

Dignity Freedom Prosperity

3 Rings

The Oathwright

SPRING SOLSTICE 380 YE

The People's Voice

FOURTH ISSUE

BOURSE PRICES PLUNGE

By Cormack Dun

A crash in prices at the Winter Bourse auctions for special resources wiped 2,000 thrones off the Senate budget.

Imperial finances were left in ruins as prices crashed to their lowest level since the death of Britta. The six Weirwood seats, which last year fetched a total of 1,860 thrones, this season went for just 306 thrones and 2 crowns.

EMERGENCY

An emergency auction of two mithril seats raised a total of 365 thrones for seats that had fetched 855 between them the previous time they were auctioned. The auction results show a fall of 55 percent in the price of mithril and an 85 percent fall in the price of wierwood at the Bourse auction. The Senate relies on income from the Bourse auctions of special resources for much of its budget. The 25 Imperial armies

cost 50-75 thrones each to maintain per season. In reaction to this price crash several senators suggested they may be forced to disband armies to save money. Senator Hengist of Wintermark said, "We have no money to pay for anything."

CONSPIRACY

Theories as to why the price crashed varied widely, with some accusing a conspiracy of rich citizens (see P.5 TWO RINGS WORTH) and others blind economic forces. Wintermark Senator Atte accused the wealthiest citizens of fraud: "Syndicates conspired to cut up the Bourse seats. That's why the prices were so low."

EXCOMMUNICATED

The business owners of The League put the issue down to demand. One banker said, "No one has any money." Johan of the Printers' Guild said, "Normally we bid against our great rival the

Butchers' Bank, but since we were excommunicated we have been too busy to attend the auctions. It seems we were keeping them honest." Lorenzo of the Butchers' Bank, scoffed at the suggestion that the Printers' Guild had economic influence: "I don't think they have ever held a bourse seat."

The banker put the fall down to more prosaic market forces: "The bottom fell out of the market. There were very few people bidding at the auction and we are saving our money for other ambitions. The Senate has said the prices were too high and now they got what they asked for, a reduction in the cost of weirwood, but that means not so much money for the Senate budget."

The Winter Senate budget was unaffected because the proceeds of Winter's auction are paid into the Spring budget which will now be critically low. The Spring Festival will see the illium



A single wain of wierwood from the Golden Trees of Seren in the Navarr forest of Miaren, in the centre of the Empire, arrives in the shipyards of Siroc in the Brass Coast. The Golden Trees was sold to Adelada von Temeschwar of the Bloody Butchers Guild for just 50 thrones and 2 crowns.

auctions, which have historically yielded lower returns. Last Spring the two illium seats raised less than 300 thrones. (See P.2 THRONES POCKETS 300 THRONES).

BRITTA

This was the first price correction since the death of Britta and the loss of all the Bourse seat holders in Skarsind. In Winter 376, all the bourse seats were auctioned at once and all of them sold for less than 20 thrones each. Since then prices have climbed precipitously, peaking at 600 thrones for the Fortress of Salt mithril seat sold at the Autumn festival to Tobias shank.

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RICHEST CITIZEN IN THE WORLD: INTERVIEW WITH LORENZO OF THE BUTCHERS' BANK

MILITARY COUNCIL ORDERS KILLING OF HUNDREDS OF WINTERMARK SOLDIERS

The Military Council ordered the deaths of hundreds of citizens when it decided to use force to capture Dogri Thulbane at Crow's Keep in Skarsind, formerly a province of Wintermark and now home to the Imperial Orcs.

PEACEFUL

The thane of Crow's Keep was accused of preventing orc magistrates of entering his home. He had never accepted the gift of his homeland to the orcs, but had offered to surrender without a

fight to a Wintermark army. That peaceful outcome had the support of the Wintermark people, the Wintermark National Assembly of the Synod and the Thane's Council of Wintermark, as well as Irontide Vio the Senator for Skarsind. (see P.7 WINTERMARK WEEPS). But the Military Council chose to send the famously brutal Iron Helms of Varushka.

HERO

A thousand citizens of the Mark rallied to protect Dogri, a famous hero of the war with the Thule.

The bannerbearers were cut down, some torn to pieces by dogs, as the impassive Iron Helms assaulted Crow's Keep on the Military Council's orders. Dogri was arrested, alive.

Speaking in the bloodsoaked ruins of Dogri's castle after the month-long siege ended one tearful masked Wintermark soldier said, "The lords in Anvil that ordered this needless killing have no Loyalty or Wisdom and they had best keep watch on dark nights in case I ever find them."

EMPERESS POCKETS 300 THRONES FROM EMPIRE

By Cormack Dun

Empress Lisabetta used her legal powers to take 300 thrones from the Senate coffer and add them to her personal purse on the Friday of the Winter Festival. Master of the Mint Duke Ferrero said, "She has seized the money and can do whatever she likes with it."

BUDGET

Speaking on behalf of the Imperial Household, the Throne's brother, Kaspar of the House of Seven Mirrors, explained that the Empress intends to return the money to the Senate in Summer "because there is a sudden drop in the Senate budget for the Summer Summit after the illium auctions, which happen in Spring. So Lisabetta used the hand of the Chancellor power to pass the budget forward to cover the gap. The Winter Senate budget was unaffected because the proceeds of Winter's auction are paid into the Spring budget. The Spring Season is the illium auctions which have historically yielded lower returns. Last Spring the two illium seats raised less than 300 thrones." Kaspar said that in the Summer, when the Senate's budget is often not sufficient, the Empress will use this money to balance the budget. This plan was formulated before



Woodcut from an original by Tom Garner

the Bourse crash that saw Winter tax returns fall to a four-year low. Kaspar added, "Because of the fiscal events in Winter we will have to look at this plan again to cover the shortfall."

BOURSE

Ferrero speculated that this dramatic action might have had an influence on the Bourse markets. He said, "I couldn't comment except to say that is surely coincidence that this (the fall in prices) happened in the same season that the Empress withdrew one third of the senate funds. The Imperial Household has attempted to predict future movements of the economy but their methodology is flawed and as a result their actions are clumsy."

The hand of the chancellor is the Throne's right to take up to a third of the Senate budget and spend it without restrictions.

IMPERIAL ORC FINED FOR BLASPHEMY AND HERESY

By Cormack Dun

Bloodcrow Yargol of the Imperial Orcs was condemned by the Synod for blasphemy and narrowly escaped execution at a noisy sentencing session at the hub.

EXCESSIONISM

Jorma Steelhail of Wintermark accused Yargol of blaspheming against The Way and committed the heresy of excessionism by accusing the Hierro Clan of barbarian orcs of having "too much Ambition". He also told orcs that they should not follow The Way because it is a "human religion." Even after being warned he continued to say that is was

possible to have "too much Pride" and "too much Ambition." The Priests of the Synod condemned him for his outrageous language in a vote.

CONDEMNED

He had previously been subject to Inquisition for similar crimes in Spring 380 YE. This time he was condemned and passed for sentencing where an extremely vocal showed up, including many Marchers and Imperial Orcs. Despite his heinous crimes the crowd were there to support Yargol amid a very real fear that he would be put to death as heretic.

Blooderow Ergot summed up the

THE OATHWRIGHT SPEAKS BOURSE BAIROUT

Conspiracy, colluding and catastrophe, should hearsay inform us? Should we panic? Is the Empire doomed? There is nothing the Senate can do to enforce its will on the Bourse. The constitution forbids it. "The Bourse... shall be free of all interference of the Senate". However, the Throne could use the money she is taking from the Senate Treasury and her considerable personal fortune and have a family member bid for Bourse seats either to raise the bidding or win seats. The money comes back to the treasury along with the wains if she cared to donate them also.

BLOODCROW ERGOT

NO DEFENCE, NO EXCUSE

The Military Council has committed murder. When they come to trial for the killing of hundreds of Wintermarkers at Crow's Keep they could plead not guilty to murder on the defence of lawful arrest but unfortunately for the generals that only covers reasonable force. When the accused was volunteering to surrender peacefully — a decision that had the support of a nation — there can be no excuse for bloodshed.

Most shocking of all is the Military Council's failure to understand that fair treatment of Dogri is vital for the delicate political balance struck when Skarsind was gifted to the orcs by Wintermark. To ignore Wintermark's wishes in that instance is a lack of Wisdom or Vigilance. The generals who voted for this must be named, they must stand down and admit their crimes or they should be tried for murder and executed.

CORMACK DUN

TOLD YOU SO

Spiral has fallen to the Grendal. Despite a 250-throne bribe paid to the Salt Lords. *The Oathwright* said this would happen (See *The Oathwright 2 EMPIRE PAYS BLOOD MONEY TO GRENDAL*).

case against his fellow member of the Imperial Orc's Bloodcrow Legion: "He's been a naughty orc and he's not been very repentant."

SINGING

The size of the crowd and their loud protestations and singing prevented the magistrates from carrying out their work. Until Inquisitor Severin Teyhard of the League addressed the crowd: "You have every right make your feelings about this legal process known. But please, for the love of the Empire we all serve, be quiet! For now, please stop protesting while the legal system of the Empire takes its course, then, after the verdict, if



you do not agree by all means begin again."

While waiting for sentence, Yargol addressed the crowd: "I didn't ask you to be here, but you have shown great Loyalty." The magistrates sentenced Yargol to pay a fine of 50 thrones and advised him to moderate his language and stop spreading heresy.

BARBARIAN ENGINEERS DEFEATED IN REDOUBT

By Cormack Dun

The heroes of Anvil went through the Sentinel Gate to Urizen on the Saturday of the Winter Solstice and stopped Grendel engineers who were planning to establish a port to land more troops to invade Urizen on the south coast of the Empire.

OBJECTIVES

Warriors from Wintermark, Varushka, Highguard and Urizen were led on the field by Urizen General Nicassia Avicia of

Phoenix Reach of The Citadel Guard. The day's objectives were to prevent the Grendel Engineers of the Kraken's Fist unit getting to the port, kill the barbarian leaders and recover their invisible night pouch of orders.

CLASH

They were successful in all objectives except the recovery of the night pouch. In the initial clash the Wintermark heavy infantry charged the advancing barbarian

column. Aelsan Dunning of Wintermark said, "Our first charge destroyed them as a fighting force. They were a column of 200; we killed a hundred and the rest escaped through the left flank held by other nations. We chased the remaining orcs to try and stop them."

Hailing the victory Field Marshall Nicassia said, "The Varuskhans put down the Lasambrarian com-

mander but may not have searched him. We have shown the barbarians it will not be easy fight to take Redoubt. I would like to thank our heroes for their bravery and congratulate them on a job well done."

The Lasambrarian orcs from the West have joined forces with the Grendel after their defeat at the hands of Iron Confederacy (See P.10 FOREIGN POLICY).

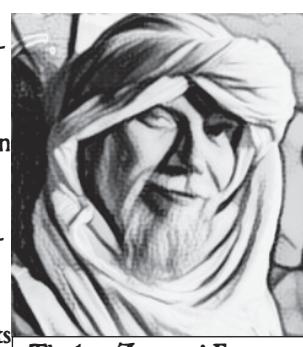
THREE CONJUNCTIONS, DISASTER AND REVENGE

By Godric Dun

At the Winter festival, three conjunctions led to Liathaven and the Jotun forces that threatened the trapped Black Thorns army, the first invited disaster. On the Saturday afternoon, an undersized force of 80, hastily gathered from various nations, including Navarr and Wintermark, crossed the gate to Liathaven and met a column of 90 elite Jotun Ulvenwar heavy infantry.

DISCIPLINE

The Empire's skirmishers abandoned a defensive position at a gate where the Empire could perhaps have held the Jotun and forced the arriving column to meet the Jotun on an open field. The Jotun's evident discipline carried the day and three dozen Imperial soldiers died on the field.



The late Zanterr i Ezmara

Wintermark's Ashenwall was particularly hard hit, losing most of its heroes including its thane. One of the survivors, Battle Mage Grim, said, "They are gone, there is no one left. We were crushed."

That night Grim joined a second raiding party that went through the gate, found part of that Jotun column and annihilated them. The next morning a battle group of Dawn, Imperial Orcs, Marches, League and Brass Coast

met with the remains of the murderous column and a complete Jotun army. Their orders were to kill the general and capture Jotun maps and orders revealing the barbarians plans that led to the strategic destruction of Jotun forces in Orchard's Watch (see P.4 DISPATCHES).

Blooderow Ergot said, "We overwhelmed the main body and got the orders in about ten minutes, then spent an hour fighting off waves of Jotun while waiting for the gate to open."

The elite Jotun who had done so much damage fled through the woods with their general and banners but were hunted down and

killed, their banner captured and much magic armour and weaponry captured by the vengeful heroes. As the Imperial Force returned victorious

through the gate one duelist in the rear guard showed extreme courage. Zanterr i Ezmara i Erido of Brass Coast challenged successive Jotun heroes to single combat. He won every fight but was not able to get through the gate in time. An egregore of the Brass Coast felt his death presumably at the hands of the Jotun a full hour after the gate closed.

SELLSWORDS DEFEAT WENDIGO

A tainted Winter regio near the village of Blades Fall in north Skarsind was closed by mercenaries, according to one member of the mission who spoke to *The Oathwright* at the Winter Festival.

Initially deployed to fight Jotun who threatened the village, the unit sent by the Iron Raptors mercenary company then discovered the regio. Wintermark sell-sword Sealclubber Dunning said,

"This Winter Regio was corrupted and called to all kinds of very dangerous creatures and we had many tough battles with them."

CURSED

The Iron Raptors mercenary company allied with the Eternal Tharim, the Bound King of the Thrice cursed court, first helping him defeat the cannibalistic Eternal The Wendigo and then using his help to close the regio.



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DISPATCHES



Woodcut from an original by Oliver Facey

ORCHARD'S WATCH LOST

MARCHES: The Military Council knew exactly when the Jotun would attack the town of Orchard's Watch, in the Marches territory Mounewold, thanks to the Imperial heroes (see P.3 THREE CONJUNCTIONS). Armies from all nations except Navarr were there: Red Wind Corsairs, Hounds of Glory, Seventh Wave, Valiant Pegasus, Summer Storm, Winter Sun, Wolves of War, Fist of the Mountains, Citadel Guard, and Drake in Greensward, and Golden Axes in the North at Freemoor.

CURSE

The Urizen wizards of the Citadel Guard placed a horrible curse on the region to weaken the Jotun

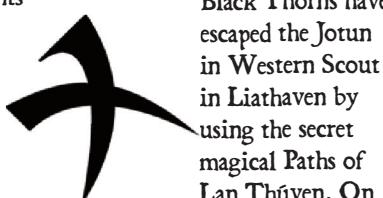
but it also killed many innocents despite the ministrations of the healers of the Valiant Pegasus from Highguard.

CASUALTIES

The Jotun captured Orchard's Watch and burned the Abbey. But they were prevented from taking The Singing Caves by the Marches' Drakes army, which suffered terrible casualties to keep the mithril mine in the Marches producing for its League masters (See P.11 RICHEST CITIZEN).

LOSSES

Although they gained much territory and the town of Orchard's Watch the Jotun losses are estimated at 15,000, five times as many as the Imperial defenders.



LIATHAVEN LOST

NAVARR: Retreating from a disastrous Winter defeat, the Black Thorns have escaped the Jotun in Western Scout in Liathaven by using the secret magical Paths of Lan Thúven. On arrival they launched a surprise attack on the Jotun in West Ranging. They were joined by the Fire of The South army from Brass Coast. The Jotun retreated behind fortifications and fighting was inconclusive. The failure to capture West Ranging now means all of Liathaven is in the hands of the Jotun.

DAWN: The army of the dead that emerged from the Semmerlak in Varushka lurks in Wierwater, Dawn. The walking corpses have killed travellers but seem reluctant to engage Dawnish knights in open battle.

URIZEN: Coming West by land and East by sea Grendal captured all of Spiral. Green Shield of Wintermark and the Northern Eagle of Varushka put up a methodical defence and made the Grendal pay for every farm. Os suary and its mithril mine, the Legacy, fell to the barbarians. Ateri and Angra were captured.

URIZEN: Thanks to the action of Anvil heroes (see P.3 BARBARIAN ENGINEERS) orcs have retreated from Redoubt in Urizen. But Grendal stragglers have captured the Evenstar Spire hospital.

DAWN: Following the peace treaty agreed with the Druj in Anvil on the Saturday of the Festival two Dawnish armies, the Golden Sun and the Gryphon's Pride, retreated from Murderdale and Carmine fields in the Barrens to Astolat in Dawn.

The Druj, now foreigners by law, control the barrens which they will be allowed to fortify.

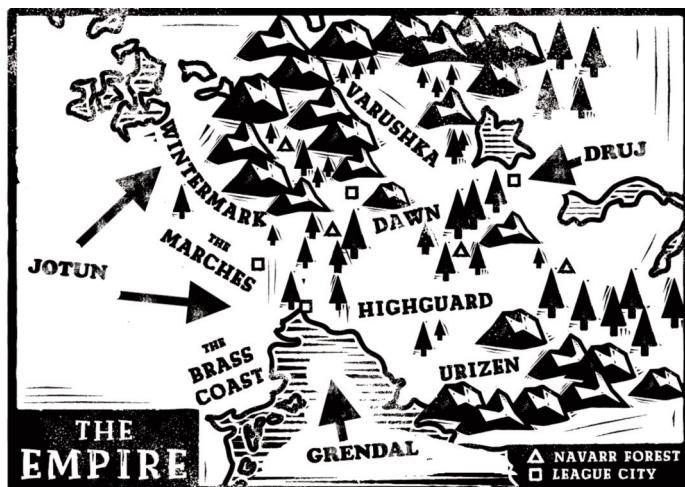
CONJUNCTIONS IN NAVARR AND URIZEN

The Civil Service magicians have been again able to identify conjunctions before the festival begins. There are two conjunctions significant enough for a full battle line to cross the gate on the Saturday morning. One leads to West Ranging in the North West of Liathaven, which Imperial forces failed to capture in this campaigning season. The other opens in Mournwold, which Imperial forces ceded to the Jotun in a recent battle. In Urizen there will be three opportunities for large forces of Im-

perial heroes to fight the Grendal via the Sentinel Gate. One in Cinion will cut off a Grendal attack and two in Ateri can prevent slave-taking and looting.

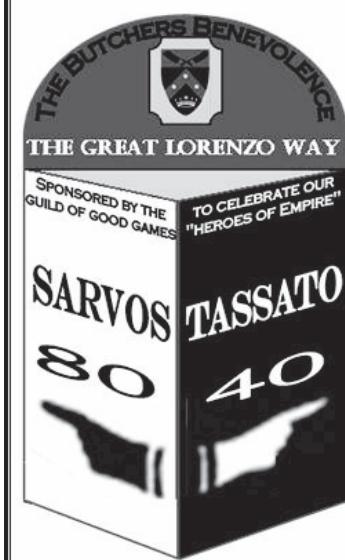
Which of two of these conjunctions are exploited on the Saturday and Sunday is up to the Military Council.

Besides several smaller conjunctions that will permit small skirmishing units, one large conjunction on Saturday evening will permit a company-sized force to launch substantial raid against the Grendal.



Map from an original by Daisy Abbot

The Butchers Benevolence The Blood Red Roads



The Rights to Name the Phase Two Highways and the Rights to Inscribe upon principle Monumental Markers of The Blood Red

Roads Great Work will be auctioned following the Bourse public auctions on Friday and Saturday evenings of Winter Solstice.

These auctions are held with the kind assistance of the Civil Service

All proceeds will be used to fund further expansion of The Blood Red Roads.

•TWO RINGS WORTH•

Expert opinion on finance by
Edmundo of Endsmeet, Urizen
Senator for Zenith,
Priest of Prosperity and Economist

ROTTEN WOOD

If you had walked into the public bourse auction last season, you would have been forgiven if you had thought you had entered a private function. Each of the seats was named, a quickly a bid of around 50 Thrones was placed.

COMPETITION

There was no real competition, and no sense of a drive for the individual ambitions of the people in the room. The allotment of the resources of the Empire were simple agreed upon by "citizens agreements" before the auction even took place.

There will be much speculation as to the long-term effects of this crash in the Weirwood market. It

is possible that the common citizen will be able to get access to more, assuming that those in charge do not simply keep their prices high and rake in the profits. Ultimately, since this crash was born out of collusion rather than from a drop in demand or glut in supply, any hopes of a long-term drop in price are likely misplaced. Indeed this could have happened to any bourse resource where no one from outside the "Citizen's agreement" showed up to the auction.

ILLIUM

The short-term effects however are huge. The Senate has a deficit of 300 thrones a season and the illium seats never make as much as

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Also Ginger Cock Mead and Granny Orc's Mead
And don't miss fresh pancakes for breakfast

the others. Precautions have already been made to deal with the shortfall of the illium seats, but this crash could have long-lasting implications for the economic potential of the Empire as a whole, let alone the ability for us to deal with the barbarians in our homes.

UNPROSPEROUS

It is likely that those who defend the actions of these buyers will state that they did not break the law and that it was not unprosperous for them to buy the resources at whatever price they can get

them. The first point is clearly true, and the second is debateable. However when any citizen takes actions which damage the Empire as a whole, as these clearly have, we all need to ask ourselves if these actions are right and virtuous.

PRIESTS

In the light of what has happened it is clearly right that more citizens attend the auctions and bid on the resources of the Empire and for more priests to be watching these proceedings to report on them.

IN BRIEF

The Asavean Temple in the city of Oran in the Brass Coast has opened its doors. Its idolatry and the Asaveans' use of slaves have riled many priests of the Imperial Synod, which will vote on potential action against the temple at the Spring Equinox in Anvil.

Magical storms have battered Urizen, wrecking ships and causing a rockfall that has blocked the main road in Redoubt, preventing military supplies and maneuvers reaching the front in Spiral.

The Thule have sent an emissary to the Great Forest Orcs currently living in the Navarr forest of Therunin. Apparently the orcs have been invited to join the Thule and are now preparing to leave the forest where they have been living since fleeing the Druj in the barrens.

The Thule have expressed a preference for the Varushkans and insist that any Imperial Ambassador to the Thule be a Varushkan national position.

The Thule hold Imperial Citizens as slaves, and the General Assembly of the Synod has not expressed an opinion on whether the Thule should return them to the Empire. Likewise the Thule have not been ordered to pay compensation for citizens murdered in the green iron mines of Skarsind.

On the shores of lake Atkonaroq in Sermersuaq a band of strange raiders has gathered, pillaging homes without declaring who they are. With no conjunctions opening in the region there is little that can be done except to send a priest to co-ordinate the response.

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Brass Coast

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PEACE WITH THE DRUJ AND THULE?

By Bloodcrow Ergot

Druj are the most hated of barbarians. Except they are now foreigners by order of the Throne to the Imperial Consul and after lengthy discussions with the Druj delegation. The peace will not last because the Druj aren't to be trusted, though many foreign nations think the same of us after we broke our treaty with the Jotun.

What strange fruits will flourish now that it is legal to trade with the Druj and the Thule? Our less law-abiding citizens and those lacking loyalty will now be tempted by vice. Given the Drujs' attempts to convert citizens to be

traitor spies, this should be alarming.

How easy is it for them to "bribe" citizens now? Perhaps it is time to look again at my motion to ban trade with slavers and those that do not make it illegal.



"The written word is the currency of worth"

Bloodcrow Ergot

The Abolishment of Proxy Slavery

Motion of Constitutional Amendment for the reformation of foreign trade

Prosperity at freedom's cost is no Virtue at all. This motion will make an amendment to the Constitution in the Senate Section. At the end of the following sentence, "The Senate will assume responsibility for relations with other nations," insert the following, "ensuring that prosperity is not at freedom's cost (9b)." (9b) Prosperity is in context defined as Imperial Trade with foreign nations and freedom is the guarantee that their people not to be subjected to slavery by their nation.

lance or Wisdom to know what they were saying, clearly spreading his corrupted ideas. These Asavean cultists think slaves are more likely to be virtuous in the face of its adversity.



ASAVEA VERSUS THE IRON CONFEDERACY

The Empire is to trade its Virtue to slavers in the name of pragmatism. In the case of Asavea pragmatism isn't required because they are so far away, while with the Iron Confederacy, the Throne and Synod seem to be saying that to help the enslaved in the Iron Confederacy is to support anarchy while spreading The Way in Asavea isn't.

IN THE SHADOW OF MONTANE

By Bloodcrow Ergot

Yet again the Empire stumbles on the issue of whether or not to allow barbarian orc tribes from the barrens to join the Empire at a cost. Let us be clear: if they were stronger than us then they would be killing us. They have also been coupled with

briar heretics from the Forest of Peytaht, of which little is known but the shadow of Montane is heavy there.

These orcs are not slaves; they are killers, and inviting these orcs to join us is inviting anarchy to the heart of the Empire.

IMPERIAL COMMISSIONER

One Imperial commissioner should be appointed by the Synod Cardinals.

A single title would be enough to enable poor nations to build commissions. A nation could sell some of its slots to fund its

own building to help their nation's prosperity and the Empire's.

As we well know more non-upkeep commissions enrich the region which less upkeep and more taxes for the Senate's treasury.

MOTION

CREATION OF THE IMPERIAL COMMISSIONER

For Prosperity

This is a Imperial appointment that will enable the holder of the title to build a number of civil commissions in the Empire by announcement in the Senate, provided that they don't require upkeep, provide votes in the Synod or are a folly. This motion will be decided upon in principle and the number of commissions available to the Imperial Commissioner will be decided by a vote in the Senate. The bearer of this title will have the responsibility of raising or collecting the necessary funds for any civil commissions and is expected to pay without delay. The title of "Imperial Commissioner" is an Imperial title that will be appointed by Synod judgement. The title can be revoked by the General Assembly, National Assembly or the Assembly of the Nine.

THE IMPERIAL ORC WAY

By Bloodcrow Ergot

The voice of an Ancestor, which I believe to be Red-hand Gik, has spoken to me and it simply said, "Virtue carried me through the Howling Abyss." It must be a powerful fate that brought this voice to me just as two new doctrines that have been passed by Bonewall Rek and Cole, as of the 380YE Winter solstice.

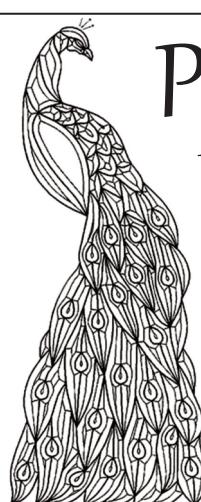
DOCTRINE OF THE HOWLING ABYSS

Orcs live only one life. After death, the orcish soul either is

lost to the Howling Abyss or crosses it to become an Ancestor who can guide and advise living orcs' Change of Doctrine.

DOCTRINE OF THE ANCESTORS

To cross the Howling Abyss an orc must be known for their deeds. Though there may be other ways to cross, embracing the Seven Virtues leads an orc to the Great and Inspiring deeds that make an Ancestor and a Virtuous Ancestor can guide future generations on The Way.



Peacock's Tale

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delights

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WINTERMARK WEEPS FOR ITS WARPED SKEIN



By Cormack Dun

In 379YE when Wintermark voted to relinquish Skarsind to the Imperial Orcs, the storm-named people knew the resolution would not be easy and would require patience and diplomacy. No one imagined it would mean Wintermarkers fighting Varushkans for the first time since the foundation of Empire.

CHOICE

Tobrytan Dunning, Thane of Dunhearth Hall, said, "It was a hard choice to gift Skarsind to the most loyal citizens, the Imperial Orcs, but it was the virtuous choice."

GRATEFUL

Irontide Vio Senator of Skarsind said, "I am grateful for what the Wintermark did for us and I understand that some people in Wintermark are not happy with that. Dogri is a citizen, a Wintermarker. If he wants Crow's Keep, the Imperial Orcs are perfectly happy to let him keep it. It is beyond the reach of the Wintermark egregores and so the hearth magic will fade, until eventually Dogri and his family do not feel at home in Skarsind. The orcs are content to wait and let that process take its course.

We have no desire to intervene. No orc would feel right moving against another citizen of the Empire especially our greatest friend and ally Wintermark."

Dogri Thulebane chose to remain in his home when most of the people of Skarsind left for other parts of Wintermark.

He was in contravention of the expressed will of Wintermark. He went on to refuse entry to Crow's Keep to orc magistrates investigating the death of Thule traders — who ought to have been given safe passage following a peace treaty. Then he let it be known he planned to attack his old enemy the Thule in a raid, in direct contravention of a peace treaty.

ENSLAVED

Tobrytan explained the implication, "I opposed Dogri's recent desire to raid the Thule as unwise even though his aim was to rescue Winterfolkslaves from the Thule mines. The Senate did not ask for

their return as part of the peace treaty with the Thule. Dogri's threatened raid would not have broken the treaty with the Thule as long as weregild were paid for any losses the Thule suffered."

The presence of Wintermark citizens held as slaves by the Thule was confirmed by a diplomatic mission by

Raknar Stomspire, Aerdon Sussvari, Brand of Sherard Hunters. One of the mission's guards Ox, The Crazy, Herald Saver, Thane of the Blackwatch described the mission, "Their attempts at settling a deal had failed and we were forced to leave with Thule scum tailing us, but as we walked I spoke to Raknar and learnt that the Thule were holding Wintermark men, women and children as slaves, and the mines close to the Silver Peaks were the target of Dogri's planned raid."

Conscience of the Senate Ingrid Sieging of Wintermark said,

"The National assembly of Wintermark stated in principle that

the matter of Dogri Thulebane and Crow's Reach should be left to a Wintermark general. Either the Military Council were not informed of this or it ignored it."

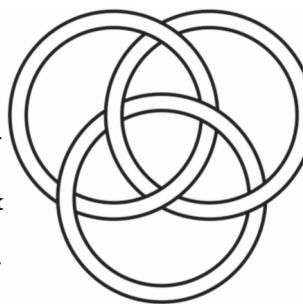
TRUST

Tobrytan said, "When a Thane who leads a large body of Winterfolk gives his word that he will surrender peacefully to a Wintermark army you can trust this to be so. The Council of Thanes authorised a Wintermark army to march and arrest him peacefully. Therefore although we despise the Thule we knew it as the Wise and Vigilant course of action. It may be that a Wintermark army could not have reached Crow's Keep in time to stop the raid, but I would rather pay the weregild a thousand times over, than allow a cruel army to butcher my kinsman."

Ingrid added, "I was born in Skarsind and a man who earned the name of Thulesbane will ever be a hero in my eyes."

TRADE

Tobrytan concluded, "Those in Varushka and the Military council knew that this was against the will of Wintermark and have acted out of greed and self-interest, seeking to trade with the treacherous Thule and abase themselves further. I cannot speak against those who supported the defence of my fellow Wintermarkers against this cruel army, a difficult choice made out of Loyalty and disgust at the Military Council's actions. The Thule turned us against ourselves."



THANE OF DUNHEARTH TO THE SHRIEKING BARD

By Thane Tobrytan of Dunhearth Hall

In response to the story "Bullying a bard" in *The Pledge* Winter 380YE edition, let me first invite *The Pledge* to come to our hall and enjoy our hospitality. We take the privilege of a scop or bard very seriously and accord them great respect.

More than a year ago, many folk from throughout the Empire were invited to Dunhearth Hall. It was then that the "bard" in question, requested to sing for us. The hall grew silent as is polite, whereupon she proceeded to shriek and wail

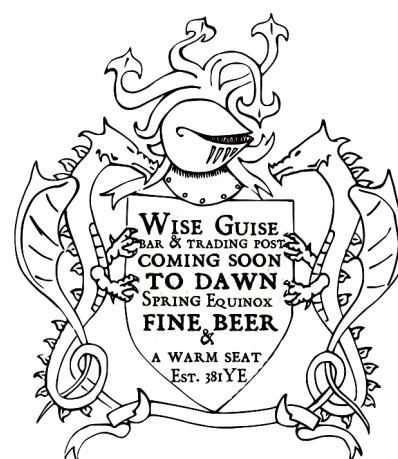
for a good length of time. When the lady in question had left, I was approached by many furious kinsman and guests. My response was to invoke the rule of the unwelcome guest.

OFFENDED

This states that if someone is deemed to have offended hospitality, they have no right to enter a hall and can be expelled with reasonable force. This was issued in perpetuity against the "bard" in question.

Therefore, when she returned

for an encore a year later, she was rightly expelled, for the banishment still stood. If the lady is offended, know that she is but one person and has offended an entire hall and likely all Wintermark with her lack of respect for our traditions. If she apologises she will of course be welcome in our hall again, as long as she does not sing.



FOREIGN POLICY: FOREIGN POWERS

By Rodrigo Barossa de Tassato Regario, Regario Dossier

The Empire is not the only civilisation in the world, and the world is a lot bigger than our knowledge of our borders, much of which was lost to the mad Emperor Nicovar who burned the Empire's libraries in 209YE.

CONTINENT

We have embassies with foreigners who share our continent and with distant nations on other continents: Asavea, the Commonwealth, Jarm, the Sarcophan Delves and Sumaaah. They are so distant it takes a fleet an entire season to sail there and back and they are too far for military action.

RELATIONS

While they cannot invade us, that does not mean they cannot harm us. All of these nations are powerful and probably about as large as the Empire. Our relations with them can affect the Empire in other ways: bans on trading lowers our Prosperity

and denies us access to their resources. Their magicians can make deals against us with Eternals or they can support our mundane enemies with resources and mercenary captains. Similarly by cultivating relationships we can gain new markets and resources as well as information and knowledge.

WARFARE

The local foreigners are Axos, The Iron Confederacy, Faradon, Skora, and the Vore. They speak Imperial and are close enough for open warfare. We believe they are probably about the size of one to three Imperial nations.

ASAVEA

Asavea is an old empire of slavers. Our relations are a tale of two Imperial institutions. Deals through the Senate resulted in a trade deal for white granite, and Asavea's ruling families wish to



continue to do business with us. On the other hand, its priests are afraid of The Way because our religion appeals to their slaves. Opposition from the Imperial Synod has delayed construction of a temple in the Brass Coast to one of their 'gods', the Black Bull.

WORSHIP

'Gods' are the focus of Asavean religion. They are supposed mystical, intangible, unseen beings or forces that somehow guide people from a place called 'heaven' a mystical place outside the world or realms. 'Gods' apparently offer benefits, only provided the people offer them worship and sacrifices. We have heard stories and rumours fly about slaves converting to The Way en masse or territories in rebellion, but we have no more hard evidence than for any other sailor's tale.

JARM

Jarm is a divided land of magic and mages held together by three alliances. While it taxed our imports heavily last year, these taxes have been lifted and our relations are now fairly good, though politics between the alliances mean that things may change quickly as Jarm's own power struggles play out. The Jarmish keep slaves, predominantly human, but some orc, and the purchasing of orc slaves by certain individuals in Jarm (to free them) prompted amending the

law and a statement of principal to ensure that the Empire does not encourage slavery. Jarm is close to the Commonwealth and the two often war.

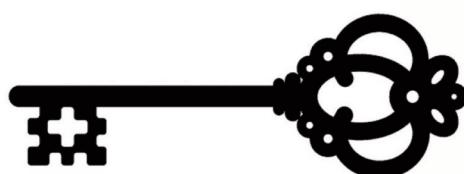
COMMONWEALTH

The Commonwealth follow The Way or something similar. It is unique in that it hosts a third sentient race, the daeva. Humans, orcs and daeva all have equal standing. While our relations are close with Asavea and Jarm, the Commonwealth is unlikely to be our friend, but we are not enemies. The Empire's firm declaration against slavery has helped matters because the Commonwealth was wary of us because of our historic support of slavery.

SARCOPHAN DELVES

A swamp nation of morbid merchants who will trade with almost anyone, including the Grendal. We know the Grendal buy wierwood in the Sarcophan Delves to build their navies. Of what orcs may be local to their lands we do not know, they tell of attacks by swamp barbarians, but as small nuisances rather than the large tribes we face. The people of the Delves do not keep living slaves, but practice necromantic hearth magic that allows them to make servants out of corpses. Whether this has any effect on the soul's passage has yet to be proven.

BRAZEN PARADOUR



The Brass Coast's
best-known bar
Est. 376YE

Prosperity prices!
For this season pay what you
think it is worth

SUMAAH

Sumaaah's government has declared war upon us, and so can be considered our worst foreign relations. The Imperial Senate has declined to acknowledge this 'war'. Sumaaah lists several grievances, among them that we snubbed their embassy, that we trade with the Asaveans — who are their mortal enemies — and that our Synod recognised the hero of the orc rebellion, Thrace, as an exemplar of the virtue of Ambition.

The Empire for its part has ignored them. This is our second 'war' with Sumaaah, the first lasted almost two hundred years and the only casualties were a handful of sailors when merchant ships met on the open seas and decided to be patriotic. Sumaaah keeps no slaves, but its people see orcs as sub-humans and try to wipe them out when they find them.

VORE

First of the more local nations this country is the most mysterious. There has been no contact with the Vore in a generation, they may no longer exist.

SKOURA

The Skoura were also thought to be extinct but recently this people sent an envoy. We hope to learn more about them soon.

AXOS

Axos has opened a port East of Urizen. The people of this Eastern neighbour dwell in citadels in the mountains and are at war with the Druj. The Axos share many traits with Urizen, but practice a religion believed to be at odds with The Way.

Now that we have an embassy and an open port we shall learn more. We do know that slavery

is still legal in Axos, but discouraged.

FARADEN

Another nation of traders, their religion is very similar to The Way, but they believe that Ambition, Vigilance and Wisdom are vices, and follow the virtue of "Justice", better known to us as the false virtue of Vengeance. They keep slaves, most for a fixed period, but some for life. They also refuse the Labyrinth and believe that the afterlife is some form of wasteland that souls must wander and seek the aid of spirits before it is possible to reincarnate into your family once again.

Relations improved when imperial captains helped them against the Jotun, but took a turn for the worse when a Faraden noble was offered a True Liao vision, but broke the vision and was badly injured.

IRON CONFEDERACY

Since the Iron Confederacy defeated the Lasambrian orcs we have shared a border.

Militaristic and expansionists, these people believe that nobility is hereditary, and so always select their rulers from the children of previous rulers. They are ruled by priests and like the Asaveans they worship a pantheon of "gods." Though never say that the Asavean gods and the Iron Confederacy gods are the same invisible, intangible, mystical, all knowing beings — unless you want to start a fight.

They also believe that magic is sinful, except when it comes from their gods when it is called

The Guild of Good Games



The guild makes games to train citizens of The League in strategy, tactics and the Virtues. Those who do well in games do well in life and do good for The Empire.

If you want to play or purchase games, or be portrayed for prosperity in the **Heroes of Empire** game, please contact Lorenzo 'La Volpe', Grandmaster of the Guild of Good Games and

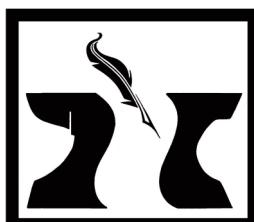
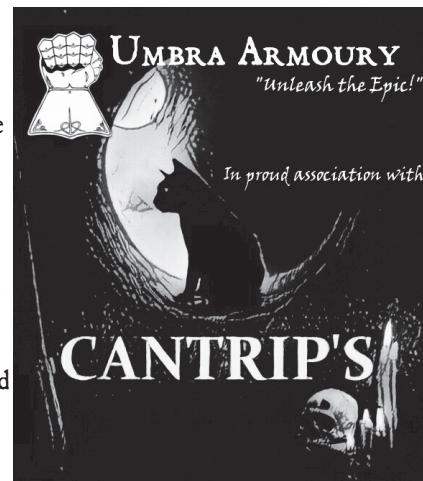
Master of the Butchers Bank. Profits are used to extend The Butchers Benevolence: The Blood Red Roads.

"miracles." Imperials who have seen them say that "miracles" seem a lot like the rituals and spells that our mages cast and that the "gods" seem very similar to Eternals.

Orcs are seen as the lowest slave caste in the Iron Confederacy, good only for menial labour or as expendable shock troops. They recently made considerable military gains against the orcs of the Lasambrian Hills, and are now probably larger than any single Imperial nation, but no match for the Empire. Still we must watch them carefully, as they make no secret of their dislike of the Empire and their scorn for our values and The Way. In the past they have tried to invade the Brass Coast, the League and Highguard, but only when they have thought our guard was down and we were distracted by other wars.

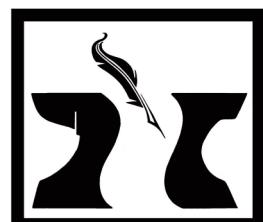
CONCLUSION

This introduces the foreign powers we know of in this world. I only scratch the surface of their politics, customs, beliefs, knowledge and how their actions intertwine with ours. There are clear elements of Virtue, and there are things we find repulsive. We shall have to use the might of the Empire to encourage the former while limiting the latter. Only a fool ignores people who could be potential allies or enemies, so, for now we learn and trade.



THE ANVIL PUBLIC LIBRARY

Follow the path of Wisdom to the library in the market place.
Sit, debate and read. Books on sale from 2 rings.
See the curious cabinet, a reflection of the Celestial Library.
Join the library and propose new titles.





IN A TIME OF REVELATION

At the Winter festival Cormack Dun interviewed Yael, who claims to be a prophet and the reincarnation of the first Empress.

"The Synod said it will not change the doctrine to accommodate her teachings. But she went on preaching her teachings, and that is blasphemy."

HAWKFROST, ARTISAN'S ARMS

"I believe she saw what she said she saw."

EMPERSS LISABETTA

Disagreement over what Yael has seen and what it might mean is tearing at the Empire. Is she the first Empress? Is there a place beyond the Labyrinth? When she spoke to the Assembly of the Nine Cardinals of Virtue and the Throne in the Imperial Office on the Friday of the Winter Festival, Yael wore a long white dress and silver jewellery in her hair. She wrung her hands and seemed distraught, even anguished, as she struggled to answer the hostile questions of the Empress and the cardinals.

QUESTIONS

Two of her devoted followers, both Priests from Highguard, attended her closely, ready to leap to her defence. The legalistic details of the questions seemed to pain Yael. Questioned over her reaction to the recent Synod vote rejecting a change in the doctrine Yael hesitated, "What I saw isn't... It doesn't... It doesn't negate the doctrine." Then from a deep well of faith she speaks

loudly and clearly, "The vote did not settle the matter. We are living in a time of revelation, we have an evolving living faith. Our faith is not stagnant. We can conduct further research. We can escape the bonds, we don't have to be thrown away like yesterday's stew."

Escaping the bonds of the Labyrinth? Escaping to the vale of tears? Or escaping the bonds of the ecclesiarches of the Synod?

FACTS

The undisputed facts are few. In Autumn 379, she drank a potion called Path of the Guiding Light, then consumed a dose of True Liao, a rare spiritual potion that gives visions of past lives and often leads to revelation of our spiritual past. Doses of True Liao are administered by the civil service at Anvil. The True Liao gave Yael a vision that left her soul badly wounded. She and her guide reported seeing a crown, an Empress and a shining white city. That city, that place, she then

chose to call the "Vale of Tears" and she claimed it is a place beyond the Labyrinth, that offers some alternative to reincarnation. Yael also concluded that the Empress she saw was the first Empress and that she is therefore the reincarnation of the first Empress.

HYPOTHESIS

Lisabetta, the 20th Empress Empress, questioned Yael closely, "I propose that there could be another interpretation of your vision. This is my hypothesis: that you were an Empress in a previous life but not the First Empress. Perhaps you were Richilde, Mariika or, most probably, Teleri." Yael's answer is shocking, "I have no proof either way. We made assumptions, we leapt to conclusions." Could Yael be guessing? Is this a trick?

DOUBT

After the meeting I spoke to her myself, "Are you the reincarnation of the First Empress?"

"Yes!"

"But you told the Empress that

you were not sure, that you could have seen another Empress in your vision."

She looks aghast "No! There is always room for doubt, we can do more experiments. But I know what I believe. I have faith that I was given a revelation of the First Empress."

"So why did you tell the Empress that you were not sure?"

"I am certain of the meaning of my vision under True Liao. I know what I saw, but I accept the possibility that others do not, that other experiments could

throw my vision into a different light, but that will never change my faith that I am the First Empress and that there is a place beyond the Labyrinth called the Vale of Tears that gives new meaning to The Way."

RELIGION

When she preaches, there is a spiritual force to her voice that is impossible to ignore and hard to disbelieve. She has a calling that could split an empire. "If you split The Way, will you lead your own counter religion?"

"What? I don't want to... I couldn't... We are to bring the faith together and forward."

And I realise what she means. She can't see schism as division of The Way, she is bound by her faith to think that her teaching is The Way. We can join her or not, she will discuss our views with us, but in her own soul she will always be Yael, reincarnation of the first Empress, the first mortal to name the Vale of Tears beyond the Labyrinth.

Potions, teas and fine real coffee brewed at the hearth

LUMI'S
Sussuvari
Hall
Wintermark

ANTLER RUNE JEWELLERY
INFUSED
WITH WINTERMARK
HEARTH MAGIC

HADAND DUNWULF, DUNHEARTH HALL
LARGE RANGE IN STOCK EACH SEASON
JUST 10R PER PIECE

LIISSÁ'S MASSAGE
Sigehold Hall
Wintermark

1 crown for
20 minutes

THE RICHEST CITIZEN IN THE WORLD

By Cormack Dun

Lorenzo 'La Volpe' von Temeschwar, Master of the Butchers' Bank holds the Empire in his hand. His staggering wealth cannot be overestimated. The Butchers' Bank has promised 360 wains of white granite, worth almost 1,500 thrones, to construct a vast system of roads. It has already delivered 260 cartloads and still had change left over for a massive statue of the founder of their bank and a theatre. Lorenzo said, "This significant economic benefit, together with the military and cultural benefits, is why The Bloody Butchers' Benevolence - The Blood Red Roads is the greatest great work ever."

OPULENT

Lorenzo's clothes and tent speak of opulent Prosperity. A simple letter from Lorenzo to *The Oathwright* arrived with a gift (a bribe?) of wine and excellent sausages. But in his soul Lorenzo maybe more closely dedicated to Pride. His tent is decorated with pictures of himself and his great works. His Colossus of Temeschwar is, nominally, a statue of "The first butcher" but Lorenzo seems to identify closely with the smiling figure in the drawings of the statue he has commissioned in his hometown.

The great Pride of the notable family firms of The League leads

inevitably to competition. Prince Jonah of the Printer's Guild said, "There is a great rivalry between us and the Butchers." Lorenzo said, "I don't think Johan has even held a bourse seat or that the Printers Guild has ever built a great work."

VICTORY

He reserves real vim for discussion of another rival, Master of the Mint and chocolatier, Duke Ferrero. Lorenzo has hung a poem about himself and the Duke on his wall. It culminates in victory for Lorenzo, "...high stakes are won by Lorenzo; Bourseholder resources count more than the balls, Of Ferrero Di Tassato."

The Pride Lorenzo takes in his great projects and clever rhymes and rivalries is joined by his Prosperity and Ambition, he bears the heavy weight of Loyalty to the dead that lies on so many born in these terrible times.

BRITTA

"I was in The Butchers' Bank in Temeschwar when I heard the tragic news that Britta and so many of the Empire's finest had been lost. My father and the Grandmaster of The Bloody Butchers' Guild of Temeschwar, together with many friends in our guild, fell by her side that day. I was initially numb with grief. However, we rushed to



When complete, The Colossus of Temeshwar will dominate the bay



Anvil to do our part in leading the Empire, knowing we would need all our Courage and Loyalty in the dark days ahead. I immediately bought the position of Regario Dossier."

IMPERIAL

Lorenzo paid just 7 thrones in the dark days of Winter 376 for his first Imperial Seat. He bought his first Bourse Seat, the mithril seat the Fortress of Salt, in Winter 377 for 80 thrones. He was then briefly Master of the Mint, then Civilian Commissioner.

CRISIS

The Butchers' Guild is an economic powerhouse and a political player. Lorenzo sees the answer to the Senate funding crisis created by the crash in Bourse prices in his effort to build roads, "The Senate should invest more in infrastructure to improve trade and commerce, thus producing long-term income for the Empire that is not tied to the fluctuations of the market in bourse positions." In Lorenzo's mind there is just one Virtuous path for the whole society and that is primarily the path of money, not feats of arms. His great roads are a work of coin.

PHILOSOPHY

Though they will be useful for the military they are not fortifications or swords, he has not raised a great host of soldiers to fight the barbarians. And he is a radical supporter of this cash-is-queen philosophy, "I would recommend that the Senate require that all national Bourse positions are auctioned with the proceeds going into the Imperial budget for the Senate to disburse." National cus-

toms are antiquated, to be swept aside by diktat of the Senate and the Senate itself should bend to the will of the money managers.

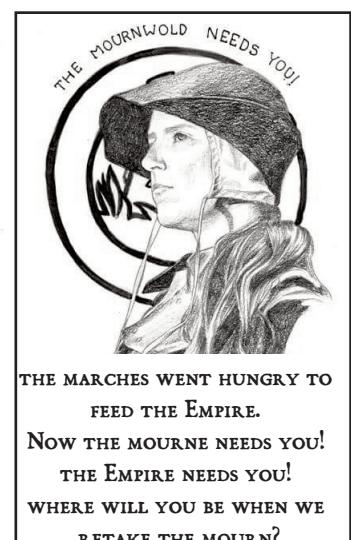
"The Empire pays substantial maintenance and upkeep costs from operating these bourse holdings." But not all nations need to be reshaped in this march towards a new regime, one is ok, "This is already the case for national positions within The League, however other nations give their bourse seats away without making any financial contribution."

AUCTION

Our conversation is cut short when Lorenzo realises he is late for an auction at the Bourse. Talking about his achievements and plans is such a happy subject for Lorenzo he has lost track of time. He arrives breathless, but in time to pay 165 thrones for the Singing Caves Mithril Mines, of course he is civilian commissioner, so cannot hold it but instead gives it to the playwright Falco, an eminent member of The Bloody Butchers' Guild of Temeschwar who serves on "the Bloody Table" as the group of guildmasters is called.

RISKY

Another victory for the bank but this time there is nuance: it is "a highly risky location of the mines near the Jotun massed armies. If, as seems likely, the caves are overrun next season, then we would not recover our costs on this occasion. However, by paying this much we are contributing to the Senate's coffers." Some citizens wield a sword, others win their battles at the Bourse.



ACADEMY ADVENTURES

"Train Hard and with Spirit"
By Sagua i'Ezmara

DAWN OF THE BOAR KING

A new Night Eternal called the Boar King has petitioned the students of the Academy to help him gather strength.

An attempt to create a new night regio in Dawn led to the Academy Cadets to be called in to help stop Boggarts stealing mana.

NIGHT

The effort to create the new interdimensional bridge to the Night Realm did not work but the intense magical rituals used in Dawn had such an effect on that realm that one of the Heralds of Night was able to catapult himself

into full-fledged Eternal status. The newly-titled Boar King then asked the Academy pupils to allow him to grow his personal power, whichever decision our young citizens make seems likely to cause problems within the Night Realm as power shifts to accommodate the newest ruler.

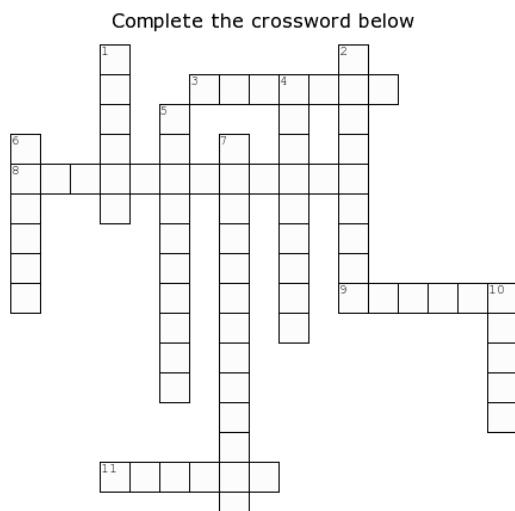
BOGGARTS

Boggarts are humanoid vermin that feed on mana crystals, the Academy trains its cadets in dealing with the tricky to help deal with regular infestations across the Empire's mana sites.

RITUALISTS IN TRAINING

While I was visiting the Academy I was also pleased to see a ritual being cast by the students and their teachers on a Brass Coast Corsair in order to bless their fleet.

It was a dramatic and visually stunning ritual and I was impressed by the skill of the casters. Perhaps the next time you are in search of a ritual caster it might be worth stopping by the Academy and asking if they can fit you into their busy schedule.

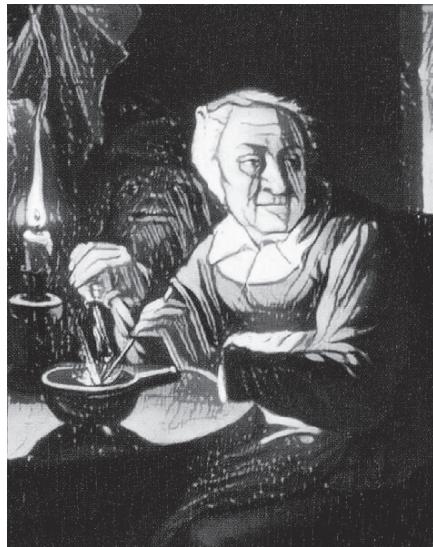


Across

- 3. Marcher Militia
- 8. Shared coin
- 9. A city state
- 11. False Virtue

Down

- 1. Guardians of Lore
- 2. A controversial army
- 4. Hated by Thule
- 5. Orc Trader
- 6. Rift
- 7. Grandmaster
- 10. Brasscoast drink



soms without being grievously injured or killed.

OPENING

The Wintermark boys' departure has left an opening for a new young apprentice, to read the recipes, find ingredients and help Wise Rangara with her potion-making. Who knows what they might learn during their year assisting the Eternal?

QUESTIONS

After an interview process involving the members of the Academy asking questions of Wise Rangara, another Wintermark child was selected. Is there perhaps something about the nation that appeals to the Winter Eternal? I am sure the best selection was made and wish the new apprentice to Grandmother Winter every luck in their studies. I hope to interview the lady in question at the Spring Festival and put more details with her permission in the next issue of *The Oathwright*.

WISE RANGARA'S NEW APPRENTICE

Ham of Wintermark has recently finished his time as an apprentice of Wise Rangara, a Winter Eternal with a soft spot for children.

He has returned with knowledge of how to handle and prepare the very dangerous Deathblossom — no one else in the Empire has successfully employed the Deathblos-

THE FORGE



BIRTHPLACE OF EMPIRE

OVER 350 YEARS AGO, IN THE FORGE OF ANVIL, THE FIRST EMPRESS SHELTERED FROM HER ENEMIES AND DECLARED HER AMBITION TO CREATE AN EMPIRE.

VISIT THE HISTORIC SITE IN THE ANVIL MARKETPLACE.

BARDS WELCOME FRIENDLY SERVICE ALE, MEAD, WALLS



Woodcuts from originals by Charlie Moss