

## Early Life

Haralamb Carcosa was born Laurentiu Nita to a peasant family in a rural North Kallandan community within South Kallanda. He had an unimpressive upbringing as a son of serfs, with likely very little formal education. Haralamb's family resided in Metsovo, a small inland farming village among other serfs tending to their lord's lands. He received some basic liturgical and magical education from the Church of Eva. He began assisting with labor for the land to which his family was bound early in his childhood.

Metsovo sits near the center of Kallanda, not far south of the cultural "border" between North and South Kallanda. Metsovo, as was common in North Kallanda, practiced a mystical form of the worship of Eva. North Kallandans generally believed in The Old Ways, a form of magic, and the people of Metsovo were no different. Haralamb Carcosa took to this worship early on, and took particular interest in studying The Old Ways.

It is rumored that in his adolescence, Haralamb was successful in practicing The Old Ways and performed a variety of minor miracles throughout the fief to which he was bound. Rumored miracles performed by Haralamb include the conjuring of trinkets and ingredients used in faith healing, the calling of insects, and the spontaneous lighting of small fires. Haralamb achieved minor fame and a small following of local believers within his fief and the nearby free towns.

## Exile from Metsovo and Kallanda

In early adulthood, Haralamb and his following came under the scrutiny of local South Kallandan officials lording over his fief. The South Kallandan attitude towards the worship of Eva and particularly The Old Ways was one of condemnation, with heavy prejudice focused towards North Kallandans. Upon a South Kallandan informant reportedly witnessing one of Haralamb's miracles, the officials sent for his arrest. Haralamb complied and was summarily convicted.

Haralamb was conducted to a penal camp near the Kallandan coast (where?), and punished with hard labor, experimentation, and physical abuse at the hands of South Kallandan officials. Experimentation on Haralamb included testing of the dietary effects of various minerals, now known to be toxic if ingested. He was eventually set free on the condition that he did not return to Metsovo. He was conducted to a nearby coastal town (which? TODO: get a name from Sam) and released as a free man with his meager belongings accrued at the camp.

He quickly rediscovered his faith among a small group of North Kallandan residents and began practicing The Old Ways in secret. Haralamb spent roughly a decade practicing his religion in secret, becoming known among followers within the town as a faith healer and a mystic. As his following grew, Rumors eventually began to circulate of an Eva-worshipping mystic cult within the town, with some suspecting Haralamb at its head.

Haralamb once again came under the scrutiny of local South Kallandan officials and law enforcement as the rumors expanded to various claims of his meddling in political affairs and obscene rituals and unconscionable acts. Haralamb and several of the most notable followers of Eva were rounded up on charges relating to the creation of cults and sentenced to exile from Kallanda in perpetuity. The arrested members were given a month to collect their belongings and arrange their own departure from Kallanda or face execution. Haralamb was able to obtain passage on the ship of a Kallandan sultan headed for business in Arulon. In order to do so, he needed to give up the vast majority of his meager wealth and serve as the ship's chaplain.

## Travels at Sea, Bargain for Salvation

The journey began with calm seas, but was nonetheless difficult for Haralamb. His total lack of experience, poor physical health due to harassment by Kallandan officials, and the continued prejudice of South Kallandan crew members on board led to Haralamb faring poorly at sea. The calmness of the journey lulled the crew into a false confidence, and though weather stayed calm, the ship was blown north of their intended course, straying near Auberin. Shortly after entering Auberinian waters, the weather turned to storms. Haralamb was largely confined to his bunk with sea sickness and fear of imminent death at sea. Each night, Haralamb prayed for salvation and safe travels at sea.

On the third night of the storm, he received an answer. He had hardly fallen asleep among the ship's jostling when he awoke to a silent, steady ship. It was lit only by moonlight. None of his fellow crew members were in their bunks. As Haralamb rose to his feet and began to step towards the exit, a mist seeped into the quarters, twisting around the ladder as it fell. Haralamb froze as it pooled around his feet. He watched as it then rose and took humanoid form. Beolacht stood before him. Beolacht consoled Haralamb and proposed a deal: Haralamb would have the safety he wanted now and the influence he had always wanted, at a cost.

The terms of their deal are as follows:

- Beolacht would do what he can to permit the ship safe travels.
- Beolacht would make Haralamb a real sultan, giving him the power and following he sought.
- Beolacht would act as Haralamb's patron, granting him further magical abilities to aid him in gaining influence.
- In return, Haralamb would pilot the ship to make landfall in Auberin rather than Arulon.
- In return, Haralamb would seek the ceremonial dagger from the court of Auberin and use it to chip the henge at Devil's Crown.
- In return, Haralamb would never again use his birth name (Laurentiu Nita), and forever go by the name "Haralamb Carcosa."

Haralamb agreed to the deal and awoke again to empty bunks, this time with sun streaming through the deck above him. As he rose to the deck, he found crew members' bodies strewn about. He searched the ship and entered the former Sultan's quarters. Inside, the Sultan's body was sat at his desk with a letter in front of him. The letter revealed that Beolacht's Madness had set upon the crew and that Haralamb was to be his heir. Haralamb could only imagine that the

Sultan's letter was the direct result of Beolacht's meddling. He did his best to clean the ship of bodies and blood, took over the Sultan's remaining belongings, and attempted to sail for Auberin.

## Entry into the Auberinian Court

Haralamb made landfall with his empty ship at a small Auberinian port. He was immediately questioned by the locals. He lied to them, saying \*his\* ship had been blown off course and how his crew had gone mad and attempted to rise against him. The locals were initially skeptical, but Haralamb found himself able to subtly charm them and to detect some of their innermost thoughts. This, paired with his perceived wealth and status, led him to easily make his way into the country unscathed. Haralamb immediately set to building influence, stating that he wished to gain an audience with the Court. (what are his supposed reasons?)