Vidium

Codex Essentia, Chapter 5: Eo

The Corruption of Eo, which now resides somewhere in the veil, takes the form of an enormous skeletal serpent. The form of a serpent is interesting as Eo, goddess of hope, was often represented as an owl swooping down upon the supposed manifestations of despair, generally depicted as a snake. The implications of this form indicate that either Essence has some will of its own, or more likely, that it’s shape is influenced by the strongest emotions within a being. In almost every case these emotions are negative- suppressed anger, primordial fear, greed, and others. Given this knowledge, we have at least some advantage over essence, furthering my hopes that we might one day channel it, and slowly return our world to how it was.

Codex Essentia, Chapter 6: Rhallos

The god Rhallos imbued solidity, determination, and resolve. It is not unexpected then, that the form of his corruption is that of a disparate hive of flying things. Some have seen it in our world, like a living cloud that passes over the land devouring any living thing with its hundreds of tiny jaws. Although not the most terrifying of the Corruptions, it instills feelings of absolute hopelessness in those who see it. Thankfully I have only heard this from third parties, or I fear I would not be able to write this down for even recollecting the events caused most of my sources to break down in tears, and in one case, turn completely rigid and unresponsive to anything around them.

Codex Essentia, Chapter 33: Vidium

Vidium, or Moonmetal as it is sometimes known, is a peculiar alloy found only in meteorites. It is unknown if it could be found naturally before the Absence, but can now be found in relative abundance (for a rare metal) due to increased cosmic activity. Although essence appears to affect all things in at least some degree, Vidium has a strong focussing effect that apparently draws essence towards itself. For this reason alone Vidium is extremely difficult to gather, and even more so to manipulate. The properties of this pitch black metal are extremely desirable however, and is now highly coveted in the manufacturing of war machines and weaponry.

The Histories of Oranos, The Nature of Essence

The effects of Essence are always sudden, but not always apparent. The subtleties of its nature mean that rather than a sudden outburst against all nearby, or an immediate and incurable fear that causes a man to gouge out his own eyes rather than face the world, the influence of Essence can go unnoticed for extremely long periods of time. Sometimes the effect is so subtle, given a host of good character and strong will, that it never manifests outwardly (though it is extremely where). In other cases it grows over time, embeds itself in the subconscious, ultimately leading to betrayal, desertion, sedition, and murder. I believe this clearly demonstrates it is the hosts will that gives form to the Essence, and that the Essence itself has no ability to decide whether its manifestation is benign or malign.

The Histories of Oranos, The Order of Mystics, Chapter I

I will document, for the purposes of posterity, the details of our order. After it became clear that the world was dying through no fault of our own, the learned people of the five kingdoms came together to form the Order of Mystics. Initially the group was loosely defined, it’s members came and went as the Essence exerted its influence across the world. I, and a few others, formed a small band dedicated to understanding the Essence, and how it came to be. It did not take us long to draw the conclusion that it was the absence of the gods that gave rise to the calamity that was before us, and that it was their presence that maintained some sort of balance in the Essence that exists within our world. At that time we were aware of the existence of Essence, but its nature was foreign to us, and we were not unanimously convinced of its existence at first.

The Histories of Oranos, The Order of Mystics, Chapter II

Over the years our order watched the kingdoms of our world fight against each other, and one by one each fell. Whether in the tracks and weaponry of the battlefield, or by the slow decline of authority they all fell. It was becoming apparent that a great collapse was coming soon. It could be felt all around like the acrid taste on the tongue before lightning strikes. We resolved that our efforts to manipulate the Essence were paramount, that we must find a way to use it, or our entire world would unravel around us. We could see that the borders between the kingdoms were fading, the scars of war filled in slowly by the sands of encroaching deserts. Eventually, we knew, it would be impossible to cross between the kingdoms. It was then that the idea of the gates was born, we would utilise our technology and research on Essence to create a portal in each kingdom. Each portal would allow free travel to another kingdom, forming a spine, if you will, across the world. What we did not realise at the time, however, was that without a body capable of channelling essence, these gates would be useless to us.

The Histories of Oranos, The Order of Mystics, Chapter III

The Necromancer was an idea that arose over a period of months, after we realised that the now complete gates were all but useless to us. Many of us gave up, threw our hands in the air in anguish, and simply disappeared into the wastes. Those that remained, myself included, resolved to find a solution. Though I cannot speak for the motives of the other Mystics, I resolved to do all I could because the alternatives were simply too bleak to consider. Without the ability to pass between the gates we would be without the ability to communicate with the now isolated communities scattered amongst the five kingdoms, and without the ability to restore the world. It is worth noting that our studies at this point had turned to what could at best be considered arcane and at worst sorcery. Manipulating essence is no simple matter. Through various testing methods we found that the most effective, yet unpleasant, way of channelling essence was through pain. I am sure that to whoever reads this account, assuming anyone is left to read it, will think us as sun-scorched mad men, making blood pacts and casting magic spells into the darkness. How I wish this were not so.

The Histories of Oranos, The Order of Mystics, Chapter IV

It was in the Autumn of the year 3346 that we made our ultimate choice. We did not force anyone to stay, those who were in the dark were informed of our intentions, and given the opportunity to leave. Few did, some stayed out of loyalty, others because leaving was simply no better than what was ahead. One of our order was chosen, a young woman- an acolyte from the mountain kingdom. There has been no protest over what we are about to do, because there are no other options. We grew weak with every day that passed, and every day the essence spread further, rooted deeper, hung heavier in the air around us. I am sorry, reader, that we could not do more. This will be the last entry in my histories, if they can be called that. I do hope that there will be enough future to fill the remaining pages of this book.

With hope, Oranos.

Memorandum from the court of Hispellum

The King has given his orders, the captains have gone to relay them into the city. We are left here together, the rulers of this kingdom. The king sits upon his throne at the head of the room, alone and brooding. We are left to discuss our options, it is clear we are at war, whether it is in the best interests of our land or not, we are at war. My peers seem excited by the prospect, as if the encroaching bloodshed has somehow been expected and deserved. I have no doubts that the courts of the four other great kingdoms are issuing their own orders, and that their Kings and Queens have withdrawn into the same solitude as our own. I will not lie my own thoughts have been darkened of late. I fear there has been a change in us, all of us, across this entire world.

Entry from the Journal of Optio Ellas

Today we are marching on the great mountain kingdom of Hispella. Like my fellow soldiers, I have never seen war. I do not know if this world has seen war before. We have seen skirmishes aplenty, peacekeeping missions, suppression of dissidents, but never war. I am proud to serve my country, and my Queen. I will remember looking out from our battlements onto a sea of gleaming metal, and a sky streaked by the trails of our warships, what a glorious sight. I hear people say our Kingdom cannot be defeated, that our lands are too great and our military too vast. If they are right then the coming war may also be the last war, for we will reign eternally after our victory!

Entry from the Journal of Optio Ellas

What a battlefield, what a battle. Our guns blazed unending for two nights, illuminating the retreating Hispellites. To think these men and women who called themselves our brothers and sisters would declare war on us. Now they understand their mistake. We have lost many, but they have lost more. Tomorrow I will take what remains of our armour and breach the walls of their keeps. By dawn we will have our victory, and stand alone in triumph in this great war.

Entry from the Journal of Optio Ellas

Today we broke into the city of Hispellum, infantry following the path of our siege engines straight into their main square. Only to find the resistance we expected was absent. The city was silent, the defenders on the walls were silent now- dead or dying. But here there was nothing, no signs of flight, banners taken from their polls. It is as if it had been abandoned for years. We searched house after house, looked in the warehouses, the armouries, the keeps, all the way up to the court and even the monarch’s tombs. It was then, as we stood in the court of Hispellum, before the throne of the King, that a strange feeling came over me. It has been at least a decade since I left our fair city. A decade that me and my men have lived in the great battlefields that now scar the space between our lands. I worry that if I were to return home, that I would find our halls empty, I would find my family fled and my house deserted. We have fulfilled our duty, we have taken the city. But now we are without orders and there are now none to issue them. It is bitter sweet, this victory, for on the very day of our victory, we are turning about, and returning home.

Entry from the Journal of Optio Ellas

We did not make it home. As we crested the horizon, and the great towers of Pyrrha came into view, a cry of despair rose up. For we could see, even at this great distance, that our city was ruined and deserted. There was no life on the charred plain before us. Some of my brothers and sisters fell to their knees and would not be moved. Some ran for the city, others away. I did not stop anyone. There was no reason. It was clear my instinct was right- somehow over all these years, through all the battles and the roaring of thunder, we have destroyed ourselves. Our kingdoms have fallen, where our people are I do not know. What will become of us I do not know. What I do know, that I predicted all those years ago, and that has now been confirmed by the horrifying sight ahead, is that this war was indeed the last war of our world.