the ashes, she would do that without hesitation."

Selena put her face in her hands, and began to sob. "This is all my fault, Constantine. If only I had paid more attention...if only I had been more diligent, this could have been avoided. Lara has taken everything I hold dear away from me...if I ever see her again, I will kill her. You hear me, Constantine? I will fucking murder her, and watch the life go from her eyes. My heart...is filled with hate."

Damn, she's really in a rough spot. "She needs to go down, I know. But if we are going to bring her down... we need to work for it. Two hands working are more effective than a thousand in prayer, you know. We need to reach out to potential allies...we need to organize against her *now*."

"...You don't understand," Selena cried as she shook her head. "Lara has...the arsenal. She has access to the advanced weapons technology. She will soon be unstoppable, and I fear we are all doomed."

Constantine sprung up from the desk, and walked around it towards his crying sister. "Weapons eh? No weapon is without a weakness, Selena." Sitting down on the couch beside her, Constantine put an arm around her shoulder and brought her close to him.

"Not these weapons, Constantine. When I was briefed on them...I was shocked...I was horrified. I wanted the research and development stopped...I warned them all that these weapons could prove disastrous if misused. Prime Minister Tangerine though...she insisted, and said they would be kept until the right time. Lara knew about all this...Sula told her everything. This was what spurred Lara's actions now, I think. To get control of these weapons, and now she does," she told her brother as she turned her head and cried into his shoulder.

"I don't know anything about these weapons, Selena...I never heard about them until now. What do they do?" Constantine was generally curious now, but wouldn't push his sister too far if she didn't want to share.

Selena looked over her shoulder, obviously paranoid. "...Imagine if you will...genetic experimentation on live human subjects to create a superhuman gene. It's a biological weapon meant to spread a genetically engineered virus lethal to humans through the atmosphere. In conjunction with that, there's a serum that makes anyone with it in their system immune to the disease, while also altering their genetic composition. They called it the Janus Project...but the side effects are equally severe. Madness, insanity, dementia...the mind is not meant to harness such power. Then there's another...even more top secret than that, called Project Pegasus...I

was never briefed on what that one consisted of.”

Constantine let that information sink in, before replying “I see. I can see why you would be so concerned. We cannot let her use either of these weapons...or may God have mercy on us all. Don’t worry Selena, we will stop her...we at least have to hope that we will.”

“I used to think I was so strong,” Selena cried. “That I was too good for the old ways, too good for dresses and for a great many other things. I was arrogant, and blind...and now my wife and countrymen lay dead as a result. Tell me Constantine, why does it hurt so bad? Why must we only learn only after we have erred?”

He didn’t really know what to say. *I am neither wise or sage*. Yet, he had to try. “That’s life, Selena. We are never as strong as we think we are until we fall. Everything thinks they are strong until they fall...but the truly strong are the ones that endeavor to stand again. We can’t stay on the ground...we have to get back up, because no one will pick us up. We have to learn from our mistakes, and turn our hurts into wisdom. Experience is a good teacher, but not a kind one. So long as we learn from our mistakes, and they help make us wiser, stronger people, it was all worthwhile in the end. I think that if mother and father were still alive, that they would be proud of you, Selena. You have already endured so much, and yet here you still are. I know you still have the strength you need to continue on, and do something great. I believe in you, and so do the people of Heilanor.”

“...I hope so, Constantine,” she continued to cry. “Thank you...I needed that. I love you, little brother...you are all that I have left. Without you I would be truly lost.”

“I love you too, Selena,” Constantine smiled. “Try to relax and get some rest...I got a feeling something big is about to go down. Call it a haunch, but I think Lara is going to show her true colors very soon, and when she does, that will be our time to strike.”

Selena sat there, clinging to her little brother’s jacket and continued to cry. “After a while, perhaps...I just want to be here, and not go. Is that ok?”

Constantine closed his eyes, and nodded, before patting her on the back. “Of course, Selena. That will be just fine.” There in Constantine’s office of the Imperial Palace of Oshastad, Constantine held his grieving sister, hoping above all hopes that it would be enough, while the dominos fell around them as they would.

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