

Complete Lore Compilation

Up-to-date for game version 3.6.2

Compiled by POE Loremaster

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Ngamahu Valley
Ngamahu Ridge
Ngamahu Peak


Salem



Timeline of the History of Wraeclast

(Points with unknown dates may not be to scale)

???? BIC: Wraeclast is a gloomy waste inhabited by the Lightless

???? BIC: The sun has arrived and the Lightless have been driven underground; humans including the Vaal, Azmeri, Karui, Maraketh & Ezomytes inhabit Wraeclast; some humans ascend to godhood

???? BIC: Sin creates the Beast and the gods pass into slumber
[this was "aeons" ago per Sin and "a few thousand years" ago per Bestel]

Multiple cataclysms involving the Beast occur

ca. 900 BIC: Vaal embassadors make contact with the Azmeri

ca. 400 BIC: The reign of Queen Atziri and the Fall of the Vaal

1 IC: The Eternal Empire is founded

Duration of the Eternal Empire

ca. 334 IC: The reign of Emperor Romira and the Night of a Thousand Ribbons

1319-1336 IC: The reign of Emperor Chitus, the Purity Rebellion, and the Cataclysm begins

1599 IC: Player is exiled

PRIMEVAL WRAECLAST

THE LIGHTLESS

Before Solaris graced Wraeclast, a race of repulsive beings, fearful of light, populated the gloomy wastes. They were thought to be long dead, with few traces and no mentions in historical accounts. That is, until the earth itself was torn asunder.

For aeons, in the deepest, blackest reaches, they have festered and multiplied. Now, they're clawing their way back to the surface in unprecedented numbers; a hateful swarm of hungering horrors hellbent on reclaiming Wraeclast. ...

--https://www.pathofexile.com/forum/view-thread/2032331

We serve only the Night.

--Command of the Pit Riveted Gloves

Even the dead serve the Lightless.

--Bubonic Trail Murder Boots

THE PROTO-VAAL

THE CLAYSHAPER

There is nothing, flesh, spirit, or stone
Free from our hunger for dominion.

--Clayshaper Rock Breaker

Fleeing the destruction set upon her home, the Clayshaper sought safety in the clouds of ash above.

--Ahkeli's Mountain Ruby Ring

Where once had stood a village, lay naught but splinters. Some had once been her home. Some had once been her creations. Some had once been her family.

--Ahkeli's Meadow Ruby Ring

The river, once fertile and fresh, and flowing briskly to the sea, now stood, stained, at a standstill. Dammed by the coagulating dead.

--Ahkeli's Valley Ruby Ring

THE FIRST KING

The narrow path turned to rough rocks that led towards the sky. One last obstacle in a life-long journey to find a land they could call home.

--Uzaza's Mountain Sapphire Ring

Cold winds blasted what little grew on the icy surface. The gifts of the land lay hidden deeper, and only patience and persistence would free them.

--Uzaza's Meadow Sapphire Ring

Sheltered beneath thick ice, the river ferried fat fish towards the sea. But the First King knew the river's secret, and the fish were not the only ones who grew fat.

--Uzaza's Valley Sapphire Ring

AUL, THE LAST KING

He surveyed his lands, green and vital, watched with pride as his slaves quarried fine stone for his fortress, and thanked the heavens for his many blessings.

--Putembo's Mountain Topaz Ring

The fields were silent but for the plucking of fruits, the rustling of leaves, and the breaking of stone. No slave dared to speak or look the passing king in the eye. No one... except Aul.

--Putembo's Meadow Topaz Ring

With no stone for rebuilding, each storm took its toll on the village. Huts eventually collapsed, their occupants injured or dead. Bodies were left by the river, to appease the gods. But the dead would not remain there.

--Putembo's Valley Topaz Ring

It was not his fearlessness or ferocity, nor his tactical genius, it was his leadership that earned Aul, the Last King, his crown.

--Aul's Uprising Onyx Amulet

THE RISE AND FALL OF THE GODS

Though I am a god, I have not forgotten my humanity. I care for that which I once was. ...

--Sin, "Kitava"

There was a time before the Beast, bathed in the shadows of lost memory, when men and women like you could ascend. Through rareness of quality and the adoration of their people, these few could reach out into the quickening mists of immortality and grasp the power of godhood.

Mind you, transcendence is never easy. Like the pains of childbirth, it reeks of agony, tragedy and sacrifice. The sacrifice most often being of one's humanity. That is simply the way of it. Those of us who seek the immortal throne live long enough to see ourselves become truly monstrous.

--Sin, "The Origins of the Gods"

Ambition is the bane of mortality. It was through ambition that we gods transcended the thick mud and thin blood of our mundane birthrights. Ambition that drove us to sustain our divine selves through the subjugation of others. ...

--Sin, "Shavronne's Soul"

... Vanja: I learned all about the old gods. They were supposed to be our idols, beings of divinity that guided us through our mortal lives.

Petarus: But they aren't like that at all, are they love?

Vanja: Hardly. The gods're no better than we are! And nobody that is as bad as us should ever wield that much power! ...

--Petarus and Vanja, "The Old Gods"

TEMPLAR GODS

INNOCENCE & SIN

On that day two were born of their mother's womb. Innocence, with eyes of burning red. Sin, with eyes of clearest blue.

--Stained Glass Window I

Innocence lived with an honest and pure heart, never straying from his mother's word. Sin filled his heart with lies and indulgence, and deafened his ears to his mother's pleas.

--Stained Glass Window II

When the Mother of Two broke bread, she allowed Innocence to eat his fill, as reward for his virtuous nature. Sin was cast the scraps to remind him of his worthless ways.

--Stained Glass Window III

Yet the punishment only served to feed Sin's lusts. Before his brother's eyes, Sin stole a fish from the market and lied to the watchmen who caught him. Sin then beat his brother until a promise of silence was extracted.

--Stained Glass Window IV

Innocence could not keep a promise made in fear. He bore witness and testimony to the Mother of Two, and it was decided, between mother and son, that Sin was beyond rule and redemption. That only purification could cleanse his burgeoning corruption.

--Stained Glass Window V

The village gathered to watch Sin become ash, and breathed deeply of the smoke that poured from his screaming mouth. Sin filled their lungs, their minds and their hearts.

--Stained Glass Window VI

Innocence watched Sin take root in the bodies of men and women and children. He witnessed them turn on each other, first with words, then with fists. Friends and kin embraced in mortal struggles, their skin weaving with skin, flesh bonding with flesh, bone entwining with bone, until the village had become one writhing giant, forged of strife and hatred.

--Stained Glass Window VII

As this titan of Sin rose to its many feet, Innocence knew that the village was lost. With an anguished cry he committed it to flame. As town and titan burned, the sky turned dark with the ash of Sin. There, amongst the raging ruins of his home, Innocence swore an oath. No matter where the ashes of Sin fell, his purifying flames would rise to meet them.

--Stained Glass Window VIII

His brother would not atone, so he took his brother's life, and with it, his sins.

--The Innocent

...and so He said: 'Let only the good meet my gaze' and no eye met His. So He called down the cleansing flames and let black smoke sweep the Sinners away.

- Book of Innocence

--Eye of Innocence Citrine Amulet

KARUI GODS

Hinekora, my Mother of Death, is not the only god, exile. The Karui are watched over by many. ...

--Navali, "Karui Gods"

TUKOHAMA, FATHER OF WAR

The Karui were a peaceful culture of farmers and fishermen, before fate thrust the great Tukohama upon them. It was he who put the stone axes in their hands and the hunger for conquest in their bellies.

Farmers quenched their dry fields in blood. Fishermen emptied their holds of fish and filled them with land-greedy hordes.

Battle by battle, war by war, Tukohama carved the steps that would carry him up a mountain of severed heads, and into immortality. Tukohama's axe is called Anger, his spear is called Greed, and their victims are the minds and hearts of all Karui.

--Sin, "Tukohama"

... Tukohama provides us with weapons and knowledge of war, which lets us walk the path safely. ...

--Navali, "Karui Gods"

Weakness must be purged lest it poison the blood of all Karui.

- Prayer to Tukohama

--Eye of Conquest

Tukohama stood in the door, blocking the sunlight from Hikatomanga and his family. The Father of War's retribution was inevitable, for it is known - man cannot cheat the gods without consequence...

--Captured Soul of Tahsin, Warmaker

NGAMAHU, MOTHER OF FIRE

... Ngamahu lends us fire, which illuminates the path. ...

--Navali, "Karui Gods"

We do not command fire. Ngamahu lends it, and Hinekora returns it.

- Lavianga, Advisor to Kaom

--Ashcaller Quartz Wand

VALAKO, FATHER OF THE STORM

A gift from Valako, appointing Kiloava as the Herald of War. A title Kaom claimed when he ended Kiloava's bloodline.

--Valako's Sign Topaz Ring

TASALIO, FATHER OF WATER

A gift from Tasalio, God of Water, to the chieftain Rakiata. Kaom took Rakiata's head and hand so that his warriors' axes might rise and fall like the waves.

--Tasalio's Sign Sapphire Ring

HINEKORA, MOTHER OF DEATH

... Rising out of the darkness to claim the souls of our enemies like Hinekora in the stories my mother used to tell me. ...

--Lani, "Introduction" (Witch/Ranger/Duelist/Shadow/Scion version)

All are welcome in Hinekora's eternal home.

- Karui Proverb

--Death's Hand Karui Sceptre

TAWHOA, FATHER/SON OF THE FOREST

... Tawhoa gives us the trees and birds that line the path, so that we may enjoy beauty and peace. ...

--Navali, "Karui Gods"

... Tawhoa, Son of the Forest, asked each of the birds to sacrifice one of their kind for the feast. He gave these offerings to Arohongui who cooked them in a great fire-stone pit. ...

--Kitava's Hunger I

RAMAKO, FATHER OF LIGHT

... Striding out of the sunlight to lay waste to our enemies like Ramako in the stories my mother used to tell me. ...

--Lani, "Introduction" (Templar version)

It is good to feel your warmth again, Ramako, Father of Light.

--Marauder

AROHONGUI, DAUGHTER OF THE MOON

Arohongui, Daughter of the Moon, was preparing for a feast to celebrate Tukohama's return from his war on the First Ones of the Ezomytes. ...

--Kitava's Hunger I

KITAVA, FATHER OF CHAOS

Kitava is a primal deity, forged from the most fundamental of human desires. Hunger. The simple act of craving that which we cannot yet consume.

To defeat Kitava is to squeeze the very heart of human nature into stillness. ...

--Vilenta, "Kitava"

Tukohama, Tawhoa and Kitava went to the lake to fish. Tawhoa weaved a net to catch the fish, Tukohama built a fire to cook the fish, and Kitava swallowed the entire lake, fish and all, with a single gulp.

--Kitava's Thirst Zealot Helmet

Arohongui, Daughter of the Moon, was preparing for a feast to celebrate Tukohama's return from his war on the First Ones of the Ezomytes. Tawhoa, Son of the Forest, asked each of the birds to sacrifice one of their kind for the feast. He gave these offerings to Arohongui who cooked them in a great fire-stone pit.

Seeing all of those plump, cooking birds made Kitava very hungry, and he offered to watch them, to make sure they didn't burn while Arohongui rested during the heat of the day. Arohongui thanked Kitava for his kindness, but while she slept, Kitava ate the cooking birds, flesh, bones, gizzards and all.

Upon waking, Arohongui was furious that Kitava had lied to her, for saying that he would watch the birds when he actually intended to eat them all up. When Tukohama arrived home in his mighty canoe, Aohongui asked him to punish Kitava for his selfish gluttony.

Tukohama, our Father of War, agreed and pulled his sharpest tooth from his own mouth. He then asked Arohogui and Tawhoa to hold Kitava fast while he cut Kitava's face with the tooth. Two diagonal slashes that blinded Kitava and formed a bleeding X on his face.

From that day forth, Kitava would never be able to promise to watch that which he truly intended to consume.

Narrated by Slave Utula

Transcribed by Irwen of Theopolis

--Kitava's Hunger I

To replace the feast of birds that Kitava had greedily consumed, Tukohama, our Father of War, and Valako, Father of Storm, went fishing.

Although Kitava was blind, he could still cast his line and feel when a fish took his bait. So Tukohama and Valako took him with them on Tukohama's mighty canoe.

But while they fished, Kitava grew hungry and secretly ate all of their bait of grubs and worms. Disgusted and angry, Tukohama and Valako decided to use Kitava as bait instead. Valako used his own jawbone as a hook, impaled Kitava on it, and cast both into the sea.

Kitava sank to the bottom of the sea, but instead of the fish eating Kitava, it was Kitava who ate all of the fish that nibbled at him, flesh, scales, guts and all.

When Tukohama and Valako hauled a fat-bellied Kitava back up from the sea, they were even more furious, and knew that Kitava must be punished one final time.

Narrated by Slave Utula

Transcribed by Irwen of Theopolis

--Kitava's Hunger II

Tukohama, our Father of War, and Valako, Father of Storm, took Kitava to Hinekora, Mother of Death.

They asked her to kill the greedy Kitava, for surely their tribe would starve if Kitava continued to live among them. But Hinekora refused, for death would not teach Kitava the lesson he needed to learn.

Instead, Hinekora beat Kitava with a whip woven of her own hair. To Kitava, each strand was a searing lash, and so he wore thousands and thousands of blistering lashes across his back as Hinekora drove him relentlessly into the darkest corner of the underworld. There she left him to suffer, without water or food, for the rest of eternity.

And there Kitava remained, in the darkness of Hinekora's night-clad island for time beyond measure. There he suffered, waiting for the day that he could return to the world of light to slake his scorching thirst and satiate his ravening hunger.

Narrated by Slave Utula

Transcribed by Irwen of Theopolis

--Kitava's Hunger III

Hinekora bound Kitava to a rock that Kitava could not lift with all his might. Kitava vowed that when he broke free, he would devour every soul in Hinekora's domain.

--Kitava's Feast Void Axe

AZMERI GODS

A raging Solaris seared and contorted the orb's surface. A despairing Lunaris filled the scars with her tears. Yet Viridi remained, trapped within, forever more.

- Azmerian Creation Myth

--Prismatic Eclipse Twilight Blade

When Solaris closes her burning eye at the end of time, the world will perish in ice.

--Icetomb Latticed Ringmail

SOLARIS, ETERNAL SUN & LUNARIS, ETERNAL MOON

The sun is a devoted mother. She casts her golden blessings on the crops of the pious and makes barren the fields of heresy. Sunlight is belief. Sunlight is life.

- The Solar Verses

--Sun Orb

Moonlight is a wise mother. The moon which bathes us in soft, cooling light, does so with the intent of illuminating our paths. Moonlight is wisdom. Moonlight is life.

- The Lunar Verses

--Moon Orb

Powerful baubles them orbs are. As old as the Azmerians themselves, maybe even older. I've read all there is on them little beauties. The Sun Orb's said to contain all that has been, while its sister, the Moon Orb, holds all that will be. Past and future, packed up neat behind glass and thaumaturgy. Shudder to think what might happen if all that got out one day.

--Hargan, "The Orbs of Sun and Moon"

Once beneath a moonlit sky, Lunaris bathed her child in the ocean's tide. Though the waters were frigid with icy death, the boy was sick and couldn't be healthy until he was silent, clean and still...

--Captured Soul of Thraxia

And so it was, that Lunaris, in her compulsion to nurture and protect, killed her son beneath the light of a waning moon. She stood silent, in trial before her tribe, as her fiery sister fought in vain to defend her...

--Captured Soul of Sebbert, Crescent's Point

But Lunaris refused to admit any wrongdoing. She'd saved her child, had she not? He was safe now, buried beneath the dirt. Conviction gnarled around her fragile mind, and in her pride she rose to seat a deathless throne.

--Captured Soul of Lycius, Midnight's Howl

...two sisters who ruled the most populous and powerful of the ancient Azmerian tribes. Solaris, [sic] was thought to guide the sun across the sky with threads of shimmering gold, whilst Lunaris saw to the wax and wane of moon [sic] with a sickle of purest silver.

It was a peaceful partnership, until the trickster, Tangmazu, happened upon their domain. In turning sister against sister he saw to the massacre of thousands whilst concealing the source of their futile feud beyond all reckoning.

Feel no pity for the moon. She is a cold and distant fool, far less radiant than she would suppose.

--Sin, "Lunaris"

Self-loving Solaris. All the light in the world, yet blinded by her own pride.

Not once did she pause to question the truth of her sister's betrayal. Instead, she gloated over her sister's transgressions, proclaiming herself greater and more honourable than Lunaris could ever be.

I suppose one shouldn't be surprised when a sun deity takes the higher ground.

--Sin, "Solaris"

The sister gods of sun and moon, hand in hand did rule.
A guide for day and one for night, their people blessed in full.
Then sister sun, as daylight broke, awakened bound in cord.
Her flames were quenched, her life laid bare, her passion ripped and gored.
Who?" [sic] she cried, "Who torments me so? And tears me from the day?"

Her captor smiled, behind a mask they wore of bloodless grey.

- The Azmeri Verses, 1:20-23

--Solaris Statue I

For many days, the sun did hide, no hand to guide it home
And icy moon hung in the sky, a queen perched on her throne.
Beneath the earth, Solaris cried, her pain too great to bare.
As instruments of sharpened steel caused skin and flesh to tear.
In the rarest slice of rest and respite, faithful Kulric came.
He cut her bonds and dressed her wounds and freed her from her pain.
Rising from beneath the hills, Solaris sprang a trap.
Her sister snared in flaming nets, Solaris brought her back.
A vow she made, a promise struck, to repay her kin in kind.
A sharpened blade, and broken luck, she'd rend her sister blind.

- The Azmeri Verses, 2:10-14

--Solaris Statue II

In chains of flame and glowing ore.
A silver moon did strike the floor.
And a sister's eyes now forged in rage.
Silenced her cries with lock and cage.
Lunaris wept with betrayal's lash strike.
As her followers were slaughtered by sword and pike
Forever a prisoner, a moon buried in the earth.
Burned by a sun and a love felt since birth.

- The Azmeri Verses 3:1-4

--Lunaris Statue I

Her heart did languish and her mind did fray.
As she bore the pain of each terrible day.
Solaris sharpened tools for sure and true caress.
As she drew her confessions from her sister's pallid fairness.
Lunaris spoke not a word to her sister insane.
While her blood did flow and her hope did wane.
Until the stranger she came to set the moon free.
Kulina, the last follower, and the last faithful deed." [sic: random quotation mark]

- The Azmeri Verses 3:9-13

--Lunaris Statue II

Hid 'neath the ice and shimmering snow.
Lunaris healed from her wounds and pondered her woe.
Solaris was mad, it was frighteningly clear.
Yet what had so filled her heart with such fear?
At the urgings of Kulina, the moon rose for war.
She world [sic] might fear their Sun no more.
Lunaris would crest the star-filled night.
And the Sun, rightly chained, would temper her light.
To war she marched, with her creatures of the moon.
With a hunger for justice and her bright sister's doom.

- The Azmeri Verses 3:20-25

--Lunaris Statue III

Solaris upon the horizon stood and gazed upon the moon.
Any army of swords and shields and bows, a war to begin at noon.
Frustration of her sister's escape was killed and eaten up.
Replaced by the wrath and fear and grief that poured to fill her cup.
As Moon and rays marched on the Sun, Solaris eyed her prey.
"Sweet sister," she vowed with love and hate, "You shall never rule this day."

- The Azmeri Verses 5:19-21

--Solaris Statue III

Every decade, Lunaris devours Solaris
Each time, Solaris emerges from Lunaris, born anew.

--Eclipse Solaris Crystal Wand

Legend tells of a time when Solaris will burst forth from Lunaris, and night will be eternally banished.

--Corona Solaris Crystal Wand

The mud is cracked and dry. The fields now burn beneath the blistering sun. Even our children are dying in the streets! We've angered Solaris and so we pay tribute to appease her fiery heart...

--Captured Soul of Shadow of the Vaal

When Solaris is angered, there must always be sacrifice. Our women have taken to mourning, they drag themselves through ash and glass, not wanting to give up our youth to the all-consuming flame.

--Captured Soul of Jorus, Sky's Edge

To take from the sun is to invite her wrath, and we've more than warranted her curse. The granaries were vacant, so we lessened our tribute to the sun thinking it would save our children, but they will die now regardless.

--Captured Soul of Suncaller Asha

The Eternals revered Sun and Moon as the two eyes of their God. The right eye, Judging Solaris. The left eye, Merciful Lunaris. ...

--Grigor, "The Lunaris Temple"

... Solaris and Lunaris got front and center stage among them folks of the Eternal Empire.

Solaris was thought to be the light of leadership, guiding and enlightening each emperor that sat the throne. In practice, most of them emperors turned out to be a bit dim, but then history and theology have never quite seen eye to eye.

As for Lunaris, a goddess of the moon and earth, the mother of dreams and inspiration. Doesn't sound like a bad lady until you consider that dreams harbour nightmares and that inspiration is just one notion shy of insanity.

--Hargan, "Solaris and Lunaris"

PROSPERO, LORD OF THE UNDERWORLD

The god of lost souls and found treasures. Lord of the underworld and all its material bounty. Gems, precious metals, coal...a myriad of subterranean substances, exotic and volatile. If it has value and it can be unearthed with pick and shovel, it falls within Prospero's divine concerns. As do all those who trade in them.

Prospero was a god of our ancestors, the Azmerians. As we Eternals descended from those mountains, our gods descended with us.

To the mundane mind they are myths, nothing but stories. To those with a little more imagination, they can be so much more.

--Cadiro, "Prospero"

... Any miner worth his rocksalt knows Prospero. Might've even tried to make a deal with him for riches or life. Prospero's followers think the two are more or less interchangeable. If you believe in that stuff, I've got a flying rhoa to sell you.

--Niko the Mad, "Prospero"

... He was supposedly in charge of all things that came out of the earth. Miners left him tributes. Guess they were hoping Prospero would protect them from a cave-in. Or an explosion. Or toxic gases. ...

--Niko the Mad, "Prospero"

RYSLATHA, THE PUPPET MISTRESS

The Puppet Mistress was a revered matriarch who nurtured her tribe into greatness through love, peace and fecundity. That is, until her children were slaughtered by Tukohama's brave warriors.

Dissolution and desperation, they do troubling things to the spirit. And given enough time, what one believes, one becomes.

--Sin, "The Puppet Mistress"

A maggot that festers and writhes in the fetid mud of the wettest lands. Ryslatha, the white worm that corrupts the very earth while her heart yearns to replenish her slaughtered brood.

Hers was a prolific tribe once, fat with peace and fecund with love. Then Tukohama's fire swept across her sacred land and her children were butchered by the madness of war.

Now the immortal mother has one waking thought. She will also ensure that her children are never harmed again. How? By making everyone's children, her children.

--Sin, "Ryslatha"

Ryslatha was flushed with pride as she watched her mindless spawn mature. Sharpening their mandibles, her children slithered from the hive, eager to devour all the creatures that frequented the ancient woods.

--Captured Soul of Gorulis, Will-Thief

The Azmeri believed that, one day, this world of ours would collapse under the weight of Ryslatha's offspring. A frightening thought, and thankfully, a mistaken one.

--Sin, on Ryslatha's death

TSOAGOTH, THE BRINE KING

Old, salty Tsoagoth, pickled in a thick brine of ignominious carnality. Vanity was Tsoagoth's downfall, and I think he grew his shell just to shield himself from the shame of it all. ...

--Sin, "The Brine King"

When I first met Tsoagoth, he was a seafaring chieftain, the beloved leader of a prosperous and sprawling fisher tribe. It was the curse of legacy that made him into the blasphemous Brine King. An endless madness of propagation and disappointment. All in the vain hope of recreating himself.

Fishwife after fishwife he took, and every one of them spawned a monster. A truly noble king would have surrendered his kingdom to cleaner blood. Alas, although Tsoagoth had many fine qualities, generosity was not one of them.

--Sin, "Tsoagoth"

Though his mind decayed with each passing wave, the Brine King stood steadfast in his hatred, and wore it like a shell, protecting himself from his failure to sire a worthy heir.

--Captured Soul of The Forgotten Soldier

You won't find a sailor that doesn't whisper a quiet prayer to the Brine King before casting off. In fact, under the maddening radiance of a full moon, the more superstitious captains would drown some poor slave or failed mutineer... just to keep old Tsoagoth happy.

No, that wasn't a sneeze. That's the fish god's old Azmerian name. It's considered foul luck to speak it on board a ship. A keel-hauling offense.

--Bestel, "The Brine King"

Every sell-dwelling lad or lass knows of Tsoatha. They call it a city, but it were more of a slaughterhouse than anything else.

Old Salty himself ruled over the place, treating its citizens as morsels from his own personal pantry. Those who weren't devoured outright were picked to try continue his family line - they became fish wives, like that pretty young Nessa near ended up being.

Well, the Brine King, as you know was forced into a slumber 'neath the ocean, and the city was said to have joined him there as well. A few folk managed to flee from the collapsing coral shards, start new lives for themselves, but I'll be reckoning they left all their valuables behind.

--Lilly Roth, "Tsoatha"

The fish-wives of Tsoatha rejoiced loudly as the Brine King descended into the great abyss, making merry while his blasphemous offspring slithered 'neath the icy waters...

--Captured Soul of Puruna, the Challenger

Slumbering in the breach between worlds, the Brine King dreamt of a day he would rise, in [sic] triumph from the shivering depths and take back the Kingdom he once so ruthlessly culled.

--Captured Soul of Nassar, Lion of the Seas

T'gnagn iia y r'ngusla ph'tu Tsoatha nga mekghul'an.

- Indecipherable verse

--The Teardrop

EZOMYTE GODS (THE FIRST ONES)

The First Ones are the forever ones. There is no dust of the hourglass in their blood. No fissures of weariness in their faces. To drink of their blood is to drink of time itself.

- The Wolven King

--Fangjaw Talisman

The First Ones thundered over Ezomyr upon hooves of grey and black. The people felt their stamping rage and cowered as the fury rained down.

- The Wolven King

--Lone Antler Talisman

Just as the rat cowers before the dog and the dog cowers before Man, so too should we cower before the First Ones and pray we never learn of what comes next.

--Natural Hierarchy Rotfeather Talisman

For too long we have crawled in darkness, scavenging through rotten scraps. The First Ones teach us to scavenge until we can hunt, and then never crawl again.

- The Wolven King

--Writhing Talisman

The First Ones stalk with us upon this lifelong hunt, and cast their contempt upon those that would make us their prey.

- The Wolven King

--Black Maw Talisman

The First Ones hold us between two sharpened blades. That should we stray too far from the path, we find ourselves severed.

- The Wolven King

--Mandible Talisman

The world of the First Ones is harsh;
We struggle on our bellies to survive.
But that which imprisons us also changes us
And soon we will emerge anew.

- The Wolven King

--Chrysalis Talisman

The first ones [sic] live where they can, where they must. They embrace the frost, the storm, the drought. Waxing and waning, breaking and mending, living with time and happenstance, as must we.

- The Wolven King

--Avian Twins Talisman

It's said to be noble to stand one's ground. To soak the earth in stalwart blood. While the First Ones chose to laugh and run and caper with untamed glee.

- The Wolven King

--Wereclaw Talisman

The fire of the hearth is a docile dog, leashed and tamed. The fire of the First Ones is a ravening wolf, wild and free.

- The Wolven King

--Ashscale Talisman

We breed thoughts of single mind, fashion tools of single purpose. While the First Ones bring to bear anything that the wildlands provide.

- The Wolven King

--Three Hands Talisman

From flesh and ferocity, the First Ones roamed through the realm of Spirit, and into the darkness beyond.

- The Wolven King

--Splitnewt Talisman

They were the first survivors. The First Ones showed my people that to win, you must outlast. They left this world long ago to seek other survivors, but they will return. And when they do, I will join them in the Great Grove. ...

--Einhar Frey, "The First Ones"

... When the end arrives, we must be ready. The First Ones will return. They will bring the survivors with them to the Great Grove. We must prove we are worthy. We must sacrifice the beasts we find at the Blood Altar.

Feed the altar the blood of these beasts, and the First Ones will bless us. And, perhaps, reveal to us their secrets.

--Einhar Frey, "The Blood Altar"

CRAICEANN, FIRST OF THE DEEP

The First of the Deep was the First of All. It was He who conquered the waves, who stood guard as land rose from sea.

--Craiceann's Carapace Golden Plate

When the land rose above the sea, The First of the Deep did not move. When the sky turned to fire, The First of the Deep did not perish. We must remember our place, and play to our strengths.

--Craiceann's Tracks Goliath Greaves

When the rains come, we cower beneath shelter. The First of the Deep teaches us that we should seek no shelter but ourselves.

--Craiceann's Chitin Magistrate Crown

The stone that stays in the waves soon crumbles to sand. The First of the Deep teaches us to watch the tides and choose our moments to move wisely.

--Craiceann's Pincers Titan Gauntlets

FARRUL, FIRST OF THE PLAINS

The First of the Plains was the First of the Hunt. It was she who showed us that there is honour in waiting in the shadows and picking your moment.

--Farrul's Fur Triumphant Lamellar

A secret is a weapon your enemies do not have. When the First of the Plains hunted, she moved in silence and acted quickly. To do otherwise is to arm your foes.

--Farrul's Chase Slink Boots

It is a fool who strikes the turtle's shell. The First of the Plains teaches us to exploit weaknesses, and where no weakness can be found, to create one.

--Farrul's Bite Harlequin Mask

A hungry beast wastes no energy. Every strike, no matter how small, must work towards victory. The First of the Plains teaches us that the largest prey can still be whittled away.

--Farrul's Pounce Hydrascale Gauntlets

THE GREATWOLF

The largest beasts cannot be overpowered. The Greatwolf teaches us to use guile, not strength, to probe for the soft flesh and strike deep.

--The Wolf

FENUMUS, FIRST OF THE NIGHT

The First of the Night was the first explorer. It was she who first braved night's terrors and found comfort in silence and solace.

--Fenumus' Shroud Widowsilk Robe

When the fires spilled out of the mountain, The First of the Night wove a net and was carried into the night on its hot winds. Though we cannot live without danger, we can learn to live with it.

--Fenumus' Spinnerets Assassin's Boots

A hunter uses everything at their disposal. The First of the Night did not hold back her venom. She used it to weaken her enemies, and used her enemies to strengthen her many children.

--Fenumus' Toxins Necromancer Circlet

A burden shared is a burden made lighter. The First of the Night teaches us that our burdens are not just ours to bear, but ours to use against oppressors.

--Fenumus' Weave Carnal Mitts

SAQAWAL, FIRST OF THE SKY

The First of the Sky was the Last of the First. It was he who showed us that our limits are self-imposed, that what we take for law may just be an illusion.

--Saqawal's Nest Blood Raiment

When the inferno spread across the land, it was the First of the Sky who singed his feathers as he brought the flames to a standstill.

--Saqawal's Winds Soldier Gloves

Though we are individual, we share the same plight. The First of the Sky teaches us that unity and selflessness, not division and greed, is what will carry us upwards.

--Saqawal's Flock Silken Hood

A bird, too heavily laden, cannot take flight. The First of the Sky teaches us to put aside our possessions so that we may live more freely.

--Saqawal's Talons Hydrascale Boots

MARAKETH GODS

Petarus: Have you ever heard much of the Maraketh legends?

Vanja: A truly unique cosmology of strange creatures, pagan gods and powerful treasures. ...

--Petarus and Vanja, "The Maraketh Calendar"

GARUKHAN, QUEEN OF THE WIND

Garukhan sought madness and knowledge amongst the billowing clouds of a blackened sky. A vulture of pride, she would not be refused, and so the stratosphere divulged unto her eldritch secrets of its tumultuous past.

--Storm Blade

A traveler on the winds, Garukhan pridefully plundered the sky for its secrets. To her mind, wisdom could be found in the eye of a hurricane.

Please understand that Garukhan is not an evil being. She was once my friend and companion. Her beauty astonished me as her aspirations inspired me. Yet I must forgo my sentiments for the sake of humankind.

Like winds erode the sandstone, Garukhan has been warped by the same powers she enslaved. This is not my goddess that you shall slay. And if I continue to say it, I might very well come to believe it.

--Sin, "Garukhan"

I would offer prayers up to the goddess of the breeze as a child, and listen to her voice sing and whisper as she danced through my family's windchimes. She was my favourite, but in light of recent time, I can only believe that some immortal madness has laid waste to her mind.

--Irasha, "Garukhan"

... Garukhan was... complicated, but she was also stubborn and never would have thought to change her ways.

...she was vain beyond comparison. It was her ambition that corrupted her, despite all my warning words. ...

--Sin, "Garukhan"

I weep for my poor Garukhan. Together we experienced the loftiest moments that this world could offer.

Alas, it was my heavy heart that she could no longer bear. I knew her pride would one day be the storm that would ravage my precious humanity. In truth, it was for Garukhan that I sowed the Dark Ember within the depths of Highgate.

When love cannot be slain, it must be laid down to sleep.

--Sin, "Queen of the Winds"

Petarus: You must've encountered men and women like us before...

Vanja: Relic hunters! ... And we need your help locating a particularly rare item. ... It's an ancient sword, belonging to the Maraketh goddess Garukhan!

Petarus: The Storm Blade some call it. A weapon carved from crystal, capable of capturing even the most powerful of storms within its rigid edge.

Vanja: The goddess lost it, somewhere in the eastern desert during her ancient battle against the necromancer Saresh and his undead horde. ...

--Petarus and Vanja, "The Storm Blade"

SHAKARI, QUEEN OF THE SANDS

It is not something I deign to speak of often, but this goddess, this creature, she was once the flesh of my flesh, blood of my blood. I rose into the clouds and fell into the arms of their queen, the beautiful Garukhan.

Now if you think that mortal marriages are difficult to navigate, try an immortal one. We parted ways, yet not before my young Queen of the Sands was born into this world of filth and horror. ...

--Sin, "Queen of the Sands"

A mother's keen heart shall bleed into the dreams of her daughter. Once a beauty who held captive the hearts of men and women alike, Shakari's splendour decayed into lust...for the power possessed by her skyborn mother.

My daughter once sought out such power within the great sands of this desert. Ever determined, she found it, and it made of her the twisted creature...

Driven by agony and shame, she built an army out here in these sweltering lands and would have conquered the very sky had not the Beast soothed her into peaceful oblivion. A babe once more sleeping in her cradle.

--Sin, "Shakari"

VAAL GODS

RALAKESH, MASTER OF A MILLION FACES

Yes, Ralakesh, the god of many faces. I read about this god when I looked after the museum in Theopolis. It's said he was obsessed with governance, in particular, the control of humanity through our base, animal instincts. He ruled over the citizens of one unfortunate Vaal city. Alas, the name escapes me.

Yet I do recall that his experiments brought his subjects to the brink of extinction and that he was forced to enslave many a primitive Azmerian of the time so as to repopulate his domain. ...

--Eramir, "Ralakesh"

... Ralakesh was renowned for his penchant for subjugation and control. ...

--Eramir, "Greust"

... Hmmm...Ralakesh. He's ruthless and cruel, with cunning unfathomable. Yet he bears one defining weakness. A fear he forged into chains of his own keeping. His is the terror of grasping too much and having it all slip through his fingers. It makes him irrational, and therefore vulnerable.

--Sin, "Ralakesh"

Ralakesh, the illustrious "Master of a Million Faces". I call him the God of Hide and Seek.

While other deities waged wars, spread their seed, and laid waste to whole empires, Ralakesh perched on his throne in a dark palace of ebony, choked with incense, blinded by obedience and deafened by a senseless cacophony of brass gongs.

Thankfully, he never had the courage to peek over the high walls he'd built, else the world might have been in trouble.

--Sin, "The Master of a Million Faces"

When you try to control everything, you ultimately control nothing. Ralakesh has never quite been able to grasp that concept.

--Sin, on Ralakesh's death

Lock the gates and build the walls! came [sic] the rallying cry, "Let those of Ralakesh take care of those of Ralakesh!"

- The God Behind The Wall

--Captured Soul of Drek, Apex Hunter

YUGUL, REFLECTION OF TERROR

Vaal scholars seemed compelled to answer all manner of strange and troubling questions. Yugul was one such scholar. Whilst plumbing the depths of humanity, he came to believe that there was no truer expression of humanity than pure terror.

He would induce terror in children and then capture their reactions within eldritch mirrors, devices of his own creation that could petrify fear for extended study.

Through his gallery of reflected terror, Yugul came to understand human nature so well that he was able to manipulate his way into the Vaal halls of leadership, and eventually grew so feared and renowned that he ascended into godhood.

--Sin, "Yugul"

I heard tell of an ancient Vaal scholar who bore the name 'Yugul'. He'd conduct these grisly experiments in pursuit of some piece of nasty wisdom tucked into the nether regions of human terror. Practiced on young kiddies no less, scaring the living shite out of Vaal toddlers and then nabbing their fear within a hall of thaumaturgical mirrors.

Could be the whole story's a crock, and here's where it gets even hazier. Seems old Yugul found something in that fear, enough to scare a whole swag of Vaal into worshipping him.

Honestly, some people will worship anything for a bit of spiritual peace of mind.

--Hargan, "Yugul"

In nature, there are many feelings exclusive only to man. But terror is not one. Terror flourishes in our world, transcending all things. It is the bedrock on which our great cosmos is formed. I am Yugul and I deign to understand this mystery, to explore its depths and unlock its secrets...

--Captured Soul of Varhesh, Shimmering Aberration

So many have scrutinised the inner workings of the heart, written entire books on sadness, love and hate. Yet terror is the truest, purest of all human emotions. Terror is what we have once our earthly facades are stripped away, once we are naked, vulnerable savages in a vast and uncaring wilderness.

Civilisation is a costume, worn to conceal our truest natures. Oh, that we could all become terrified children once again! That we could understand in an instant that everything is hopeless, everything is death. There is no next step, no reprieve. Life is terror and terror is life.

- Forbidden Texts of Yugul

--Primitive Carving II

Yugul was a cautionary tale. The only way to truly understand fear is to become it.

--Sin, on Yugul's death

A temptress and a predator. Vaal legends say she crawled up from the blackest of pits during the creation of the world.

No, her beginnings were far more mundane, a mortal harlot whose endless lust for loin and lecherous delight saw her transformed into the very image of her dark desires.

'The Spinner of Shadows' they once called her. She sees herself as a regular goddess of love, and has the romantically forged temple to prove it.

That's where you'll find her. Yet there's little romance to the lady herself. At least, I doubt the corpses that now embrace her carapace would think so.

--Sin, "Arakaali"

Answering the call of a royal invitation, I visited the Spinner of Shadows as an emissary for a small and fragile alliance of gods. Mostly weak deities huddling together in terror of being consumed by their greaters. At this time, Queen Arakaali ruled an empire, and so invited me to gaze upon her mighty works with appropriate wonder.

If I'd looked past this pretense, I may have chanced to see her hidden desire to have me share her bed. For years I lay trapped in her webbed sheets. Some days she enjoyed my prowess, other days we enjoyed each other.

Yet, this illusion of love and leisure simply veiled the morbid reality that I was not free to leave. I languished under her bewitching spell until the day the spider was betrayed by her own flies, and sealed within that temple of her own fevered making.

--Sin, "The Spinner of Shadows"

From what I can recall, Arakaali was a Vaal fertility goddess, a rather unsettling union of sexuality and mortality. Whilst usually presenting herself as a large arachnid, Arakaali would often assume human form, a ruse intended to lure mortals into the act of copulation. The entries were vague about the gender of her prey.

After satiating her carnal desires, she would then quench her divine thirst, draining her erstwhile lover of all bodily fluid. Her acolytes would then collect the dessicated [sic] husk and give it a decorative placement in Arakaali's unholy temple. ...

--Eramir, "Arakaali"

There is a story held by the ancient Vaal, in which the beautiful seductress Arakaali strode through towns, stealing the hearts of men, and turning to ash their lovers' desires.

- "Legends of the Vaal" by Eramir, Scholar at Theopolis

--Captured Soul of Arachnoxia

When the cold was at its strongest, Arakaali came, and like a farmer leading cattle to the slaughter, she drove her victims into the outer darkness.

- "Legends of the Vaal" by Eramir, Scholar at Theopolis

--Captured Soul of Shock and Horror

Records of Arakaali's violent reign suggest she kept her citizens sedated with 'juices of lust' and venoms of the spider. Perhaps her guise of seductress was in fact her way of farming those 'juices'.

- "Legends of the Vaal" by Eramir, Scholar at Theopolis

--Captured Soul of Armala, the Widow

Many an artist of Azmerian descent has engaged in the sad worship of that sultry arachnid...

--Sin, "Arakaali"

Our great goddess, we worship her, and in so doing, we may become her. Healer of Hearts, Arakaali, with the juices of lust and venoms of the spider, she brought many back from the brink of death. Only she was worthy to rule. The Porcelain Queen, Gruthkul, disgraced my ancestors, drained them with drought, starved them with famine, blighted them with plague. It was with justice and truth that my ancestors shattered the Porcelain Queen's reign, and brought our Messiah to power.

The Widow

--Shrine to Arakaali I

Our Temple of Decay was built so that we, her chosen, might sustain our great goddess in her pursuit of the secrets that lust and life would keep from us. We, her followers, brought all assortments of venomous creatures and laid them at her feet, yet it was the spider she most coveted, and as the divine energies wove their destinies about her body, our Queen, Arakaali, was reborn. Arakaali the Miracle, Arakaali the mighty Arachnophage, a beauteous creature of immortal power and unfathomable wisdom.

The Widow

--Shrine to Arakaali II

As our Queen's body was reborn, so too was her mind. Awash with visions of future and past, she burst from the deluge, gasping with terror. She had seen her empire in ruins, her people ground into the dust. And atop her throne sat the children of Gruthkul, their long white hair fluttering in the winds of victory, their laughter as saw-blades in Arakaali's heart.

Yet as the vision poisoned her dreams, Arakaali poisoned the vision. Once, twice, thrice, the children of Gruthkul fell, crying their crimson tears. And how their mother grieved.

The Widow

--Shrine to Arakaali III

As her fury grew to blot out the sun, the mother's grief grew to eclipse the land. Gruthkul and her horde stampeded across the realms of Arakaali, crushing her subjects, blood and bone, into the trembling earth. With her empire on the brink of ruination, our Queen, our Spinner of Shadows, hatched a desperate plan. Feigning injury and defeat, Arakaali lured Gruthkul into the heart of a great cavern. There she entwined her enemy in unyielding silk and then, with prodigious bravery and strength, brought the very stones tumbling down upon Gruthkul's antlered head.

The Widow

--Shrine to Arakaali IV

Even as our courageous Arakaali forged the foundations of a new empire within the ruination of the old, a fresh threat was born in the shadow of the mountains. A creature so devoid of divinity, so beyond humanity, that it drew the very essence from Arakaali as the spider imbibes the life of the trapped moth. Our Queen's medicines had once sustained us. Now famine and plague ravaged what little remained of our lands.

As the Beast of the Mountains grew, our Arakaali waned until, helpless as a child, she lost even the faith of her most devoted, the Temple of Decay. I feel the shame for my ancestors as the spider's venom burns in my belly. When our Queen needed them most, her people betrayed her, bound her in silk and left her to languish in the bowels of a pyramid, just as Arakaali had done to Gruthkul so many years before. ...

The Widow

--Shrine to Arakaali V

GRUTHKUL, MOTHER OF DESPAIR

... Gruthkul the Despairing sulks and schemes.

The Vaal laid waste to her kingdom and placed her slaughtered children at her feet. Grief enveloped Gruthkul, transformed her, flooded her mind with a singular thought. To share her suffering with those who had murdered her daughters.

... There is no fury like a mother bereaved.

--Sin, "Gruthkul"

... After the deaths of her children, Queen Gruthkul fled north, eventually finding respite amongst the refugee [sic] of her own shattered realm. Yet these loyalists saw their own queen as a weapon, a tool for vengeance. They nurtured her pain, transfiguring sorrow into hatred, hatred into violence. Like a grizzled bear, Gruthkul descended into animalism and ferocity. Yet her caretakers foolishly underestimated the agony their bereaved queen harboured in her heart. Like a bear caught in a trap, Gruthkul wrenched free of her human loyalties and slew her followers to the last woman and child. It was through devastation Gruthkul ascended to divinity. ...

--Eramir, "Gruthkul"

I wonder if Gruthkul would still grieve for her children if she knew the truth.

The Spinner of Shadows had no aspirations until Gruthkul's daughters plotted against her. They saw her power over the people, her miraculous potions, her intoxicating lusts.

They feared Arakaali, thought she might threaten their legacy. Yet that's the curious thing about spiders. They only leave their web when you force them to.

--Sin, "The Mother of Despair"

The earth shakes, moon eclipses black. Graveyards quake, crops turn to ash, as the grieving mother weeps. Oceans boil and wind ravages home. We feel famine inside our bones, as the grieving mother, Gruthkul weeps.

--Captured Soul of Erebix, Light's Bane

ABBERATH, THE CLOVEN ONE

... Abberath, a deranged old goat with a thirst for human souls ...

--Sin, "The Cloven One"

A renowned alchemist, eroded by his lust for distilled spirits - and not the alcoholic kind. Abberath the Scholar King, dancing upon a stage of chemicals and fire.

He used his knowledge to burn away the flesh so as to liquidate the life force within, a libation he consumed with both frequency and alacrity.

It started with animals, goats specifically, and thus his own cruelty became his curse. The Scholar King became the Cloven One, Quaffer of Souls. Some say he turned to the dram of Man in order to cure himself. I believe his thirst simply grew with his burgeoning immortality.

And perhaps he still retained some of his scholarly nature, for he seemed fair determined to share his hard won wisdom. He took himself a princess, a lovely thing from a local tribe, and nine months later she gave birth to something rather unlovely.

The Faun, as wild and wicked as the shaggy god himself. Schooled in his father's ways, the Faun would carry off many more virgins in his time, and thus, the race of goatmen found their footing.

--Sin, "Abberath"

The goat king knew not of war, of the lands and laws he trampled. The goat king knew only joy at turning life into ash.

--Abberath's Hooves Goathide Boots

Soul prepared, Soul be mine. O' Abberath, goat lord of the fallen race, rise up and take this, my offering of delectable essence.

As it is known, with the consumption of souls, comes the ecstasy of true enlightenment. For the cloven ones shall subjugate every creature on this earth, and as such, all creatures need be consumed.

--Primitive Carving I

When the demon Goat plays his flute,
And cloven hooves clip-clop your path,
Pray the gods will hold you mute,
And bless the fire on your hearth.

--Captured Soul of Mephod, the Earth Scorcher

THE GODDESS OF JUSTICE

The Just Goddess presides over us all. ...

--Bronze Plaque

In the court of the Goddess, every man and woman is deemed worthy of redemption. ...

--Bronze Monograph I

... Within these walls, the Lady of Justice doth preside. She shall weigh your Mind in one hand, your Heart in the other. Should she find you wanting, death shall be your sentence. Should she find you worthy, you will be given the loyalty and love of an empire. ...

--Izaro, on The Aspirants' Plaza

THE MOLTEN ONE

Our home was swallowed beneath the great mountain for our complacency. Now we must prove our value to the Molten One by sating his hunger for life.

--Redblade Tramplers Ancient Greaves

Prayers? I don't need the Molten God's help to smite you.

--Korell Goya, to Guff Grenn

How many did you fruitlessly feed to your molten god, Redblade? ...

--Catarina, to Korell Goya on his death

THE SPIRIT

In all things living, the light burns bright.

A passionate fire that consumes the heart.

The Spirit, it radiates not from above.

It is the warmth that draws you ever inward.

Where rest the truest colours of life.

Gold of the organ. Green of the throat. Red of the vein.

The myriad wet rainbow of the Spirit's domain.

--Fireflies

THE BEAST: DRIVING THE GODS INTO SLUMBER

I shall put this simply, for in truth, everything comes down to the simple act of planting a seed in the ground. The gods are rising because you slew the one creature that prevented them from doing so. Your name for it is "The Beast."

It was I who planted the seed in the rich soil beneath Highgate, who nurtured it, who watched it bloom into maturity, even as I succumbed to its mollifying powers. We gods, we were driven into slumbering darkness, to dream away eternity whilst the gentle Beast watched over us. ...

--Sin, "The Rise of the Gods"

The Ember is a seed... the black core of the Beast's heart. It is the pure, undiluted essence of corruption. ... all of [the Beast's] power, the stupefying effect it had on us gods, it all dwells within this Dark Ember. ...

--Sin, "The Dark Ember"

The Beast was never a cruel master. It didn't want to destroy, to corrupt, to terrorise. It simply existed to exist. I made it that way.

Unfortunately, in neglecting to provide it with ambition, I made it vulnerable to the ambitions of others. Queen Atziri and Doryani. Emperor Chitus and Malachai. Others even before them.

I created a Beast that would free humanity from the tyranny of the gods. Yet all I really did was provide the perfect tool with which humanity could tyrannise itself.

--Sin, "The Beast"

... My Beast was born to be a thing of beauty. A crowning jewel to rest upon humanity's head. I... I wanted to give your kind a chance for peace, a chance to play atop the great stage. No longer pawns to a pantheon of petty, slavering gods...

It was only ever defending itself, the fault lies within the twisted hearts of those who would betray their own humanity.

Not even I could anticipate the cataclysms my pet wrought on Wraeclast. Both Vaal and Eternal. Ruins in the pages of history. And the others... trailing back across the aeons.

There is blood on my hands, exile, the innocent blood of millions, and try as I might, the stains just won't wash off.

--Sin, "Cataclysm"

THE NATURE OF THE BEAST

... Twisting tunnels of flesh. A blinking cathedral of a thousand eyes. History itself pierced and remade by corruption.

The outpourings of the Beast's consciousness brings [sic] life to nightmares beyond imagination. ... Within its belly there is no 'real'. ...

--https://www.pathofexile.com/theawakening/actfour

... A dark God of ancient sacrifice, a muse to the twisted and vile...the Beast, the Nightmare, the Darkness...names given to it by mortals that think with slugs bound in shells of bone.

Yet, one man knew the Beast's true name, understood its impenetrable nature.

Malachai.

--Tasuni, "The Beast"

...The Beast is not Death...

--Tasuni, "Malachai"

... The Beast is the source of all thaumaturgy, the one power in this world that transforms 'what is real' into 'what is imagined.' ...

--Piety, "Malachai"

... If the Beast were in any way human, we could think of the Black Core as the Beast's heart. I'm not even going to try to explain to you what it really is. ...

--Piety

... Spirals can often be found on the land and creatures the Beast influences. ...

--http://www.pathofexile.com/forum/view-thread/1981149

THE VAAL

From the flesh of the gods, Xibaqua was born. From the carnage of Xibaqua, we were born. It is our duty to return to the gods what was once theirs.

--Mask of the Stitched Demon Magistrate Crown

Xibaqua's treachery was met with divine fury. One by one, the gods reclaimed their flesh, until all that remained was a droplet of pure light: The first Vaal.

--Demon Stitcher Satin Gloves

The oldest known culture on Wraeclast. The Vaal were the first known users of the gems, and their ruins are scattered across the land. ...

--Help Panel glossary, "Vaal"

...Vaal...a culture I've seen mentioned here and there in some of the most antique of texts.

It is the Vaal who began the use of Virtue Gems, well before our imperial ancestors. Little else is known about them. ...

--Eramir, "Ancient Gateway"

"The Vaal were even more steeped in gem culture than our Emperor and his 'Gemlings.' It's an obsession as old as civilization itself."

- Icius Perandus

--Golden Page I

Vaal Skill Gems

The Vaal civilization may have existed thousands of years ago, but it had its own form of Skill Gems. Brutally powerful and fueled by the sacrifice of foes...

--https://www.pathofexile.com/forum/view-thread/807869

The Vaal used human sacrifice to power their empire. They, too, eventually sought means to make their machines run more efficiently.

--Sacrificial Harvest Viridian Jewel

Vaal bloodpriests were among the earliest intellectuals on record. It was they who found that a newly freed soul would desperately cling to any other source of life.

--Soul Tether Cloth Belt

So great was the thaumaturgy of a bloodpriest's mark, that sacrifices soon welcomed their death.

--Mark of Submission Unset Ring

For the Vaal, the relationship between slave and master was as intimate and volatile as that of lovers.

--String of Servitude Heavy Belt

Though the Vaal revered peace, it would have been suicide for any culture to rouse them to war.

- Icius Perandus, Scholar to the Empire

--Rebuke of the Vaal Vaal Blade

For a relatively peaceful empire they sure made a lot of weapons.

--Alva Valai, on the Hall of Champions

Through war we found peace. Through death we found advancement. Our ancestors did not know where their actions would take them. Are we any better?

--Story of the Vaal Variscite Blade

We pack up our camp just before sunrise and journey towards the capital, Azala Vaal. We hear the crowd before we see them. Word of our victory spread quickly, and even the Queen has come to meet us.

My family has come to watch the ceremony. As I lay on the stone altar, I hear them chanting my name. It's the last thing I hear before the Queen's dagger is plunged into my chest.

--Unknown, River Crossing Memory

THE REIGN OF QUEEN TETZLAPOKAL

While they were highly advanced in their technology, the Vaal were rather brutish in their social practices. I find it rather baffling to think of the Vaal as a people who believed in science and progress and yet constructed elaborate sacrificial altars in the centers of their cities.

Judging by the construction of this particular ruin, I would say that the city rose to prominence during the reign of Queen Tetzlapokal who some scholars refer to as a 'waif of disturbing proclivities'. She was a devotee of Arakaali and according to the literature, had a deep fascination with mortality and the inert human form.

The histories tell how the queen would request her subjects to deposit the bodies of their deceased loved ones upon the steps of her palace. The corpses would be promptly taken inside to be used for...unfortunately most scholars fell into hysterical conjecture at that point. At least I hope it was conjecture.

--Eramir, "The Vaal City"

CONTACTING THE AZMERI (CA. 900 BIC)

Book 4: Raising the Azmeri

Drain a cup of Azmerian tea and then try to read your future in the leaves. You'll find that your Vaalish will come in mighty handy. Our literature was conceived and born within the Azmeri's cultural marriage with the Vaal.

Prior to Vaal contact some 2500 years ago, the Azmerian culture had a purely oral tradition of story and record keeping. Afterwards, their literary culture blossomed, along with just about every other aspect of their fledgling civilisation. From the moment the first Vaalish embassadors set foot upon the rugged slopes of the Azmerian Ranges, the Vaal civilisation held the hand of the Azmeri as they grew from a primitive tribal existence into a cohesive culture of settlement and agriculture.

Yet while the Vaal were generous with their knowledge and guidance in many areas, there is one subject upon which they were notably silent: the Tears of Maji, now known as Virtue Gems. Despite an exhaustive search, neither account nor passing reference can be found regarding gem usage amongst the early Azmeri. Though they described the Vaal as having flesh adorned with glittering crystals, our Azmerian ancestors were never privy to the gems' potentials or powers.

At least, not until the first Vaal refugees came knocking five hundred years later.

- Trinian - Intellectus Prime

--The Ancients

THE VAAL IN ORIATH

... I have seen signs of blood and ancient sacrifice in the ghostings of our precious city! Such as what the Vaal would commit in their homelands. Could it be that these echoes point to Vaal culture having extended all the way to the shores of Oriath? ...

- Templar Davaro of Theopolis

--Research Journal I

... My theory that the Vaal once dwelt in this land has proven fruitful, one of their ancient sites lies not far from here. There is great power dormant in the ruins, one that I am yet to tap fully, but it will come soon enough.

Through my thaumaturgy, I was granted special sight, I saw the ancient Vaal city that once stood in this place. All around me were signs of the legendary Queen Atziri ruling from afar. I saw, as I stood at the base of a great pyramid, the sacrifice of new harvest unfold. The steps ran red with a river of blood, a crimson tide, cascading towards me and washing over my skin. In it, I felt my being shake, as if lightning was reverberating through my body. I felt the strength of that blood ritual, and then returning to my senses, I found myself once more standing in ancient ruins. I thought it to be all a dream, only, when I reached up to touch my face, I found it both horrifyingly and marvelously, pelted with that same salted vermillion.

- Templar Davaro of Theopolis, Key to Ancient Wonder

--Research Journal II

... During me time on the sea, I heard tale of Queen Atziri and her penchant fer using this land as a kinda vault for all her special shinies.

One such shiny be her famed love potion - s'posed to attract the drinker's ideal mate to their loins, even if that mate be far across the sea. Ol' Queen Atziri kept the liquid in the skull of her favourite lover. ...

--Weylam Roth, "Elixir of Allure"

THE REIGN OF QUEEN ATZIRI (CA. 400 BIC)

Book 1: Last of the Vaal Queens

It has been written of Queen Atziri that her throne room was lined with mirrors and that she held court naked, demanding the same of those wishing her audience. The theory was that a naked man

had nothing to hide, but one might easily venture that Atziri utilised her striking physical presence to influence courtly engagements in her favour.

A woman like Atziri, beautiful and naked, would be very difficult to refuse. The few statuettes and reliefs that remain depict her as a rare beauty, a young woman with exquisitely delicate features, large, mesmerizing eyes, and a full figure of intoxicating sensuality. Whether the depictions are realist or interpretive is unfortunately impossible to corroborate.

But who was the woman behind the title? The few surviving accounts on this matter contain two schools of thought on the matter [sic]. Some speak of Atziri with adoration, touting her as a visionary, the woman who would lead the Vaal into a brighter future. Others are less kind, suggesting that Atziri's love for herself overshadowed any love for her people. If her court of mirrors truly existed, however, then the latter seems more likely. Vanity, after all, is the most insidious of all Sins.

Only one thing can be said for certain of Atziri: she was the last Queen of the Vaal. The trail of history ends during her reign, some four hundred years preceding the Imperialus Conceptus.

-Trinian - Intellectus Prime

--The Ancients

Famous for her many lovers, those that did not come willing to Atziri, came by liquid persuasion.

--Elixir of Allure

Book 2: Zerphi the Murderer

It is said the Vaalish noble, Zerphi, lived for 168 years. That is more than three times the current imperial average. Were this the only unusual attribute of an otherwise uneventful life, Zerphi might have have been cast into the back corner of history to gather dust with the other inexplicable anomalies. But his life was anything but uneventful.

Zerphi was the Vaal civilisation's most infamous serial killer. Over a period of 128 years, Zerphi abducted, tortured and murdered thirteen victims. All in their twentieth year of life. All of noble descent. All Gemlings. But this feat alone did not catapult Zerphi into the annals of history. Rather, it was the quality of his heinous acts that set him apart, not the quantity.

Evidently, Zerphi was a master at inflicting the most prolonged and agonising demise. His victims' bodies were found in a state of horrific mutilation, yet post-mortem analysis revealed that all of the physical trauma infilcted [sic] had occurred while the victim was still alive. Some sources claim that the techniques of torture were so refined that he was able to inflict the most intense and lasting pain the human body is capable of sustaining.

Then we come to the curious matter of Zerphi's death which, as so often occurs with historical investigation, brings us back to where we started. Zerphi was finally found at the side of his thirteenth and final victim, who was unmolested and unmutilated. Simply dead. When the centenarian's body was committed to autopsy, the recorded results are mystifying in the extreme. It

is claimed that Zerphi did not possess the body of a 168-year-old, rather that his corpse had the physiognomy of a man of twenty years, no more.

Life and Death have walked hand in hand since the beginning of Time. Could Zephri have persuaded them to kiss?

- Trinian - Intellectus Prime

--The Ancients

"Proof that if you devote yourself to a god of death, you may be spared from its wrath."

- Icius Perandus, Antiquities Collection, Item 408

--Zerphi's Last Breath Grand Mana Flask

Book 3: The Queen's Thaumaturgist

In a culture festooned with gems and steeped in thaumaturgy, Doryani must have had quite the exceptional mind to rise to such preeminence as he did. Or perhaps he was simply more ruthless than his counterparts. Such is the impression one tends to garner from the accounts written of events following Zerphi's death.

Atziri's orders are quoted in a number of different texts. Doryani was "to make any effort within the realms of possibility, and to act without fear of question or consequence". And to what was Doryani expected to apply this supreme effort? The investigation of Zephri's longevity and youthful vitality.

There is a particularly chilling manifest, containing endless lists of names, page upon page. The names of young men and women, ranging in age from sixteen to twenty-six, sent to Doryani for "processing". Only those of "full and recent maturity" were deemed capable of accommodating the "necessary procedures" required without succumbing to "premature expiration".

Yes, Queen Atziri was prepared to slaughter her own people in the desperate pursuit of perpetual youth and beauty. Vanity, indeed, is the most insidious of all Sins.

- Trinian - Intellectus Prime

--The Ancients

Atziri went to great lengths to ensure her immortality, but nothing is eternal.

--Atziri's Reign Crimson Jewel

... It was said of the beautiful Atziri that she "wished to see her likeness reflected in the still waters of history." ...

--Siosa, "Malachai"

Take comfort knowing that, even in death, we may serve our Queen and fuel her empire.

--Transcendent Spirit Viridian Jewel

Atziri is my love and my life. I give one so that I might have the other for all eternity.

I was to wither away in darkness. My queen has brought me into the light. I would have lived in ugliness. Now I may die in Beauty.

I am but a crude reflection of our Queen of Endless Beauty. I die today so that all of Vaal may bask in her Radiance tomorrow.

I had nothing. I was nothing. I sold my flesh to survive. Today, my flesh belongs to my Queen.

What did I say? What did I do? I flattered, I promised, I bared my skin and soul to my beloved Atziri. I did everything but offer to die for her. Is that where I went wrong?

Our Queen has demanded we look into the gems for our salvation. We see ourselves reflected in those facets, twisted beyond recognition.

A ring. Plated, not even solid silver. That's all I took. Now I'm stuffed full of gems and destined for the block. For palming a wretched, half-crown ring.

There was no escape for me. Should our Queen and her thaumaturge succeed, there will be no escape for anyone.

I should have drawn the last breath from him. Yet all I did was draw his blood. Doryani will take my head in the morning and I have my shaking hands to thank for it.

For seven years I advised. For seven years she listened. Today, she would not. Now my blood will be but another drop in an ocean that will drown this land.

Atziri promises us eternal life. The only eternity we shall have is in the memories of the barbarians that shall plant their crops on our graves.

Queen Atziri forfeited her sovereignty the day that she chose to murder her people.

--Vaal Letters

Destined for sacrifice, they were dressed in garments that blurred the lines between this world and the next.

--Shadowstitch Sacrificial Garb

The Vaal emptied their slaves of beating hearts, and left a mountain of twitching dead.

--Rathpith Globe Titanium Spirit Shield

In their final days, every crime was punishable by death. Atziri's empire ran on blood, but the blood was running dry.

--Vaal Sentencing Cobalt Jewel

To sacrifice is to become the divine.

--Atziri

KISHARA AND THE STAR

...Kishara, a tough-as-nails Vaal lassie said to have explored every coast, cove and bay of this blasted continent with the help of her Star, some nifty artefact she nabbed from somewhere on her first voyage. ... Said to be fair humming with thaumaturgy, able to guide its mistress wherever she be fixing to journey. ...

--Weylam Roth, "Kishara's Star"

Legend has it, Kishara got herself in some hot water with a certain Queen Atziri. Details are vague as to exactly how, but by all accounts, Atziri weren't the most understanding of lasses. Kishara, being the free spirited sort probably just pricked the royal arse with some spiky facts from the outside world. Almost lost her head for her trouble, Kishara. Atziri took her ship and made sacrifices of her crew. Forced the poor girlie into hiding.

Still, Kishara being of a wily inclination like meself, she slipped through Atziri's talons and right out of the empire. But before she left, Kishara hid the Star somewhere near the Causeway that leads into the old Vaal city up north, just in case she got caught, I suppose. Something like that in the hands of a tyrant like Atziri...who knows what trouble she might've found with it.

--Weylam Roth, "Kishara"

THE TEMPLE OF ATZOATL

The lost Temple of Atzoatl; Halls lined with finery, boxes stuffed with glimmering riches and relics touched by insurmountable power! ...

--Alva Valai, "Introduction"

The lost Temple of Atzoatl is said to be the most famed in all Vaal history and myth. Best I can tell, the Temple began its construction in the final years of the Vaal Empire. The exact date of its completion has been hard to ascertain as it occurred shortly before the events which brought about the civilisation's extinction.

Perhaps it is this fragility of the timeline that has made Atzoatl such a staple of Vaal mythology. Some say it was a place of darkness, home to the most vile of sacrifices. But there are others who claim the temple to be the birthplace of technology - even our own is said to pale in comparison to what was being forged within those walls.

Scholars today have even suggested that it was the treasure house for Queen Atziri herself. Whichever is true, it was bound to have been fiercely protected by fanatics and royalty alike. And if something's worth protecting, well, then it's worth bloody taking!

--Alva Valai, "Atzoatl"

THE FALL (CA. 400 BIC)

Doryani's ingenuity raised the Vaal Empire to unprecedented heights. His curiosity reduced it to ruins and bones.

--Doryani's Fist Vaal Gauntlets

In my dream, a voice spoke to me. It said: 'My reach knows no bounds. All that is pure is destined to rot. All that lives is destined to serve.'

- Doryani, Queen's Thaumaturgist

--Blood of Corruption Amber Amulet

"Long ago, people looked to the stars, believing they influenced us. Soon, it will be us who influence the stars."

- Doryani, Queen's Thaumaturge

--The Ethereal

Doryani promises immortality, yet we build great structures, carve magnificent works into stone, so a part of us lives onward. A sign of faithlessness through action.

--Fate of the Vaal Gemstone Sword

My word. Vaalish contextualized syntax is a slippery eel indeed. Let me see if I can grab it by the gills...

They carried their virtue gems to..."Doryani's bed"...no, that's not quite right. Ah yes, Doryani's *cradle*. The historian finishes that it was a price they needed to pay to ensure a Vaalish future.

A cradle of virtue gems? What sort of 'Vaalish future' did Doryani hope to ensure?

--Siosa, "Page One Translation"

The result of the catalytic reaction would be either immortality for all, or death for all. It was a risk Doryani was willing to take.

--Doryani's Catalyst Vaal Sceptre

Splendid. Let's see what this page has to offer us... It talks of Queen Atziri. Now here's a portentous line:

She drenches her alters with the blood of those deranged enough to question her vision.

The next piece is a real eye-crosser, but I believe it refers to a 'communion,' something to do with the harvest moon? Again, Doryani seems at the heart of it.

Good, this line I can read without issue:

This will be our final night of fear, our final night of suffering.

Sacrifice, communion, the harvest moon...an unsettling combination.

--Siosa, "Page Two Translation"

"A communion...but with what? By all accounts, it wasn't God that the Vaal were trying to reach."

- Icius Perandus

--Golden Page II

Doryani stumbled into a realm of madness and awoke its Master.

--Dream Fragments Sapphire Ring

... I have divined one weak point in the Beast's flank, an ancient wound wrought by that Vaalish overreacher, Doryani. ...

--Sin, "The Dark Ember"

The darkness is not a mindless thing like the sea or the air. It is a creature that obeys neither life nor death. A truly undying being. A Nightmare.

Oh my, this first line is frighteningly clear:

Our Queen is dead. Doryani is dead. So many have fallen. So many have changed.

The latter text is almost indecipherable. It practically hums with agitation. Let me see...I can make out the words "sleep," "nightmare," and..."the Beast," whatever that may be. Our historian finishes with:

We have succeeded where our forebears did not. We have failed ourselves.

I need not imagine the fall of the Vaal. I saw the nightmare with my own eyes.

--Siosa, "Page Three Translation"

Book 5: The Fall

The Vaal. Thousands of years in the making. Gone in a blink of Solaris' burning eyes. The Azmeri tell of the Vaalish immigration with equal measures of pity and horror. Small bands of tattered, shambling survivors, bereft of their families, their wealth, and in many cases, their sanity. They were welcomed, and cared for, but none could give the Azmeri the one thing they sought in return. None could tell them how the Vaal realm came to such a sudden and catastrophic end. An apocalypse that came to be known as The Fall.

The number 3126 is forever burned into Azmerian history. Three thousand one hundred and twenty-six: the number of Vaal refugees who came to live with and eventually become absorbed into the Azmerian people.

Three thousand one hundred and twenty-six survivors from a civilisation counting in its millions.

- Trinian - Intellectus Prime

--The Ancients

THE FATE OF ATZIRI

Even a millennium later, Atziri's presence casts a shroud over Wraeclast.

--Chill of Corruption Viridian Jewel

The narcissistic Queen Atziri plunged the Vaal civilisation into a dark age of sacrifice and terror almost two thousand years ago. Millions died due to her obsessive pursuit of eternal youth, a pursuit that brought about a cataclysm that ended the Vaal civilisation overnight. But Atziri herself still lingers in a nightmare realm that is starting to leak back into the land of Wraeclast. Now, as the queen rises again, her corruption spreads throughout Wraeclast. ...

--https://www.pathofexile.com/forum/view-thread/807869

How is this possible!? She should be long dead!

--Alva Valai, on the Throne of Atziri

IMPERIALUS CONCEPTUS (1 IC)

Your visions led the Azmeri down into a world left abandoned by the Vaal. They cast you out, young Egrin, but the Order of the Djinn accepts you.

--Rusted Elder Scarab

Book 6: Imperialus Conceptus

Tarcus Veruso descended from the mountains and led his eighty thousand tribesmen and women through the doomlands to Azala Vaal. There he planted his banner upon Atziri's grave and with these words founded our great and eternal empire.

"The Vaal closed their eyes to flesh and stone, to blood and bronze. We are not Vaal. We are Azmeri. For now and forever, our eyes are open."

Veruso built his capital upon the bones of Azala Vaal and baptized it Sarn. From there, Veruso formed the first Legions and proceeded to conquer the lands beneath the Mantle, clearing it of the mindless constructs and fierce abominations left in the wake of The Fall.

True to his word, Veruso ensured that his people lived "with eyes open". The ancient Vaalish centres of learning and power were sealed and quarantined. Thaumaturgy was outlawed and those who stained themselves with Vaalish folly were burned for their sin. The Tears of the Maji, too dangerous to be destroyed, were gathered up, taken to Highgate, and buried within the bowels of the mountains. The caverns there were sealed and forgotten.

A supreme effort to erase the past. A primitive reaction born of primitive times, in the opinion of this humble historian.

-Trinian - Intellectus Prime

--The Ancients

Beneath the summer sun we follow Tarcus in search of the promised land. Before long, hunger grips our stomachs. The doomlands take their toll. Our numbers dwindle, and discord spreads amongst the tribesmen.

Veruso's words quell our hearts, but not our stomachs. In the dead of night, a woman goes missing, and our hunger is abated. We reach the ruins of Azala Vaal alive, but dark deeds hide in our bellies.

--Unknown, Distant Mud Pit Memory

Sarn, birthplace of the Templar. ...

--Templar, on The City of Sarn

By all accounts, Tarcus Veruso was a ruthless despot, a man to rival even the likes of Dominus. Yet his heart of stone contained one precious seam, his love for his wife, Chiara.

So when the poor young woman died giving birth to Veruso's son, Caspiro, the grieving emperor threw aside his great convictions and placed his last hope in thaumaturgy, in the Ankh of Eternity.

Perhaps it was shame that drove Tarcus to lock the ankh away, to steal such hopes from his descendents. It was he who had asked his people to turn their backs on the ancient arts, so what right had he to enjoy that which he forbade? Love gave him that right.

--Clarissa, "Emperor Veruso"

... My hope waits for me to the east, tucked away in a shrine in the Quay.

The Ankh of Eternity. Veruso, Prima Imperialus, placed it there himself at the dawn of the Empire. If the legends are correct, the Ankh has powers over life and death... when paired with the correct Azmerian ritual. ...

--Clarissa, "Reviving Tolman"

As I understand it, the Ankh of Eternity was somehow able to return the dead to the full bloom of life. There was nothing necromantic about it, rather it was a source of true resurrection.

How it came to exist, I honestly don't know. A couple of inscriptions I read treated the ankh as some sort of gift to Veruso from the Vaal. But surely the Vaal were long gone by Veruso's time... weren't they?

No matter. Despite the vagaries of the Ankh's origins, Veruso used the Ankh to return his young wife from the death bed to the wedding bed. The accounts are unanimous on that point. ...

--Clarissa, "The Ankh of Eternity"

How could I have been so stupid? Veruso didn't hide the ankh out of shame. He hid it out of fear, out of...oh my, what did the ankh really do to his wife? Everything I saw, that I read...lies to cover the truth of what Chiara had really become. ...

--Clarissa, on Tolman's second death

"The custom of the Lord's Trial was upheld throughout the founding years of the Empire. Veruso's successor, Caspiro, was a low-born legionnaire, the lone survivor of a labyrinth that claimed the lives of every high-born contender, including Veruso's only son.

Caspiro proved to be every bit the emperor that Veruso was..."

- Emperor Izaro Phrecius

--Bronze Inscription IV

Book 7: The Light of Phrecia

Five years after Veruso's death, Emperor Caspiro, too, was dead. Although accounts of the exact details differ, one clear fact is agreed upon. Caspiro was dismembered by something referred to simply as a dark being.

It was General Alano Phrecia who avenged the Emperor's death and who triumphed in driving away the pervasive darkness enveloping what would become the imperial heartlands. Though it seems fanciful to contemplate a portion of our Empire cast in perpetual night, Azmerian writers of the time are unified in their depiction. Perhaps it was caused by peculiar weather patterns or some thaumaturgical residue of The Fall. On this matter, this humble historian is left in the uncomfortable state of pure conjecture.

On the first Sacrato of Lurici, 35 I.C., Alano himself wrote that "our legions drove the dark being deep into the recesses of its lair and sealed it away for eternity". Having returned the gaze of Solaris to those lands stretching from the foot of the Mantle to the Axiom Ranges, Alano Phrecia returned to Sarn. In the absence of a clear hereditary succession, Alano was crowned emperor and the Imperial heartlands were named in his honour.

With the former realm of the Vaal thus tamed and settled by our Azmerian ancestors, the Eternal Empire saw a long period of peace and prosperity under an unbroken line of Phrecia emperors.

"To care for this Empire with eyes open." - A traditional vow made by the High Templar upon the coronation of an Eternal Emperor.

-Trinian, Intellectus Prime

--The Ancients

EMPEROR ROMIRA AND THE NIGHT OF A THOUSAND RIBBONS (CA. 334 IC)

On the Night of a Thousand Ribbons, our finest city burned. It burned with fires lit by cruelty and neglect. It burned with shame for giving the title of 'Emperor' to a man who did not deserve it.

--Bronze Monograph, Trial of Burning Rage

...Selfish blood breeds selfish times, and the Empire paid for it with its own blood. With the Night of a Thousand Ribbons. With that most regal of cannibals, Emperor Romira...

- Emperor Izaro Phrecius

--Bronze Inscription IV

The night of a thousand ribbons
To remember the day of a thousand flames
When Sarn burned
And was born again

--Thousand Ribbons Simple Robe

The Empress gave Romira two sons
Born of his brother's seed
Romira threw her a banquet
A perfidious meal indeed.

--Romira's Banquet Diamond Ring

Shame what happened to my husband. He had such good taste.

--The Feast

THE ASCENDANCY OF CHITUS (1316-1319 IC)

EMPEROR IZARO & THE LABYRINTH

In the impressionable youth of my reign, I was encouraged to believe in the precious nature of my imperial blood. The 'divine claret', as one fool of a courtier would repeat with tiresome regularity.

Unfortunately, my divine claret refused to pour from one cup to another. Try as I might, with a lovely procession of young and ever dutiful wives, my noble seed simply would not sprout.

Who, then, to choose as my worthy successor? With the candidates on hand either mediocre at best, or maniacal at worst, I found myself in quite the quandary.

That's when Fortune took me by the hand and led me to a forgotten tome on a forgotten shelf in the quietest corner of Sarn Library. A tome entitled, 'Ancient Traditions of Azmerian Ascendancy'.

The rest, one might say, is history.

- Emperor Izaro Phrecius

--Bronze Inscription I

The Azmeri were the first culture known in history to use the trials of strength, wisdom, and spirit to select its chieftains.

The first Lord's Trial was a rough-hewn maze festooned with wild animals and brutal traps, crafted to test aspiring Azmerian leaders' body, mind, and soul. [sic]

In conquering the adversities of the maze, a champion proved they were capable of bearing the crushing burden of chieftainship.

The first trials were simple contraptions reflecting simple times. As the Azmerian civilisation grew in number and complexity, so did the trials, from treacherous mazes to bewildering labyrinths.

Alas, there are no surviving descriptions of the labyrinth that tested and proved the worth of Veruso, Prima Imperialus. I would imagine it was quite something to behold.

- Emperor Izaro Phrecius

--Bronze Inscription II

The Azmeri were consummate survivors. They had to be, having been sired in the most inhospitable range of mountains in all of Wraeclast.

Unfortunate, some might say. I do not. I believe it was the making of them. And of us, their descendants.

So it is no wonder that they developed the Lord's Trial. With survival being a moment-by-moment concern, that harried people grew to understand power quite intimately.

Strong leadership is able to bridge the chasm between existence and extinction. Poor leadership might see an entire tribe vanish into that same chasm.

When the Azmeri descended from their mountains to conquer the fecund lands of central Wraeclast, they thrived and multiplied with utmost alacrity in those more forgiving climes.

For is it not poverty that teaches us how we might excel in times of plenty?

- Emperor Izaro Phrecius

--Bronze Inscription III

The custom of the Lord's Trial was upheld throughout the founding years of the Empire. Veruso's successor, Caspiro, was a low-born legionnaire, the lone survivor of a labyrinth that claimed the lives of every high-born contender, including Veruso's only son.

Caspiro proved to be every bit the emperor that Veruso was.

Alas, the Lord's Labyrinth was corrupted by those with the vanity to consider their blood more precious than their Empire. Selfish blood breeds selfish times, and the Empire paid for it with its own blood. With the Night of a Thousand Ribbons. With that most regal of cannibals, Emperor Romira.

Not any more. I, Izaro Phrecius, shall return us to Justice. I shall build the greatest Lord's Labyrinth in Azmerian history, and my successor shall be chosen by the Goddess herself.

Only when the Lord's Labyrinth is drenched in selfish blood can a true leader ascend the throne.

- Emperor Izaro Phrecius

--Bronze Inscription IV

If you're going to be in the antiquities business, it pays to take note of whatever history you can. High Gardens and the great Emperor Izaro, for instance. Have you heard of the Lord's Labyrinth? The High Gardens were designed by Izaro as a test run for his great work.

He turned his personal garden into a maze and filled it with all sorts of traps and nasty beasties. Convicted criminals were then given a choice. Death or the Garden. If they got through, an imperial pardon was theirs.

Weren't no pardons on record as far as I could see. That's what happens when people have too much time and gold on their hands.

--Hargan, "The High Gardens"

Izaro saw himself not as a man, but as a divine saviour trapped in a man's body.

--Izaro's Dilemma Imperial Claw

THE PERANDUS FAMILY

Cadiro watched young Chitus play in the frostbitten grass, care-free, happy, and unburdened by the responsibility the Perandus scion would soon endure.

--First Snow Cobalt Jewel

Before the Cataclysm, and before the Purity Rebellion, the Perandus family ruled over Sarn. Chitus Perandus was the first to navigate the Lord's Labyrinth, the first to show that it could be beaten. He was aided immeasurably in this endeavour by his uncle, Cadiro Perandus.

Cadiro Perandus was a master of coin, the minister of finance in the kingdom both before and after his family's ascension. His greed was legendary, for he was a devotee of Prospero, the ancient Azmerian god of the underworld, the earth, and all its boundless treasures.

--https://www.pathofexile.com/forum/view-thread/1595088

The Perandus were an esteemed, wealthy family long before they realized their imperial ambitions. As they gained riches and renown, they steadily acquired ancient and powerful artefacts from Wraeclast's past. Cadiro had these relics stashed in nondescript boxes, crates and vaults to throw off potential thieves. ...

--https://www.pathofexile.com/forum/view-thread/1595088

The same day that Veruso planted his banner in the soil of Sarn, the Perandus family built the first market stall. That one stall spawned so many others that the people came to call our venture *Perandus Markets*.

We were never vain enough to make the name official. Until Chitus took the throne, we were a most unassuming consortium.

Yes, we did occasionally employ the Silent Brotherhood to remove the more stubborn obstacles to our commercial endeavours, but for the most part we tended to solve our issues with coin and contract rather than bow and blade.

In hindsight, we should have taken the reins of power much earlier. If we had done so then perhaps I could now be speaking of Perandus in the plural rather than the singular.

--Cadiro, "The Perandus Family"

TREACHERY

Izaro was slow to see the treachery growing in his own court and powerless to stop it once he had; a captain sailing his own ship into rocks.

--Winds of Change Ancient Gauntlets

Izaro Phrecius? Despite my personal feelings surrounding that man, he did provide we Perandus folk with an unprecedented opportunity.

Over the centuries, the Phrecius family had blocked our every attempt to gain the throne on the scandalous basis that our blood was not of imperial quality.

So when Izaro called that whole blood fiasco into question with his Lord's Labyrinth, it gave us the only clear shot we would ever have at sovereignty.

Without Izaro, the Perandus name may never have come to be associated with the throne. So in a somewhat qualified fashion, he has my gratitude.

--Cadiro, "Izaro"

3rd Kaso of Vitali, 1316 I.C.

Uncle Cadiro,

While my father remains determined to play the role of Izaro's lapdog, I trust that you and I are of like mind regarding our 'glorious' Emperor's ridiculous Labyrinth. He would have us entrust our imperial leadership to the primitive diversions of some cave-dwelling ancestors. It is beyond reasoning. In fact, it can only be surmised that Izaro himself is also beyond reasoning.

On that matter, I suppose it should come as no surprise. Phrecius blood has become polluted by decadence and incest. It is no secret. So perhaps it is a matter of good fortune that Izaro has not been able to sire an heir. For such a whelp would be undoubtedly dim or demented. Yes, such emperors are easy to control, but they can also be extremely dangerous, as the Empire learned all too well with Romira.

So in his own deluded way, Izaro is right to look to fresh sources of blood to serve our Eternal Empire. Yet he looks in the wrong places. Perandus blood has served the throne proudly since Veruso first set his foot upon the soil of Sarn. Perandus gold has filled the imperial coffers. Perandus minds have crafted this Empire into the marvel it is today.

And has a single Perandus ever sat upon the imperial throne? No.

Izaro's plans are an insult to the Empire and an insult to us, its most devoted servants. Izaro spits upon our very blood and then offers up everything we have worked for to the first fortunate fool who stumbles through his little maze.

I will not stand by and allow Izaro to deliver us all unto damnation. I trust, dear uncle, that I can rely on your support.

Chitus

--Chitus Letter I (https://www.pathofexile.com/forum/view-thread/1538608)

1st Lunaro of Verusi, 1317 I.C.

Uncle Cadiro,

Our Eternal Emperor Izaro might be insane but he's clearly not stupid. Or at the very least, he has had the presence of mind to surround himself with clever people. Three meticulously planned attempts on Izaro's life. Three astutely thwarted failures.

Of course, none of them can be traced back to us, Uncle. You can rest assured that I have been most discrete in my arrangements. As for Cousin Elano, he will be dead by sunrise. We need not fair [sic] any inconvenient disclosure on his part, and he is not a Perandus by name. His familial connection is known only to us. It's a simple matter to keep a bastard or two in the shadows for occasions such as this. Legitimacy is a useful carrot to dangle.

I assume you've been keeping abreast of the Labyrinth's progress? I have purchased several of Izaro's overseers and they keep me informed. I'm told it's to house quite the menagerie of monstrosities. And the mechanisms that are currently being installed, many of which Izaro designed himself, are utterly nefarious in their invention. While one might easily question the man's rationality, one cannot so easily discount his imagination. If only Izaro had contented himself with an artistic pursuit some kind [sic], such as painting or sculpture. Instead he now drains the imperial coffers dry, building a delirious promise to the peasants and peons of Wraeclast.

"Come one and all! Enjoy the largest playground ever created. And should you win the games that I have laid out for you, why, you shall be crowned emperor!"

Izaro would place our fortunes in the calloused hands of ignorance. He would have us forget the centuries of leadership, diplomacy, prosperity and security that we, the ruling families of Sarn, have amassed.

Izaro's folly will be the end of our beloved empire.

I, for one, will not let that happen, Uncle.

Chitus

--Chitus Letter II (https://www.pathofexile.com/forum/view-thread/1538608)

The Just Goddess presides over us all. The future of the Empire rests in her even hands.

The Lord's Labyrinth, opened by Emperor Izaro Phrecius on the second Galvano of Azmeri, 1317 IC.

--Bronze Plaque

Thousands gazed upon the doors of the great labyrinth, at an Eternal Champion in steel and gold, the first to challenge its treacherous traps. To mark the occasion, Izaro had the Champion's remains gilded.

--Spine of the First Claimant Iron Sceptre

3rd Solaro of Divini, 1318 I.C.

Uncle Cadiro,

I am as ready for this Labyrinth as I will ever be. Each day I have trained with the duelist, Kre Faarblood. There is no better swordsman in all of Sarn and I have been a most attentive pupil. So attentive that he made the mistake of admitting, after his twelfth cup of wine, that he is not of the noble blood he claims to be. His 'disinherited dandy' act is just that: an act. People have a tendency to entrust me with their secrets. I know, it's a valuable gift.

Please have Faarblood tried and hanged, discreetly, away from the crowds. We simply can't have commoners impersonating their betters.

Yes, I have familiarised myself with the architectural plans you so kindly obtained for me, and I have paid certain overseers handsomely for further details regarding Izaro's various hazards and living horrors. The man is obsessed with spikes. They pop out of the floor, spin on treacherously shifting wheels and even roam about like predators in search of prey. Izaro's mechanisms are truly of the most devious design. And the creatures! If it bites, claws or stings, in [sic] now lives in that Labyrinth.

Fear not, uncle [sic]. I have designs of my own. My hirelings shall place discreet caches of supplies here and there, in the eventuality that I should need restoration or assistance. I shall enclose a list of their names. It would be our interests [sic] if those named men and women were to, upon the Labyrinth's completion, suffer accidents of a mortal nature. One word spoken carelessly could end any hope of a Perandus ever ascending the imperial throne. A few common lives are nothing compared to the slaughter that would occur if, God help us, one of the Ezomyte contenders survived this Labyrinth in my stead.

So there it is. Our noble endeavour to save our Empire from a madman. I do this for our family. I do this for our Empire.

We are Eternal.

Chitus

--Chitus Letter III (https://www.pathofexile.com/forum/view-thread/1538608)

Since one with knowledge of machines might be able to bring the labyrinth to a standstill, Izaro had us place many boobytrapped decoys. But I know which switch brings the monster down.

- Xirgil, Trapbuilder's final words

--Xirgil's Crank Coiled Staff

You stand before the gates of the Lord's Labyrinth. Within these walls, the Lady of Justice doth preside. She shall weigh your Mind in one hand, your Heart in the other. Should she find you wanting, death shall be your sentence. Should she find you worthy, you will be given the loyalty and love of an empire. The Lord's Labyrinth awaits you. Choose wisely. Strike quickly. Trust completely. And may you find the ending that you deserve.

--Izaro, on the Aspirant's Plaza

The Son of Ezomyr met the Son of Sarn
Upon the road to the Imperial throne.
The Eternal offered his cunning,
His eyes and ears, bought and paid for.
The Ezomyte offered his strength,
His sword, earned in the arena.
A pact was forged,
With the Labyrinth as witness.
Two men separated by blood.
Two men bound by hope.
Two men, and only one emperor.

--Weylin, Poem I

The Ezomyte and the Eternal took their rest
In the lee of strife's gale,
And remembered the travelled road.
Beast and fiend had fallen and bled,
To the Ezomyte's sword, swift and true.
Trap and trial had risen and succumbed,
To the Eternal's wits, quick and shrewd.
Two men had cried their triumph,
A Warrior and his Guide,
Whilst other ascendants echoed their pride,
With anguish and agony.

--Weylin, Poem II

The Warrior bled upon Izaro's stones,
And cursed Izaro's ilk.
He looked upon the walls of his tomb,
Built by his masters, his enemies,
And called for the First Ones to carry him,
To the forest and fields of his Ezomyr.
Yet while the First Ones remained silent,
The Guide did speak
Of secrets planted by clever hands
Enslaved by gold.
And with one such secret,
Plucked the life of the Warrior
From the First Ones' jaws.

--Weylin, Poem III

A Guide, cornered and quailing,
A Warrior, watching,
The moment bathed in the shadow
Of doubt,
Of ambition,
Of an imperial throne.
And a people made free
By an Emperor of Ezomyr.
The Warrior threw off that cold and cloying shadow,
And struck down the slavering beasts.
The Guide looked to the Warrior
With gratitude in his eyes.
And spoke of doubt,
Of ambition,
Of an imperial throne,
And a people made free
By an Emperor of Sarn.

--Weylin, Poem IV

The Guide led the Warrior down a path
That wound and twisted
Through fields of blossoming promises.
Green-bladed hopes.
The Warrior closed his eyes.
A mere moment
To feel the warmth of the sun on his back,
And to drink from the Guide's proffered flask.

Now the Warrior staggers and crawls
Down the wounded, tortured causeway.
The bitterness stings his weeping eyes.
The fire roars in his belly,
Consuming him.
The Warrior will not ascend.
Instead he hunts.
Guided by his love for Ezomyr.

--Weylin, Poem V

Before your emperor, you are worthy. Before the Goddess of Justice, you are worthy. Receive our blessings. Embrace our gifts. And rise, ascendant, for this is the ending that we all deserve.

--Izaro, on his defeat

THE FATE OF IZARO

When an aging Izaro retired and gave the throne to Chitus on the First Kaso of Verusi, 1319 IC, the new emperor immediately cast Izaro into the Lord's Labyrinth and sealed the gates behind him. Twinned with the Goddess he worshipped, Emperor Izaro lives on in the Labyrinth.

--https://www.pathofexile.com/ascendancy/izaro

The once-glorious emperor spent his final days imprisoned in his greatest creation; a tool to filter out the unworthy that pushed a monster to power.

--Izaro's Turmoil Crimson Jewel

THE REIGN OF CHITUS: ESTABLISHING A THAUMATOCRACY (1319-1334 IC)

... It was said of the beautiful Atziri that she "wished to see her likeness reflected in the still waters of history." Chitus was no less self-impressed.

Of all the Sins, Vanity is the most hideous.

--Siosa, "Malachai"

Emperor Chitus could offer you a gift with one hand, and drive a blade into your back with the other. His blend of brutality and charisma cultured a potent mixture of fear and admiration among the masses.

--Might and Influence Viridian Jewel

Chitus began to aggressively expand his empire into neighbouring nations at great human cost. But for absolute power, there is no price that a Perandus won't pay.

--Rapid Expansion Crimson Jewel

MALACHAI

Malachai
Laureate Thaumaturge to the Eternal Empire
The Father of Dreams

--Plaque

I suppose every civilisation has its Doryani...its Malachai. Men of divine talent and demented ambition. Without them, history would be a far less 'interesting' place.

--Siosa, "Doryani"

There is no cost too great to pay for power. Merely men who lack the conviction to pay it.

--Malachai's Awakening Iron Mask

Volume 2: The Blackest Monkey

The Monkey King was enjoying an afternoon amble along the riverbank when, upon looking over his hairy shoulder, he noticed the Blackest Monkey he'd ever seen ambling along behind him.

"Why do you follow me?" the Monkey King demanded of the Blackest Monkey, for he did not appreciate uninvited followings, especially on his riverbank amblings.

"So that I might go where you go, be where you be, my King," answered the Blackest Monkey.

"And what if I do not want you to go where I go, be where I be?" clamored the irritated Monkey King with a spit and a gibber.

"Wanting and having are not the same, my King," answered the Blackest Monkey in a voice as smooth as banana juice.

"I am the Monkey King! I do as I wish!" cried the now furious Monkey King with much shrieking and frothing.

"Wishing and doing are not the same, my King," answered the Blackest Monkey in a voice as silken as butterfly wings.

Too wild to even spit or gibber, to shriek or froth, the Monkey King took to his heels and ran. Along the riverbank he raced, faster than the water, faster than the wind, faster than thought, for he was the Monkey King, and all know that the Monkey King has the fleetest feet in all the land.

He ran to the end of the river, and then to the end of the mountains, and then to the end of the clouds, and then to the End of the World.

And who should be there, waiting at his King's feet at the End of the World, but the Blackest Monkey the King had ever seen.

"Why do you follow me?" the Monkey King begged of him.

"Have you ever been to the End of the World before, my King?" asked the Blackest Monkey.

"No, I have not." [sic] realised the Monkey King.

"There is my reason to go where you go, be where you be, my King," concluded the Blackest Monkey in a voice as warm and welcoming as death.

- Victario of Sarn

--Victario's Writings

My dear Chitus,

The Empire has lived in fear and ignorance since its inception. Our Azmeri ancestors, in their arrogance, turned their backs on the lessons of the Vaal.

The emperors before you lacked courage, lacked vision, paying lip service to 'Eternity' while scrabbling for approval and comfort within the prison of their meagre, mortal lives.

You are not one of those emperors. You are Chitus the Great, the man who will make this Empire truly understand the meaning of the word 'Eternal.'

We shall build this Thaumatocracy together, my emperor, gem by gem, immortal by immortal.

Your devoted servant,

Malachai

--Letter to Chitus

Malachai ran roughshod over every ethical boundary in pursuit of creating the ideal gemling. For him, there was no doubt that the end would justify the means.

--Collateral Damage Viridian Jewel

I am so very late. This is deeply embarrassing. I fear the wait will be too long now. But this is the one chance I get to meet the great Laureate and I will not let it go to waste!

Malachai says he has perfected new techniques that will unlock the raw power hidden within the Virtue Gems. I have volunteered my body to the cause. I feel no fear, no hunger, no pleasure... nothing. I only hear his voice. I must obey...

--Unknown, Eternal Residence Memory

Strange. I was put in charge of dating the most antiquated of texts. This parchment, it's a remarkable copy, but it's no original. Much younger.

Oh my...listen to this!

My dearest Icius,

I have been enlightened beyond expectation. Your work in translating these artefacts is worthy of the highest recompense, and thus I am delighted to offer you a position in my personal laboratory. Please do not give your escorts any consternation. I would be most pained to see such a precious asset damaged in any way.

I very much look forward to working with you, Icius Perandus.

Your friend and admirer,

Malachai

Poor, poor Icius. Wherever you went, my pity goes with you.

--Siosa, "Page Four Translation"

VIRTUE GEMS

A Virtue Gem is a raging thunderstorm imprisoned within a single raindrop. Infernal Talc simply lets the storm out.

-Malachai the Soulless

--Infernal Talc

... Calibric Extantia being the corrupt energies locked within virtue gems. ...

--Helena, "Maligaro's Spike"

... Remember, these gems are phantasms in crystalline form, alive, with volitions inscrutable. ...

--Ancient Reverie Device

The gems are strangely human at times. They simply love to be held.

- Doryani, First Seer to the Queen

--Vaal Caress Bronzescale Gauntlets

... You will be able to directly manipulate the intelligence that dwells within Virtue Gems.

--Malachai, Path of Exile: Origins #2

I'm sure you've heard of Malachai by now? Ever the heterodox, he often sought otherworldly inspiration by imbibing a substance called 'Ghost Wine'. For the purpose, he created the Decanter Spiritus. I found it on my last visit here. Liquid placed in this crystal decanter becomes quasi-apparitional in nature. ...

--Captain Fairgraves, "Decanter Spiritus"

Tear down the walls that imprison the mind...that is what the gems do. That is their true 'virtue.'

The moment my fingertips brushed the cool, silken planes of that first gem, I felt it. My skull ached, as if its contents were growing, pressing against the bone, searching for a way to break free.

That night, once the wine had dulled the pain enough to allow the onset of sleep, the dreams began. I have not been without them since. Nor would I be. Every spark of thaumaturgy that I wield, every device that I forge, every creature that I transfigure, I owe to these lessons cloaked in Nightmare.

From whence do these precepts hail? Certainly not the mundane grey between my ears. I possess only one reference that bears faith. Translated with unquestionable clarity by that idiot savant, Icius Perandus. "The Beast." Doryani of the Vaal knew the truth. Soon now, so shall I.

Malachai

--Malachai's Journal

... A dark God of ancient sacrifice, a muse to the twisted and vile...the Beast, the Nightmare, the Darkness...names given to it by mortals that think with slugs bound in shells of bone.

Yet, one man knew the Beast's true name, understood its impenetrable nature.

Malachai.

--Tasuni, "The Beast"

GEMLING LEGIONNAIRES

The Eternals commanded an army that need not eat, sleep, or breathe without the usual depravities of necromancy.

--Iron Commander Death Bow

... Gem-studded warriors pounding the earth, lead [sic] by their strongest... a Captain. I've known of these gemling legionnaires, how they were once the personal swords of Emperor Chitus. ...

--Maramoa, "The Gemling Legion"

They walked our earth in the times of great strife, cruel and hideous shadows, cast against the clay wall of ruined abode. [sic] Thaumaturge Malachai grew them out of the vain ambitions of his dark imaginings.

Emperor Chitus believed the legionnaires belonged to him, that gemling men would beat to the drum of his own crystalline heart. ...

--Maramoa, "Gemling Legionnaires"

... Malachai has given me supreme command of his creations. The heart of each soldier beats in time with the heart of his emperor. If the emperor wishes that beat to stop, it stops. And should my own heart cease, so does the life-blood rhythm of all my loyal soldiers.

--Chitus, Path of Exile: Origins #4

MAPS

A fool steps into the unknown. An explorer finds his way back again.

- Malachai, Thaumaturge Laureate

--Empyrean Apparatus Cartographer's Strongbox

This week I thought I'd give a small snippet of info from our lore document, which outlines all the information about the history of Wraeclast. This entry gives some information about the origins of maps:

Lazhwar - An old archbishop of the Eternal Faith who secretly conducted dark experiments, using thaumaturgy to create his own miniature worlds in which he could rule as a God. Malachai studied his work with interest, using Lazhwar's designs as the foundation for his Eternal Laboratory. ...

--Eternal and Diamond Supporter Newsletter #4

I awoke, feverish, and barely conscious I set to drawing these maps through the sable hours. By morning my fingers ached, my eyes burned, yet still I found no rest. The Reverie commanded its rendering.

The Reverie Device now stands completed. I have placed the first of my maps within its receptacle. I have taken my maiden voyage into Nightmare.

I know now that which sent me this precious gift. It knows me, expects my return. It would be foolish to disappoint.

- Malachai

--Reverie Device

"There are worlds that lie beyond the edge of my page, the edge of my understanding. Worlds of wonder. Worlds of terror."

Aramil - Cartographer to Emperor Chitus

--Lost Worlds

THE GODLESS THREE

Malachai's apprentices. Shavronne of Umbra, Doedre Darktongue and Inquisitor Maligaro. You'll find no more devoted servants in all of Nightmare. In life, they were the three finest forgers of corruption in the Empire.

... Ingenious, they are. True artists. ...

--Tasuni, "Malachai's Apprentices"

... You taught me far more than I ever taught you, my students...my friends. ...

Malachai

--Malachai's Dedication

SHAVRONNE OF UMBRA

This world is dull and ugly, an imperfect feast of sights, feelings and smells that repulse and depress. Yet amongst this deformity I have found my sublime calling. This world may be abominable, but to an extent, I can be its savior.

I have been gifted with a special sight. Before me lies a blueprint of perfection, a kind of hidden beauty within skin, muscles, tendons and organs. With a tempered hand and a sharpened blade, I will refashion, reshape and rebirth this world.

My obligation is immense, something that will, in all likelihood, consume my life. I cannot rest! My calling energises me. Such is an artist's curse and compulsion.

--Shavronne's Manifesto

...Shavronne of Umbra, a witch who devoted herself to the study of transfiguration during the latter days of the Eternal Empire. ...

--Helena, "Prisoner's Gate"

Some see our mortal flesh as a limitation. I see it as an opportunity for vast miraculous improvements.

- Shavronne of Umbra

--The Aesthete

"Mastery of thaumaturgy is like any other pursuit; it requires dedication and sacrifice. Sometimes several sacrifices."

- Shavronne of Umbra

--The Thaumaturgist

Eternal beauty has a cost, one which Shavronne was happy to pay with the lives of others.

--The Offering

Dear Shavronne,

You have certainly had your work cut out for you with Lioneye's Legion. Do not concern yourself with Marceus' complaints. Our Emperor is fully aware of the General's fickle nature.

As to your need to accelerate the implantation process, I can recommend a quite simple alteration. Dip the gem in a boiling solution of six parts blood and one part thaumetic sulphite for no more than thirteen seconds. Any longer and you invite the crystal's wrath.

Once the gem is withdrawn from the solution, you have but a few seconds to install the gem in the prepared flesh and close the wound. Should the gem cool too much prior to implantation, it will become inert and your patient with it.

Trust in that bountiful talent of yours, Shavronne. My thoughts are with you.

Malachai

--Letter of Instruction

INQUISITOR MALIGARO

My interest in this world is dwindling. Most children begin their lives wide-eyed, amazed at what this world has to offer. I have always been different. Since the day I was born I've been searching for the new, the surprising, that which disturbs both senses and mind.

Oh to be an artist! What a lamentable task. Not seeing the world as it is, but as it should be.

Peace is the worst of it! A disgusting state of stagnation, fit only for the weak and vapid. War, confusion, terror. Love and passion, these things are closest the world gets to being interesting and alas, I have felt them all. Yet all these pale in comparison to the delightful chaos I have envisioned for this poor, dull world.

--Maligaro's Manifesto

The Chamber of Sins? Apparently the late Archbishop Geofri of Phrecia gave it that title. It was built by Emperor Chitus for one Inquisitor Maligaro. ...

--Eramir, "The Chamber of Sins"

He does not love. He does not feel regret or remorse. He does not think about consequences, only possibilities. If that does not describe a monster, tell me: what does?

- Archbishop Geofri

--Maligaro's Cruelty Turquoise Amulet

Inquisitor,

If you were to attempt to transmogrify a virtue gem without the proper mental preparation, you will be a puppet master working strings made of vipers. Remember, these gems are phantasms in crystalline form, alive, with volitions inscrutable. Master conscious dreaming, as I instructed you. Your death means little to me, Maligaro. It's what your demise will unleash that concerns me.

Malachai, Thaumaturge Laureate to the Empire

--Ancient Reverie Device

He might be lacking in vision, but his virtuosity is undeniable.

- Malachai, on Maligaro

--The Surgeon

Maligaro understood that devotion to science, means devotion to trial and error. For Maligaro's errors, death was slow, and very painful.

--Growing Agony Viridian Jewel

Experiment 22A: Rhoas, when deprived of water, secrete a most delightfully potent toxin.

- Maligaro

--The Rabid Rhoa

Our genius will pave the way forward. May all who are worthy be improved!

- Inquisitor Maligaro

--Maligaro's Restraint Chain Belt

DOEDRE "DARKTONGUE" STAMATIS

Peel back the skin, for there are secrets in sinew. Mysteries in muscle. Plunder the intestinal fortress, reach deep into bowels of power. The esoterica of kings lies [sic] not in the mind, but in the beating walls of a bloodied heart!

The wonders of the universe are screamed from the ramparts of our fleshly fortresses. Shall the meat show us holiness? Oh, how I feel the tingling of our sacred bodies pressed together, tight and fluid.

Let the meat show us the way. Hail the meat, praise the meat. The meat is both debasement and divinity alike. The meat shall lead us down the path to true enlightenment.

--Doedre's Manifesto

...Doedre Darktongue, an idol of fervor and dedication...

Malachai

--Malachai's Dedication

After losing her tongue to Maligaro, Doedre embraced her new name with even more innovative means of spellcasting.

--Doedre Darktongue, Steam trading card description

While Doedre lacked Maligaro's sense of style, she surpassed her master in pure malevolence.

--Doedre's Tenure Velvet Gloves

Doedre Darktongue knew the Way of the Thaumaturge. In order to receive, one must give... without hesitation.

--Doedre's Elixir Greater Mana Flask

LADY DIALLA, THE GEMLING QUEEN

I was the emperor's favourite, for a time. But Chitus had many favourites. He filled the Sceptre of God with favourites. Every now and then, he cleared away the clutter. Those who pleased him, they were given to his lords and generals. Those who did not...were given to his thaumaturgists.

I talked too much, asked too many difficult questions. I was gifted to Malachai. My dear, troubled Malachai.

--Lady Dialla, "Chitus"

I loved Malachai. He gave me gems, divine jewels for his Gemling Queen...

--Lady Dialla, "Malachai"

1st Caso of Divini, 1333 IC.

"Pretty as porcelain, but her mouth spins like the potter's wheel." That's how I once described Dialla. Yet on this day, my lady is as ravishing as a nightmare, radiant as the fullest moon.

Dialla is my Gemling Queen and we shall rule, side by side, over the world that will soon come to be.

- Malachai

--Journal Entry

He took me by my hand, promised me power beyond compare. But i did not do it for power. I did it for love. And I'd do it again in an instant.

--Dialla's Malefaction Sage's Robe

I walked halfway across this forsaken continent because of an ode. *Of Jewels and Eternity*, it's called.

For twinkled promises
Of jewels and eternity,
The Gemling Queen gave her heart
And body
To the King of Shades
For one more day in the sun,
The last day in the sun.

That's but a portion of the full epic. "The Gemling Queen" lived, and she's the enigma behind the fall of the Ezomytes and the eternals both. ...

--Grigor, "The Gemling Queen"

Dialla has the *form* of a woman, yet the substance is one part corruption and nine parts death.

One day soon, you will see how lifeless she truly is.

--Tasuni, "Dialla"

SEEDS OF DISCONTENT

Volume 1: Kalisa Maas

I never really understood Brektov's work. Just a mess of trills and squeaky highs to my commoner ears. But that was before Kalisa Maas. From the very first note, her voice reached into my chest and

plucked my beating heart from its cage. By the wide, glistening eyes of my fellow punters, I knew that they felt it too.

I've previously stolen a quick nap during the aria that precedes Antonio's disembowelling. Not tonight. The gem at Kalisa's throat sparkled with starlight brilliance as her C sharp shattered every pane of glass in the auditorium. An emergency intermission was called while the stage crew repaired the floods and cans, and a pair of physicians saw to those audience members lacerated by falling splinters.

Now, my suspicion of the Virtue Gems is well-documented. Though general and courtier might fall over each other to have Malachai embed them with these miraculous crystals, it is a travesty of justice that the legionnaires and workers of this Empire should have such mutilations foisted upon them.

Yet, in Kalisa Maas I've seen how these gems may rend apart our mortal bonds and permit our imaginations and souls to truly shine.

I'm adrift in the quandary, no oar in sight. Is Kalisa the Artist or the Art? Is she the same woman I knew before, the young bundle of talent and timidity I had no choice but to adore?

Is she still, in fact, a woman at all?

- Victario of Sarn

--Victario's Writings

Volume 3: Slaves of Virtue

Another shipment of human picks and shovels, bound for Highgate. Ezomytes mostly, care of Gaius Sentari's "civilisation camps". A few dark skins here and there, Karui and Maraketh. Malachai has had his wicked way with them all.

Limbs are stretched, contorted, double and triple jointed. All the better to pluck gems from the cracks and fissures of their home and tomb to be. They squint and cower in the sun, their eyeballs injected with gloom so that they might see in the subterranean night as they would in their warm, homeland day.

The shackled slaves shuffle north as the gems they mine tumble south, a glittering landslide of power and privilege for the fairest of our Eternal citizens. Civilisation is bought and paid for with the flesh and blood of the primitive. It is a debt that will one day need to be repaid.

- Victario of Sarn

--Victario's Writings

Blow it all down! The emperor must have his gems, no matter the cost!

--Trarthan Powder

Sarn's slavers knew all too well that comfort leads to laziness, and nothing spreads faster than laziness.

--Lethargy Crimson Jewel

These shiny baubles we pull out of the rock are worth more than their weight in gold, yet we hardly get paid at all! We should stop work and demand our fair share.

Don't worry! They're just sealing the entrance as a way to intimidate us! They wouldn't dare leave a thousand men down here to die.

--Unknown, Abandoned Shaft Memory

... Vanja: Petarus and I did our research on Adus. ...

Petarus: The General was an eternal commander of the Highgate Legion...

Vanja: He ran a mining camp up here in the mountains. The bastard was the one responsible for controlling Karui, Maraketh and Ezomyte slaves, forcing them into the black bowels of rock fissures in search of gems...

Petarus: ...At least he treated them fairly and as human beings.

Vanja: A slave is still a slave my sweets.

Petarus: For all his faults, the general appears to have been a good man for his time. It's a shame what happened to him...

--Petarus and Vanja, "General Adus"

Volume 4: A Friend in Need

It's one of those summer days in Sarn, when the sweat dries on your skin the moment it dares slither from your pores. Lorenzi and I are sipping coffees, iced with cubes from the North. There's a tremor in his voice as he announces that he is going to see Malachai tonight, to have a gem implanted in his hand. The palm of his left hand to be exact. Once I have run out of expletives and paused for breath while the waiter wipes spilled coffee from our table, I manage to ask him why. "So that I might have the fastest fingers in the Empire," is his reply. Lorenzi, first violinist of the Sarn Symphonic, and my dear friend, is going to become a Gemling.

Ten days pass and Lorenzi's hand is healed. He plays for me, a piece that he has written during his convalescence, something he will debut this evening in God's Theatre. The gem casts a bloody hue over his violin as his fingers fly across the strings. They are an ephemeral blur, too quick for eye or mind to follow. And the music... there's only one experience in my life that compares. The night I had with Marylene before she died.

It has been a month now, and once again Lorenzi and I sip iced coffees together in the Perandus Markets. Though we sit only a narrow table apart, Lorenzi is a world away. The nightmares began a couple of weeks back. He toys absently with the vial that I have bought for him from the apothecary, yet I know he won't drink from it. The soothing of his wits will mean the slowing of his fingers. The music is Lorenzi's life, and to Lorenzi, the music and the gem are one and the same.

A year has gone, and the day is once again hot enough to dry the sweat on my skin the moment it dares slither from my pores. I sip an iced coffee and think of Lorenzi. He played last night, in God's Theatre. Fleet, furious, and wondrous, he was. We passed in the foyer, and I looked into his grey face, his pale blue eyes. I don't know what he saw, but it wasn't me. I don't know what I saw either, but it wasn't Lorenzi.

- Victario of Sarn

--Victario's Writings

THE PURITY REBELLION (1332-1334 IC)

Chitus thought that the Gemling was the pinnacle of human progress. "These glorious gems have brought us within spitting distance of godhood", he once said. The High Templar at the time, Voll of Thebrus, thought they were a perversion. He wanted the Empire made pure, "cleansed of the stain of thaumaturgy". ...

--Clarissa, "The Purity Rebellion"

Book 1: Embers of Insurrection

"He soared to power on the smoke of burning witches". So the surviving Gemlings whispered of Voll of Thebrus, as he donned the Imperial crown on the 2nd Sacrato of Phreci, 1334 IC. But in truth, he was never the sort of man to set a girl alight for merely reading a palm or remedying a bout of the clap.

Righteous and devoted to both faith and country, High Templar Voll struck little hardship in gathering others to his godly cause: Sarn's own Lord Mayor Ondar and Victario, the People's Poet; Archbishop Geofri of Phrecia; Governor Kastov of Stridevolf; and Commander Adus of Highgate. Together, these Warriors of Purity forged an uprising against the Gemling thaumatocracy that Voll hoped would "snatch this empire from the claws of devilry and return it to humanity".

- Garivaldi, Chronicler to the Empire

--The Purity Chronicles

...Marceus Lioneye. Their great 'Hero of the Empire', one of the best slavers they ever had. ...

--Utula, "Slave Pens"

Karui slaves were once bought and sold like pigs here.

--Marauder, on The Marketplace

Marceus commanded the southernmost of the Eternal Legions, here at Lioneye's Watch. Why was he called Lioneye? Crazy fool had his left eye taken out and a golden-hued gem put in its place.

His head must have made quite the pretty adornment for King Kaom's belt.

--Bestel, "Marceus Lioneye"

It's an often-told story among the Karui. How Voll of Thebrus bent his knee to my ancestor, King Kaom, and promised freedom in return for war. While Voll raised his Purity Rebellion in the heart of the Empire, Kaom took Lord Lioneye's head and the southern coast all the way to the Siren's Cove. It was the greatest conquest the Karui had ever seen.

--Maramoa, "The Purity Rebellion"

One by one, Kaom slaughtered the weakest tribe leaders until the others leapt to join his cause.

--Kaom's Primacy Karui Chopper

A gift from Valako, appointing Kiloava as the Herald of War. A title Kaom claimed when he ended Kiloava's bloodline.

--Valako's Sign Topaz Ring

A gift from Tasalio, God of Water, to the chieftain Rakiata. Kaom took Rakiata's head and hand so that his warriors' axes might rise and fall like the waves.

--Tasalio's Sign Sapphire Ring

A gift from Ngamahu, a sign to the Karui to spread like fire. Given to Akoya, but inherited by Kaom with the swing of his axe.

--Ngamahu's Sign Ruby Ring

Kaom's canoe struck this sand with the force of destiny. At his back, the greatest war host in Karui history tamed the wild sea, their canoes coupling with the land, one by one.

Lioneye's Gemlings met us with shining metal and bold words. Hyrri's arrows withered their pride. Kaom's axes silenced their despair. Marceus Lioneye fought bravely, to the last. Kaom honoured him with a place on his belt.

Kaom has shown Wraeclast our Karui strength. Kaom will teach Wraeclast the Karui Way.

--Lavianga, Weathered Carving I

Kaom watched the torches patrol the top of the Watch. He observed the lay of the beach, its barricades and rocks, and his men in their canoes, ready to lay their lives down for him. But when his foot hit the sand, he thought only of the fight.

--Combat Focus Viridian Jewel

Lioneye's men stood at the walls, eyeing the savages that walked the beach below. With a single word, a thousand bodies, and ten thousand arrows, would litter the sands.

--Volley Fire Viridian Jewel

With a fire burning brash in his golden eye, Marceus fired his arrow into the pitch-dark sky, and seared the hope of surprise, from Kaom's skulking horde.

--Pitch Darkness Viridian Jewel

Seeing only foot soldiers, the Sarn Knights cast aside their heavy shields... and paid dearly for their mistake.

--Broadstroke Heavy Quiver

Hyrri loosed a barrage of arrows, tipped with a poisoned hatred only oppression can ferment.

--Hyrri's Ire Zodiac Leather

Even as the tide turned, and victory swiftly became impossible, the legionnaires of Lioneye's Watch stood their ground and fought on, every last man dying a brutal but honourable death.

--Overwhelming Odds Crimson Jewel

Book 3: Fall of a Jade Axe

In a man-to-man fight on open ground, a Gemling Legion would have slaughtered Kaom's Karui warriors like so many pigs in a pen. But Kaom had no intention of engaging Lioneye in a fair fight. By absorbing some heavy losses and feigning a chaotic retreat, Kaom drew Marceus into ordering his Gemlings to abandon their tower shields so that they might pursue and rout the fleeing Karui.

It was not out of recklessness that Lioneye plucked such a decision, but from the experience-born confidence that the Karui did not have archers. Traditionally, Karui warriors are forbidden from using projectile weapons of any kind. What Lioneye understandably overlooked was that this tavukai (sacred prohibition) did not extend to women. At her uncle's behest, Hyrri had traveled to Thebrus and studied archery with Voll's finest military tutors. When the legionnaires shed protection in favour of mobility, Hyrri and her bow-women broke cover and rained death upon the Gemlings from the cliffs above.

A valiant Marceus Lioneye gathered his surviving legionnaires for a final stand within the walls of Lioneye's Watch. Kaom honoured his bravery by wearing Marceus' bejeweled head upon his belt from that day on.

Having secured a safe harbour for landing reinforcements, Kaom continued his conquest of the coast, slaughtering the Eternal citizens and clearing the way for the first ever settlement of Karui upon the Wraeclastian mainland.

- Garivaldi, Chronicler to the Empire

--The Purity Chronicles

There is no Honour without Sacrifice.

--Lioneye's Standard

Everyone is dead and I am alone. The Karui swept through the watch so quickly, we didn't have a chance to flee. Men, women, even children, slaughtered. I'm lucky to be alive. But I cannot return home now. No.

I'd be branded a coward, imprisoned, and hung for desertion. I have no choice. I must make do out in the wilds. Perhaps a farmer will take pity on me. And if not, I have my blade. I will take what I need by force.

--Unknown, Distant Lush Crater Memory

News of Kaom's victory in the south spread quickly. Those in support of the coming rebellion bided their time. The rest fled like rats from a fire.

--Wildfire Crimson Jewel

Still the Karui barbarians advance upon us. Lioneye is dead, his legion slaughtered, along with every Eternal man, woman and child from Lioneye's Watch to the foot of our Axiom. Should the need arise we shall retreat through Prisoners Gate, raising my barricade behind us.

Yet our salvation is at hand. Foul times demand heroic deeds, and through my arts our Lord Brutus will arise anew to defend us. May the dry sands quench their thirst with Karui blood when our mighty Warden delivers his judgement upon them.

--Shavronne's Journal

Shavronne raced to Brutus' side, her last hope against the Karui tide.

--Shavronne's Pace Scholar Boots

... Brutus was Warden of Axiom Prison and one of the most feared men in the Eternal Empire. But there the histories end... and the myth begins, with Brutus commissioning a witch to transform him, in a mad attempt at immortality. A moment of hubris that didn't end well...for anyone. ...

--Nessa, "Brutus"

"Shavronne held Sanity in her right hand and Revelation in her left. Brutus chose the left hand."

- Kadavrus, Surgeon to the Umbra

--Shavronne's Revelation Moonstone Ring

Old axe for brains. Kaom had Eternals dragged from their homes all over the south coast.

Like sheep, he butchered them, no matter how desperately they bleated. He adorned his doorways with the heads of women and children.

What makes a hero or a villain? It depends who you ask.

--Dialla, "Kaom"

Kaom has removed the Eternal stain from this coast. The Empire's citizens decorate our meeting houses with their heads. Our warriors build homes for our families. Our families till the earth, fish the waters, fill the air with song.

The Karui Way is yet a seedling here, but it grows, gains in pride and power every day. Kaom has kept his promise. The time of the Karui has come.

--Lavianga, Weathered Carving II

[These events are also covered in Path of Exile: Origins #1, "The Karui Way."]

DESHRET & THE MARAKETH

This isn't widely known, but Hector Titucius was an Ezomyte by birth.

--Leo, "Hector Titucius"

What little humanity General Titucius was born with, he traded in for strength. Went as far as to have Malachai replace his joints with virtue gems...mad bastard. Afterwards, Emperor Chitus charged Titucius with subduing the Maraketh, a job he took a little too much pleasure in, if you ask me.

--Hargan, "Hector Titucius"

Asenath loosed arrows with almost musical rhythm, a rhythm matched by her nearly inaudible whispers, and the crunch of the dead hitting the dust.

--Asenath's Chant Iron Circlet

... You ever heard of the Wings of Vastiri? Not just another damned artefact. This one was the highest symbol of office for the Maraketh, held by the "Sekhema of Sekhemas". History books say the Wings were last worn by Sekhema Asenath, the Golden Sekhema...the one who went and got herself murdered by Hector Titucius. ...

--Hargan, "The Wings of Vastiri"

... The wings are a treasured piece of the Maraketh heritage. Back when the tribes quit their squabblings and joined hands to battle the Eternal Empire, the wings were seen as a symbol of their unity. The Golden Sekhema wore them as she led the whole bloody Maraketh horde against Sarn? [sic] She was the single greatest hope for the Maraketh, was that Asenath.

Hector Titucius crushed both their hopes and their precious sekhema.

--Hargan, "The Wings of Vastiri"

Book 4: The Red Sekhema's Saddle

In return for her military support in the rebellion, Voll promised Sekhema Deshret the return of the Maraketh grazing lands stolen during the imperial conquest of the Vastiri Plains. The Red Sekhema

agreed on one condition, that she might have Hector Titucius' skin with which to fashion a rhoa saddle.

To this end, Voll and Deshret engineered a trap for General Titucius and his Vastiri Legion. The Maraketh had long been able to predict the comings and goings of the vast and vicious dust storms that constantly plague the plains. Deshret located one such fledgling maelstrom within a day's march of Titucius' camp. For his part, Voll identified a number of imperial spies amongst the Maraketh and fed them false information regarding a potential tribal uprising. Taking the bait, Titucius had his Gemling legion surround the supplied location, thus placing himself squarely in the path of Deshret's dust storm.

On the third Galvano of Vitali 1333 IC, the tempest descended upon Titucius' legion with blinding, deafening ferocity. Deshret's *akhara*, born and raised in dust and wind, swept through the legion, harvesting it like a field of ripe corn. Once storm and Maraketh fury had abated, the Vastiri Legion existed only as a multitude of dust-cloaked mounds. The Red Sekhema claimed her prize and it is said that there is no more comfortable saddle in all of Vastiri than Deshret's.

- Garivaldi, Chronicler to the Empire

--The Purity Chronicles

"Greatly outnumbered, Deshret dressed her personal guard in identical garb. When the Empire rode north, Deshret and her guard took turns revealing themselves, creating the illusion of speed beyond the capabilities of even the Virtue Gems."

- History of the Maraketh

--Careful Planning Viridian Jewel

The Maraketh knew that a mountain path free of vegetation was cut by regular avalanches, and so the advancing Eternals were unwittingly drawn into a deathtrap.

--Frozen Trail Cobalt Jewel

When a woman forgets how to die, a woman forgets how to live.

Deshret said that to her *dekhara* on the day she killed Titucius, Scourge of the Maraketh. ...

--Kira, "Dialla"

The Chamber of Sins? Apparently the late Archbishop Geofri of Phrecia gave it that title. It was built by Emperor Chitus for one Inquisitor Maligaro. ...

--Eramir, "The Chamber of Sins"

I bequeath this Transmutia Device to you, Inquisitor Maligaro, in recognition of your devotion to our sublime Art. May it be the chariot that conveys your dreams into reality.

Malachai, Thaumaturge Laureate to the Empire

--Transmutia Device

... 'The Spike'. Fashioned by Inquisitor Maligaro, it was said to enable the injection of 'Calibric Extantia' into living flesh. Calibric Extantia being the corrupt energies locked within virtue gems. ...

--Helena, "Maligaro's Spike"

Maligaro had an assistant, a man named Raulo. If Maligaro's records spoke truly, Raulo offered himself freely as a test subject. With the Spike, Maligaro injected Raulo with a high dose of calibric extantia, thus gifting the poor man with both endless life and horrific deformity.

In honour of his sacrifice to Maligaro's work, the Inquisitor gave Raulo a new name. Fidelitas.

--Helena, "Fidelitas"

Maligaro was transformed by Raulo's love. Thaumaturgy allowed Maligaro to return the favour.

--Fidelitas' Spike Jagged Foil

Perverse loyalty, blind love, the abuser and the abused reunited in sin.

--Echoes of Mutation

According to his notes, the Baleful Gem was a byproduct of Maligaro's attempts to enhance the already formidable qualities of virtue gems. It was an abject failure yet Maligaro wasn't one to waste his atrocities.

By combining the Baleful Gem with the venom extracted from one of his arachnid subjects, he brewed something called 'Black Elixir'. He proudly proclaimed it to be 'the most potent poison in existence' until it was stolen by a man named Victario.

It was rather entertaining to read Maligaro's intentions for Victario once he caught the man. Twisted...yet I can't fault the Inquisitor's creativity.

--Helena, "The Baleful Gem"

Upon learning of Maligaro's horrific experiments, Archbishop Geofri initiated a massive movement to purge the miscreations and their master.

--Archbishop Geofri, Steam trading card description

Archbishop Geofri the Abashed

Templar and theologian, Geofri was a stoic of the Eternal Faith. He deplored anything thaumaturgical, and was therefore disgusted when Chitus installed Maligaro's laboratory into the Phrecian Forest, not a stone's throw from Geofri's Phrecia Cathedral (now the Fellshrine ruins). It was Geofri who coined the title, "Chamber of Sins" for Maligaro's lab.

Geofri plotted with High Templar Voll to destroy Maligaro and his work, but Maligaro got wind of the building threat. Maligaro's pre-emptive strike put an end to the plot, and to Geofri who was slain with Maligaro's Etcher at the foot of Saint Corutino the Golden Hand's Shrine.

Archbishop Geofri remains in Fellshrine to this day, animated by The Twist into a Brittle Templar of some power.

--Eternal and Diamond Supporter Newsletter #20

[These events are also covered in Path of Exile: Origins #2, "Sons of Virtue."]

RIGWALD & THE EZOMYTES

The Empire poisons our blood with sweet wine.
Poisons our flesh with silk.
Poisons our minds with civil lies.
Poisons our children with servitude.

- The Wolven King

--Deadhand Talisman

We Ezomytes are beasts of burden bearing wealth of an empire on our backs, growing lean and strong while our masters grow fat and weak.

- The Wolven King

--Spinefuse Talisman

You can take a wolf from the forest. You can collar him, chain him. You can starve him, beat him until he whimpers and bows down. Yet, is that wolf a dog?

Never.

A man is only a slave when he allows his heart and his mind to be conquered. When he comes to believe that his life is no longer his own. When he chooses to cast his eyes forever to the ground.

Like a king that chooses to press his lips to the feet of an emperor. A king that looks to his goblet and his plate, feasting and fattening while his people starve in their own streets.

Some might say that I should bear the guilt of regicide. That I killed the King of the Ezomytes. Yes, I served King Skothe his last meal, for I saw no king at that table.

I saw a dog.

- Rigwald, the Wolven King

--Inscription I

I once believed that a boy's eyes were born pure, clear of cruelty and malice. That it is life that teaches one to hate, to strike out at others through anger and fear.

Yet when I looked into the eyes of Gaius Sentari, I found no anger. I found no hatred. I read no tales of injustice inflicted upon youthful innocence. Saw no walls built by suffering and sorrow.

Instead, I was regarded as a merchant might regard beasts of burden at a market. By Governor Sentari, my countrymen and I were counted, weighed, and allocated. This man to the mines. This woman to the mills. This child to the streets of Sarn to be worked and flogged until the day his blood would drain into the sewers of that wretched city.

And those that resisted, those that asked to be treated as anything other than animals, were skinned and butchered, with an even dozen of their kin.

Fear not the man who lusts. Fear not the man who hates. Fear the man who feels nothing at all.

- Rigwald, the Wolven King

--Inscription II

Victario, a fellow warrior of words. He wrote many entreaties to the Ezomytes, begging our assistance in helping High Templar Voll depose Emperor Chitus.

That was centuries ago. Victario's words held much power then. I imagine they still do.

--Grigor, "Victario"

Book 2: Bloody Flowers

High Templar Voll had Victario entreat Thane Rigwald of Ezomyr, knowing that a poet would fare far better than any politician in rousing the romantic Ezomytes to rebellion. Stirred by Victario's impassioned words, Rigwald mustered his blood-bound clans, and on the 3rd Fiero of Dirivi 1333 IC, took to the fields of Glarryn in open rebellion against Governor Gaius Sentari.

Such was the colourful splendour of a thousand tartans and banners that the Ezomyte uprising became known as "The Bloody Flowers' Rebellion". Though Sentari's Gemling legionnaires slew three Ezomytes for every one of their own fallen, the Bloody Flowers won the day through sheer fury-driven courage.

Governor Sentari fled to Sarn, only to return in Astrali with reinforcements drawn from the capital, Vastiri and southern garrisons. Little did Sentari know that, by so weakening those forces, he was playing right into Voll's hands.

- Garivaldi, Chronicler to the Empire

--The Purity Chronicles

"Today, clansmen, my sword is my voice!"

- Rigwald, at the Battle of Glarryn

--Rigwald's Charge Highland Blade

The colours and banners of a hundred clans, scattered like the wildflowers of spring across the meadows of Glargarryn. Thousands of men and women, starving, poor, armed with rusted hatchets and hunting bows, looking across that field, with the courage of desperation, at the imperial legion arrayed against them.

Soldiers gleaming in bronze and steel. Trained and hardened men. Their polished shields forming a wall of discipline and determination against the advances of my motley rabble.

"I sing, I rant, I rave," I said to them, "but today, clansmen, my sword is my voice!"

We crashed against that legion like waves upon a cliff. Time and time again they repelled us. The green meadows became brown and red with the mud of toil and the blood of war. Yet what is a slave to do? Suffer the lingering death of mine and mill, or offer the gift of your life to your people in one bright and glorious moment?

For the men and women who followed me into battle, the choice was a simple one.

Three Ezomytes fell for every Eternal and still the courage of my people tore down that polished wall, severed the strong arm of the Empire with a rusted, woodsman's hatchet.

Gaius Sentari ran for his wretched life.

I called to the Greatwolf to aid me, to give me the scent of that fleeing fox. Though the hunt was swift, I took the time to ensure that Gaius felt some small measure of the suffering he had inflicted before I answered his plea for mercy.

- Rigwald, the Wolven King

--Inscription III

THE SIEGE OF SARN

We are the soldiers of Faith, armoured in devotion. Let the sinners come, for we - the Pure - shall endure!

- Voll of Thebrus, at the Battle of the Bridge

--Voll's Devotion Agate Amulet

...Inquisitor Maligaro, Shavronne of Umbra, and Doedre Darktongue.

If the history books are accurate, High Templar Voll burned Maligaro and Doedre at the stake on his way to lay siege to Sarn. He didn't have to worry himself with Shavronne. Brutus had already sorted her out. ...

--Piety, "The Godless Three"

We, the Court of Reckoning find you, Doedre Stamatis, guilty of the following transgressions against God:

Perversion of God's Creation

Promotion of Heretical Beliefs

Unlawful Enslavement of Eternal Citizens

Torture of the Innocent

Murder of the Servants of Purity

For these most severe crimes, I do sentence Doedre Darktongue to burn at the stake till naught is left but ash. May her life serve as penance for the lives she has taken, and let Purity sweep away the dust of her deeds from our firmament.

- High Templar Voll, Commander of the Army of Purity

--Proclamation

As she was sentenced to death, Doedre was silent. As she was tied to the stake, Doedre was silent. As the flames licked away her life, Doedre was silent. But Wraeclast had not heard the last of her.

--Doedre's Skin Widowsilk Robe

... Whilst investigating the Fellshrine, I learned of the existence of a map, forged by Maligaro from his own viscera. This map allowed him to transfer his spirit into another form of existence, an existential safe house to which he could retreat should death ever attempt to take him. Understanding the map's purpose, Voll tried to destroy it, to no avail, so he locked it away deep within the ruins of Phrecia Cathedral. ...

--Helena, "Maligaro"

... On the last day of Divini 1333 IC, High Templar Voll laid siege to Sarn, his ranks swelled by Ezomyte, Karui and Maraketh rebels under the respective leaderships of Thane Rigwald, Hyrri of Ngamakanui and Sekhema Deshret. ...

- Garivaldi, Chronicler to the Empire

--The Purity Chronicles

INCITING THE PEOPLE TO REVOLT

Victario was a poet what ended up leading a rebellion, right under the nose of Emperor Chitus. But here's what really interests me. Our wordsmith was quite the talented larcenist as well. Pulled off the heist of the century, in the name of the people, of course. Three finely-crafted platinum busts commissioned by Chitus for his favourite trio of generals.

Victario and his cobbers holed up in the sewers. ...

--Hargan, "Victario"

After years of subterfuge, sabotage, and sacrifice, Sarn had become a powder keg just waiting to explode. Finally, Victario lit the match.

--Sudden Ignition Viridian Jewel

Mortality is the mother of life. We have turned our backs on her.

--Victario, Ancient Graffiti I

The Monkey King has built his throne on your back. A throne of gold and gem, polished with blood and tear. Throw off the Monkey King and his shining privy, before your back is broken.

--Victario, Ancient Graffiti II

The gemmed genteel are an infestation. They are the Monkey King's fleas that drink of your lifeblood. Crush them in your work-forged hands!

--Victario, Ancient Graffiti III

The Shadow whispers and simpers at the Monkey King's feet, but when the Monkey King puts his back to the Sun, it's the Shadow that leads the way.

--Victario, Ancient Graffiti IV

If Chitus was the Monkey King, then who was this 'shadow'? Malachai perhaps?

--Scion, on Ancient Graffiti IV

The Monkey King names you 'slave'. No. You are the gems of Wraeclast, not the treacherous stones you dig and die for. It's time to bend the Monkey King's ear. Tell him your true name.

--Victario, Ancient Graffiti V

There is nothing 'eternal' in this empire of ours but the names of our day that shall be revered or reviled in the centuries to come.

--Victario, Ancient Graffiti VI

Eternals would travel from far and wide to see the spectacles of Sarn arena. The gemling diva Kalisa gave her final performance in there for Emperor Chitus himself.

Legend has it, on that same day, the first gemling legionnaire cut through four Ezomyte warriors in less time than it would've taken Kalisa to sing a single bar. ...

--Leo, "Sarn Arena"

Victario: The plan is simple. According to Ondar, Emperor Chitus has been hoarding food in secret storehouses across the city, ensuring that his elite remain well fed and loyal... We're going to tell our starving people where those stores are.

Marylene: There'll be riots! Innocent people will die!

Victario: I know, Marylene, but it has to be this way.

Marylene: Why?

Victario: Chitus will dispatch troops into the city, to restore order and recover the food.

Deshret: Meaning more legionnaires in the streets than on the gates.

Hyrri: Victario certainly knows how to be a distraction.

Victario: The grain gate garrison will be closest to the riots. It will be weakened the most.

--Path of Exile: Origins #3

DEFEAT AT THE GRAIN GATE

Voll stood at the gates of Sarn, and a nation stood behind him. He thought of the righteousness of his cause, and of the glory he would bring to the empire he would soon lead. But as Chitus and his gemlings advanced, he thought only of the fight.

--Combat Focus Cobalt Jewel

Alive but not unscathed, Victario fled as slaughter blossomed at the gates.

--Victario's Flight Goathide Boots

I stood with the Army of Purity and looked upon the mighty walls of Sarn. I fought against Chitus and his Gemling aberrations. I watched the strongest of our army, Ezomyte, Maraketh, Karui and Templar, struck down by creatures of thaumaturgy.

It will take more than strong men and women to defeat Chitus, for this is no longer a war of mud and blood. We face monsters, and to defeat them, we need some monsters of our own. ...

- Rigwald, the Wolven King

--Inscription IV

"... Malachai has given me supreme command of his creations. The heart of each soldier beats in time with the heart of his emperor. If the emperor wishes that beat to stop, it stops. And should my own heart cease, so does the life-blood rhythm of all my loyal soldiers."

--Chitus, Path of Exile: Origins #4

Captain Alsarus,

Remain in the warehouse until I personally send for you. In the unlikely event that Chitus should fall, you and your fellow legionnaires will be safely beyond the perimeter of his heart gem's influence.

You men and women are my finest work yet. I would not lose you all to some aberration of chance.

Malachai, Thaumaturge Laureate

--Official Orders

Book 5: The Emperor is dead. Long live the Emperor!

... Emperor Chitus rallied his freshly minted Gemling Legionnaires and, for a time, looked set to execute an effective defence of the capital. But his efforts were cut short by his closest advisor and friend, Lord Mayor Ondar.

During the celebration of the Night of a Thousand Ribbons, Ondar struck Chitus down with blades tainted with the most virulent of poisons. Yet the emperor's inhuman constitution served him to the very last. Taking up his axe, Chitus cleaved Ondar in twain before expiring himself, in a visceral and calamitous display of thaumaturgy.

Malachai, Thaumaturge Laureate, and his gemling consort, Lady Dialla, were captured by Victario Nevalius' citizen revolutionaries shortly thereafter. With their leadership either dead or detained, the gemling aristocracy of Sarn had no choice but to offer the city's surrender.

Voll and his Army of Purity marched through the gates of the capital and the following day, the High Templar was crowned Emperor Voll the First.

- Garivaldi, Chronicler to the Empire

--The Purity Chronicles

Tonight is a celebration. On this, the night of a Thousand Ribbons, we honour Emperor Chitus for his heroic defense of our beloved capital. Long may he reign!

I feel fear... and hatred. The Emperor stands before me, and I know this is my chance. I strike at him. I pierce his belly, but it is not immediately lethal. I lock eyes with the man. I watch him raise his axe...

--Ondar, Pristine Palace Memory

Ondar not only betrayed his emperor, he betrayed his friend. And in his dying moments, Chitus ensured that Ondar felt the full weight of his guilt.

--Weight of the Empire Crimson Jewel

Emperor Chitus was stabbed in the posterior by his own Lord Mayor on the eve of the Purity Rebellion. Chitus' grieving gemlings buried him in The Imperial Gardens and a plum tree was planted upon his resting place, so that his mourners might taste his glory for years to come. I found that tree, and one of my men tasted its fruit. I've never seen so much agony crammed into such a brief moment. ...

--Captain Fairgraves, "Chitus' Plum"

[These events are also covered in Path of Exile: Origins #3, "Death to Sin," and #4, "The Black Heart."]

AFTERMATH

True to his title, Voll, newly crowned, had many of the Eternal Empire signature extravagances destroyed.

--Emperor of Purity

... When the Emperor Voll took power, Malachai freely gave Lazhwar over to the Purity Courts. Lazhwar was burned at the stake for 'fraternizing with unholy forces'.

--Eternal and Diamond Supporter Newsletter #4

On this day, the 2nd Sacrato of Verusi, 1334 IC, the Army of Purity remembers its most devout and beloved servant, Archbishop Geofri of Phrecia.

As spoken by Geofri:

Only will and truth can prevail

over the evil of our own kin.

- High Templar Voll, commander of the Army of Purity

--Plaque

THE REIGN OF VOLL (1334-1336 IC)

Although a great leader during the war, Voll proved disastrous in times of peace.

--Voll's Protector Holy Chainmail

When Voll took the throne, he swore to care for the empire with eyes open. And so he looked to the salvation of his people, blind to the damnation in his hands.

--The Vigil Crimson Jewel

I'm no history scholar, but I know that Emperor Chitus was overthrown by Voll of Thebrus in the so-called 'Purity Rebellion'. But Voll had the shortest reign of any Eternal Emperor. The cataclysm saw to that.

--Hargan, "The Purity Rebellion"

Chitus was shaping up to be the greatest leader since Veruso. My nephew's gemling thaumatocracy would have made the Empire truly eternal, would have raised mankind up from the fragile muck of flesh and blood. And the wealth... oh the riches that could have flowed through the Empire's capitalist capillaries.

Then that idiot of a High Templar had to come along and ruin it all. Him and his 'God of Purity' and his army of fanatics and barbarians. A veritable horde of ignorance.

If Chitus had lived, the Empire would have lived, and oh what a wondrous and eternal life it would have had!

--Cadiro, "Chitus Perandus"

On the fall of the Empire, the historians are deathly silent. After the Purity Rebellion, the Kingdom of Kaom blockaded Oriath, preventing any trade or correspondence with the mainland. It's said that Kaom planned to invade. Only when the Karui retreated did Oriath get any news from Wraeclast, but by that time there wasn't really anyone left to tell the tale.

--Clarissa, "Cataclysm"

MALACHAI & THE RAPTURE DEVICE

How Malachai survived the Purity Rebellion, I don't know. He was at Emperor Voll's side before Chitus' corpse was even cold.

I suppose Voll found him as difficult to refuse as Icius did.

Malachai would never have risen so far without the patronage of an emperor like Chitus. ...

--Siosa, "Malachai"

Book 6: The Rapture Device

Voll condemned Malachai to the Crematorium for 'living conflagration', but it seems that Malachai's promises have saved him from the pyre. "An end to thaumaturgy," he claims. A fancy that our Emperor is willing to humour.

For over a year now, Malachai has been consigned to the Solaris Temple, forging a mechanism that will purge Wraeclast of its otherworldly vices. Today, the first Fiero of Eterni 1336 IC, Malachai and his Gemling Queen gripped each one corner of a silken mantle and unveiled his Rapture Device. Like a pit of copper snakes it writhes before the eyes. Whether it is a miracle or a monstrosity, none but Malachai can say. Yet tomorrow Voll shall lead the Highgate Legion home, conveying Malachai, Lady Dialla, and this bewildering apparatus north.

North, from whence the first Gems came. From whence the nightmare of Chitus' thaumatocracy was born.

It is in Highgate that our Emperor Voll will finish what he started. He will burn Chitus' empire from history and raise up a fresh and pure theocracy from the ashes of arrogance and corruption.

God be with you, Voll of Thebrus, and with us all.

- Garivaldi, Chronicler to the Empire

--The Purity Chronicles

MALACHAI'S BETRAYAL

"When Voll spared Malachai, accepting his aid in pursuit of Purity, the strongest faith was infected by Corruption and made brittle as glass."

- Victario, the People's Poet

--The Brittle Emperor

As Malachai stepped into the Highgate mines, cold winds billowed from the mountain above. One final, feeble attempt to save what was meant to be eternal.

--Omen on the Winds Viridian Jewel

On this day, the eve of this Rapture's completion, I honour those who have passed and whose passion and knowledge have brought us to the brink of salvation.

Inquisitor Maligaro, a creative force without equal.

Shavronne of Umbra, an aesthete of transcendent sensibility.

Doedre Darktongue, an idol of fervor and dedication.

You taught me far more than I ever taught you, my students...my friends. We strove to make a greater world together and, in your memory, I shall make that world a reality.

Malachai

--Malachai's Dedication

The Rapture Device has absorbed its fill of harvested life from Fury and Desire. It is ready.

So am I.

I know now that I was born to be the end and the beginning of the Empire. The Beast has made this clear to me. As clear and undeniable as the sacrifice I must now make.

My Lady Dialla, my love, my life's greatest achievement. She must leave me now, for she cannot follow and she will perish if she remains.

And so I will ask of her more than she would ever give. I will betray her. I will break her heart, so that I do not break her soul.

--Malachai's Notebook

The Rapture is our hope. Our desperation. It will set the Nightmare to boil, cook that nice big fishy in its own whining brine.

... The Rapture was Malachai's most wondrous creation, the only fire hot enough to burn the Beast from existence.

And its fuel? A gemling queen, blood and flesh and gem. Yet my selfish self did not want to burn away, and so the fire was but a tiny spark. The spark of a cataclysm. ...

--Lady Dialla, "Malachai"

Malachai knew exactly what he was doing when he created the Rapture.

His primary concern...get inside the Beast and take up the reins of true power. And his second objective...incite a Cataclysm that would wipe the very thought of resistance from this land.

The Beast is the source of all thaumaturgy, the one power in this world that transforms 'what is real' into 'what is imagined.'

The entire world is now at the mercy of one man's vision. It won't be the future I imagined, and it won't be the future you imagined, either. While he remains within the Black Core, the only imagination that matters...is Malachai's.

--Piety, "Malachai"

I take no pleasure in this. It simply must be done. Humanity's purpose has been fulfilled... in me. Within this sanctum of flesh lay the tools I shall use to reshape the world.

With this act, I sweep away the trappings of mortality, and bring about a new age. A world of Thaumaturgy, and I, its ruler. Farewell, my Gemling Queen...

--Distant Nightmare Memory

RESURRECTING THE GODLESS THREE

I gave my life. Nightmare gave me so much more.

--Malachai, on opening the first Heart of the Beast

... Malachai gave up much of himself when he became the Beast's prime servant. Both in spirit and in flesh. Yet, in a moment of rare sentimentality, he kept a few pieces. Three vital organs, placed in the safe-keeping of his godless three; Inquisitor Maligaro, Shavronne of Umbra and Doedre Darktongue. ...

--Piety

My heart forces blood through my veins. But one who may bleed may die, and death is no fitting end to genius.

--Malachai's Heart

My lungs breathe the same air as the foolish and the weak. May I be yet another step removed from them.

--Malachai's Lungs

My organs tether me to mortality like a chain. This chain holds me from my true potential.

--Malachai's Entrails

Malachai chose his three most loyal servants to guard those precious innards. His Godless Three. Inquisitor Maligaro, Shavronne of Umbra, and Doedre Darktongue.

If the history books are accurate, High Templar Voll burned Maligaro and Doedre at the stake on his way to lay siege to Sarn. He didn't have to worry himself with Shavronne. Brutus had already sorted her out.

Yet slaves of nightmare seem to be shackled just as tightly to life as they are to the Beast...

--Piety, "The Godless Three"

Malachai's apprentices. Shavronne of Umbra, Doedre Darktongue and Inquisitor Maligaro. You'll find no more devoted servants in all of Nightmare. In life, they were the three finest forgers of corruption in the Empire.

I'm inclined to agree with Malachai on this one. It would have been such a waste to let them languish in death. ...

--Tasuni, "Malachai's Apprentices"

THE CATACLYSM (1336 IC)

The Cataclysm was but the first act in a play of horrors. The dead lingered, and the living began to rot.

--Spreading Rot Cobalt Jewel

Beneath your feet, Creation shivers and writhes. It yearns for transformation like a worm in a cocoon that dreams of wings and freedom. A transformation that only the Beast can excite.

A dark God of ancient sacrifice, a muse to the twisted and vile...the Beast, the Nightmare, the Darkness...names given to it by mortals that think with slugs bound in shells of bone.

Yet, one man knew the Beast's true name, understood its impenetrable nature.

Malachai.

--Tasuni, "The Beast"

Ghasts have no use for words. To speak in nightmare is to speak in emotion and image...in thought.

I see and feel the darkness, and that is how I know that the cataclysm was no accident. Its images are far too rich with intention, far too steeped in satisfaction.

Malachai's satisfaction. Malachai devastated my people, destroyed the Eternal Empire, for one reason. To put himself right where he is now, within the Black Heart of the Beast.

--Tasuni, "Cataclysm"

Malachai is what every Ghast aspires to be. The hands and eyes, the voice and mind of the Beast itself.

I see him in my dreams, forming his designs, crafting his tools, refining the chaos of nightmare into a vision. A future that you and I would not recognise.

That neither you or I belong to unless, of course, we choose to accept the dark embrace.

This is Malachai's greatest work. An act of invention like none other. Should he succeed, he will awaken the Beast.

What then? The Beast is not Death. Life will go on. A life like nothing we have seen before.

--Tasuni, "Malachai"

Nothing is immune to the Nightmare's twisted influence.

--Corrupted Energy Cobalt Jewel

... Malachai is in the Beast's black core right now, harnessing all that the Beast is, and will be. He will destroy this world and forge it anew in the divine image of Nightmare. ...

--Piety, "Malachai"

... Universal transmogrification. ... The power to change the world into anything you like. ...

--Petarus and Vanja, "The Beast"

THE FATE OF ADUS

... Highgate Refinery ... General Adus and his elite legionnaires sought refuge there during the first moments of Malachai's Cataclysm. If they remain, they will be creatures of darkest discipline. Strong men in health and life made even stronger in corruption and death.

--Sin, "Trarthan Powder"

THE FATE OF VOLL

Voll the Pure, they called him. Voll the Murderer, I call him. In his name, an Emperor was murdered. In his name, an Empire was murdered.

Yes, it was Malachai's lips that kissed me. Yes, it was Malachai's hand that led me to the Rapture. No, no and no again. It was Voll's words that put me there.

--Lady Dialla, "Voll"

I vowed to "care for this empire with my eyes open". I lied to my people. I lied to myself. Blinded by my lust for 'purity', I placed my faith in the most corrupt of men.

I watch now as my legion dies, their flesh melting from their twisted bones. They fall...and rise. A tide of mortal death and eternal damnation.

I feel it now in my own flesh. The heat. The corruption.

I have failed you, my Empire of Purity. Do not forgive me but please, I beg of you, survive me.

-*Voll*

--Voll's Confession

The Maraketh speak of his betrayal, but Voll did what he thought was necessary to destroy the Beast.

Now he wanders the desiccation, tortured as much by his failure as by Nightmare.

--Tasuni, "Voll"

Voll and his 'unmen' have dipped their fleshless claws into the lifeblood of the Maraketh since the day this *akhara* tethered its rhoa here.

Such is the way with men of war. Remove their tongues, yet still they thirst for blood. Remove their bellies, yet still they hunger for battle. Remove their manhood, yet still they lust for conquest.

--Oyun, "Voll"

THE FATE OF SARN

I see you. You are seeking answers, because you can find them only in the stories we will leave behind when Malachai and Voll cause our destruction. In this final hour, I entertain the notion that the words I write exist in some form beyond me. Do they go on as dreams? As memories?

I have the wildest notion that perhaps you will find a way to pick up scraps of memory, and you, whoever you are, will come across this one someday. If you do, I ask only this: slay Malachai. Slay him for yourself, or slay him for all the lost citizens of the Empire, but, most of all, slay him for Marylene.

--Victario, Distant Exchange Memory

I write this now in hope that someone will remain. Someone may remember.

The sun is an orb of blood. Twisted twilight shrouds my eyes. The air reeks of anguish. Sarn has plunged into nightmare.

The man who served me coffee now writhes on the floor. He rants of visions he alone can see, as writhing red tentacles grow from his face, as if his eyes had been seeds waiting to sprout. He is quiet, now, my waiter. No more cackling and screaming. Dead.

Of my fellow patrons, only two live. The others have fallen. Their blood is everywhere. The survivors, Gemlings both... their skin shrivels and greys to the hue of necrosis. Their gems flare with unholy lustre. Their eyes... black as... hatred.

A gemling ghoul... it twisted off a corpse's head... gnaws at skull like dog. My head now... visions clawing at me... Thinking burns! I see... horror, envy the mute corpses at my... feet. Words flay me... flee me. All is madness!

--Victario, Ancient Notebook

Sarn fell in the course of an hour, no more. A tempest raged down from the mountains and engulfed the city, throwing it into midday darkness. I saw madness in my colleagues' eyes. Watched as the most rational men in the Empire jabbered and slavered and slaughtered each other.

I witnessed Trinian, our Gemling Intellectus Prime, engulfed by the radiance of his flaming cranial gem and wither, like a grape in the sun, into a thing of desiccation and famishment.

I've seen mountains spew fire in Ngamakanui. I've seen waves as tall as trees and winds that leveled warriors and walls alike. Nature is what nature is.

There was nothing natural about the cataclysm.

--Siosa, "Cataclysm"

... Chitus' Gemlings still rule Sarn. We call them the Undying now.

--Grigor, "Gemlings"

... Emperor Chitus believed the legionnaires belonged to him, that gemling men would beat to the drum of his own crystalline heart. But as the silhouette of the emperor faltered and fell, burned out by the light of true men, some of the legion remained.

The cataclysm turned legionnaire into monster, another mindless man of undeath. ...

--Maramoa, "Gemling Legionnaires"

I visited Sarn some thirty odd years ago. Those ghasts, the Undying you call them, scurried up from the sewers near the river and slaughtered all but a few of my most stalwart lads. Oh they're a foul parody of humanity, those Undying. Nothing in common with a fine, upstanding revenant like myself.

--Captain Fairgraves, "The Undying"

Citizens of Sarn that was...the Undying have been around for hundreds of years. Left to their own devices, they're likely to survive for hundreds more. Still, they're not immune to mortality's touch. They can be killed...with some difficulty.

--Maramoa, "The Undying"

I know, so strange that stone and metal should move and live as you and I. Still, I read that Chitus' sculptors used to soften their materials with 'thaumetic sulphite', a by-product of gem refining. It's the only connection that I can fathom between the cataclysm and the living sculptures of Sarn.

--Clarissa, "Statues"

The winter that followed the Cataclysm was especially harsh. Wraeclast's few survivors fought to the death for the last scraps of bread.

--Fight for Survival Viridian Jewel

In the years that followed the twisted sky, cold winds cloaked Wraeclast in snow. The pure-white blanket masked a black heart that lay dormant deep beneath the earth.

--The Long Winter Cobalt Jewel

THE FATE OF DIALLA, THE GEMLING QUEEN

The Gemling Queen, she's... impossible. How did she survive? Why is she not one of the Undying? ...

--Grigor

Something Eternal remains in this Empire. The question is, how?

--Templar, on the Solaris Temple

THE FATE OF KAOM & THE KARUI

... After the Purity Rebellion, the Kingdom of Kaom blockaded Oriath, preventing any trade or correspondence with the mainland. It's said that Kaom planned to invade. Only when the Karui retreated did Oriath get any news from Wraeclast, but by that time there wasn't really anyone left to tell the tale.

--Clarissa, "Cataclysm"

Black storms descend on us from the North. Unnatural tempests of rage and hatred, lashing our backs, tearing at our houses. The rain is shot with shadow. It withers our crops, sickens our livestock.

And the wind... the wind carries with it a restless spirit that breeds melancholy and madness. A spirit that creeps through our dreams, weaves tales of misdeed around our resting minds. We try not to listen. We try to remember ourselves. Some of us forget.

Brothers fight. Brothers die. Kaom punishes those that quarrel, that steal, that murder. Yet still the nightmares goad us into malefaction.

We Karui are banished from sleep.

--Lavianga, Weathered Carving III

The earth of Wraeclast rejects the dead. The black spirit of storm and dream now reaches into the ground and raises up our slain imperial foes. It leads the fallen from their graves and drives them to fight us beyond the end, rotted tooth and jagged nail.

Our own Remembered have joined their cursed ranks. No longer may we give our beloved to the birds, messengers of spirit to the sky, conveyors of flesh to the earth. Kaom has commanded us to destroy our Remembered with axe and fire. Kaom is the bravest of us, willing to bear the ire of the Ancestors for the survival of his people.

--Lavianga, Weathered Carving IV

The black spirit infects living flesh and bone. The animals suffered first. Their bodies changed. Their eyes filled with a hatred of mankind that is beyond instinct.

Now it is we who must bend and bow like saplings before the seaborn gale. The firstborn of the Kingdom of Kaom greeted us this day. The firstborn of the Kingdom of Kaom was buried this day. Even our children are not spared the black spirit's touch.

What have we done to enrage Wraeclast? We look to Kaom. Our King will lay the spirit of this land at peace.

--Lavianga, Weathered Carving V

Kaom stands before us and looks out to the raging sea. He sings, calls, screams to our Ancestors to come to our aid. He offers them the Gifts of Old, a feast of heart and mind, muscle and marrow, cooked in the fire and rock of this angry land.

We have not practiced these ways in so many years. Only in the darkest of times, most desperate of times, do we perform these oldest of rituals. Only here and now may we sacrifice and consume our own. Only in our King can we trust this return to our ancient selves.

--Lavianga, Weathered Carving VI

Kaom took his 500 mightiest warriors inland to find the source of the crippling nightmares plaguing his people.

--King Kaom, Steam trading card description

I dreamed of my Ancestors' halls. They were empty.

I dreamed of the north, of an offering left to us by Tukohama, an offering that will save the Karui. I needed only to take it.

I gathered my finest five hundred. I brought them here. I claimed what Tukohama had promised me.

--Kaom, Weathered Carving VIII

We read the land, learn its stories. Kaom and his warriors entered those Mines some twenty years before Deshret sealed them and bound our *akhara* to this mountain.

Neither soil nor stone speak of Kaom's return. Now we know why. He became a monarch of Nightmare, like Voll before him. It seems the Beast has uses for those with a talent for conquest.

--Oyun, "Kaom"

We crushed the servants of Kitava beneath our heels as we marched across the land. I allowed not one of my five hundred to fall. The blood of the Ancestors surged in our veins and each and every one of my warriors earned Tukohama's mark upon their skin.

We descended into the heart of Wraeclast, and there He came to me. Tukohama. He asked of me a sacrifice. I gave it willingly. My axe fell five hundred times, the jade drinking its fill of Karui blood.

Tukohama was pleased.

--Kaom, Weathered Carving IX

500 times Kaom's axe fell, 500 times Kaom's heart splintered. Finally, all that remained was a terrible, heartless fury.

--The King's Heart

The Eternals opened the gate and invited Kitava into this land. The Karui paid the price.

Kitava cut us off from the Ancestors, raised the Remembered as His children, tortured our dreams.

Kitava murdered the Karui Way. I will found a new Way, for I have been chosen. I gather my forces so that I might wage war on Kitava. I am the son of Tukohama, and I will lead the Karui back to glory.

--Kaom, Weathered Carving X

The moment your skin touched the corrupted soil of Wraeclast, you were infected. Kitava has soaked this land in his filth. I will crush the corruption from your bones, drain your black blood upon this sacred ground.

Brothers and sisters, I honour you with a warrior's death. Your spirits will fight by my side when we march against Kitava. You will be given in service to Tukohama.

You will be remembered with glory.

--Kaom, Weathered Carving XI

The Beast eats the souls of its prey, devouring their very life force. Those consumed become a part of the creature, existing forevermore as a thrall of twisted nightmare. This fate befell many of Wraeclast's most legendary figures. ...

King Kaom of the Karui - Proud and strong in life, tireless in his hope to bring honor and justice to his people. Kaom was deceived by the call of the creature, lulled by its sweet whispers to complete destruction. His unrequited dreams of conquest live on though, manifested in a physical nightmare of molten rage.

--https://www.pathofexile.com/theawakening/actfour

Kaom is gone. Our King has taken our finest five hundred warriors and descended into the depths of Wraeclast. He spoke to us of a vision, a gift from the ancestors. Kaom has been deceived. The vision was a gift from the black spirit. It has conquered Kaom. The black spirit has conquered the Karui Way.

Hyrri has made ready her canoes. We will take those that are left, five hundred forgotten families, and carry them back to their true homes. Back to Ngamakanui.

Kaom's promises have led us into nightmare. Hyrri will lead us back to the dawn.

--Lavianga, Weathered Carving VII

THE FATE OF DESHRET & THE MARAKETH

The Sekhema rode to the mountain, with her tribe, devoted and strong. And sewed shut the mouth of nightmare, so that it would not consume her world.

--Steel Spirit Viridian Jewel

The Maraketh once stood united under Deshret's Banner. That was before the plagues, the tempests...the corruption.

Deshret rode here with this *akhara*, the Kiyato, to put an end to the Beast's curse. And upon the very threshold of the darkness she faltered.

Perhaps she saw that King Kaom had gone there before her and not returned. Or perhaps the nightmare simply overcame Deshret's seemingly indomitable courage.

Either way, she chose not to ride into the mountain, to slay the Beast. She closed and sealed the Mines and committed this *akhara* to Highgate's guardianship.

The tempests, the plagues...they passed. Of their own accord, or because of Deshret's seal, we do not know.

But what I do know is this. When Deshret vowed to watch over these Mines, she simply traded one curse for another.

--Oyun, "Deshret"

We're trapped down here. Though we strike it again and again, the Sekhema's seal remains unharmed. No one down here can sleep. My throat is parched, yet I feel no thirst.

The foreman is beginning to show signs of madness. He claims the walls, earth, and even his pick have become sticky as honey. I pray death comes for us soon, but I fear we will receive something far worse.

--Unknown, Deep Dig Memory

It seems the mines of Highgate were sealed before everyone could be evacuated... what a terrible fate...

--Zana, on Deep Dig Memory

... Our Red Sekhema sealed that gate for a reason. Not simply to prevent the Beast from reaching out, but to hinder those fools who would disturb its slumber. ...

--Kira

Sekhema Deshret sealed the Mines, trapped the Nightmare within its black den.

The Beast should never have been imprisoned. The Beast should have been destroyed, yet, for all her ferocity, it seemed that Deshret lacked the courage to do so. ...

Deshret's Banner...was taken from her when she fell to Voll, the Brittle Emperor. ...

--Oyun, "Introduction"

The Red Sekhema was the woman who forged what it meant to be 'Maraketh', a people united, strong. Deshret lit fires in the hearts of women and loins of men. When she fell, so did the Maraketh. We've been falling ever since.

--Tasuni, "Deshret"

Yes, Tasuni has informed me of Deshret's existence within the Mines, but has been unable to tell me how she comes to be there. Another troubling hole in our knowledge of Nightmare...

--Oyun

Malachai's apprentices. Shavronne of Umbra, Doedre Darktongue and Inquisitor Maligaro. ...

Poor Deshret. Each had their wicked way with her, you see, their turn at trying to subsume Deshret into the collective corruption. Ingenious, they are. True artists. Had Deshret been in possession of an imagination, they might well have succeeded in creating a Ghast of her. Fortunately for us, Deshret never had such a faculty.

--Tasuni, "Malachai's Apprentices"

...I hear her voice as clearly as if she were sitting right here with me.

Words of a dead woman, reverberating up from the depths of Highgate. A spirit chained, yet not enslaved. Tortured, yet unbroken.

That dead woman is Deshret, and our Red Sekhema longs to return to the dust of her Vastiri...

--Tasuni

THE FATE OF RIGWALD & THE EZOMYTES

Death came to town.
The roaring Ezomytes wore red.
The red of blood,
The red of the fray.

Death came to town.
The crying Ezomytes wore black.
The black of disease,
The black of dismay.

Death came to town.
The silent Ezomytes wore grey.
The grey of twilight.
The grey of decay.

Only the Isles of Skothe were spared. Once, a backwater of my proud civilisation, now... all that remains of the Ezomytes.

--Grigor, "Ezomytes"

Ancient Ezomyte Talismans

Talismans are infused with the power of the First Ones, the primeval gods of the ancient Ezomytes. The creatures of Wraeclast are instinctively drawn to these relics and the feral vigour they impart.
...

--https://www.pathofexile.com/forum/view-thread/1478438

Thane Rigwald, The Wolven King

Rigwald the Wolven King led the Ezomytes during the Purity Rebellion. To ensure the ongoing freedom of his people, he recovered the Talismans of the First Ones and called upon those ancient Ezomyte gods to help him. It was a First One called the Greatwolf who answered, and it soon became apparent that the Wolven King had bitten off more than he could chew.

--https://www.pathofexile.com/forum/view-thread/1478438

I stood with the Army of Purity and looked upon the mighty walls of Sarn. I fought against Chitus and his Gemling aberrations. I watched the strongest of our army, Ezomyte, Maraketh, Karui and Templar, struck down by creatures of thaumaturgy.

It will take more than strong men and women to defeat Chitus, for this is no longer a war of mud and blood. We face monsters, and to defeat them, we need some monsters of our own.

Here I stand, amongst these stones. Here I lay my gifts of blood and song, of flesh and fire. Here I call out to the First Ones, beasts of legend, terrors of our dreams. Here I howl to the Greatwolf himself.

Should he answer, I am ready to pay the price that I know he will ask. It is no more than a man should do for his family. It is no more than a king should do for his people.

- Rigwald, the Wolven King

--Inscription IV

The wolf greeted the king,
In the light of the harvest moon.
The wolf offered the strength of the wild,
And the king paid for it in blood.

--Greatwolf Talisman

Look not upon me with fear, my men. Though I seem strange, even monstrous, were you to see with the eyes of your forebears, your hearts would be filled with wonder.

- The Wolven King

--Monkey Paw Talisman

The Greatwolf has come for me. His heart beats within my chest. His tongue lolls within my mouth. His fangs crown my jaw. His eyes rest within my sockets.

I do not see Ezomyte and Eternal, king and commoner, master and slave. I see only prey.

In the world of street and field, the emperor has fallen. Those who were slaves are now free.

In the world of forest and mountain, the First Ones hunt and feed as they have done since the first dawn.

No longer will I walk among my people. I will not have their blood on my lips. I will not be their king.

I am the King of Wolves now.

- Rigwald

--Inscription V

The Greatwolf has forced me to forget who I was... and has taught me to be so much more.

A man becomes a king so that he may protect the people of the day. A man becomes a god so that he may protect the people of all the days to come.

And so the endless hunt begins.

The fervour of the First Ones remains, bound by the druids into fetishes of tooth and bone, skin and claw. I know where these potent talismans have been strewn. I have their scent.

And so the endless hunt begins.

I shall pursue the thieves of our ancient heritage. I shall wrest our First Ones from the clutching and the corrupted lest they feel and grow fecund on power not their own. Power I must have, must wield, in the name of all that is Ezomyr to come.

And so the endless hunt beings.

- Rigwald

--Inscription VI

THE FATE OF CADIRO

The Perandus Fall

The Perandus reign was brief, cut short by the Purity Rebellion and the death of Emperor Chitus. However, in the months before the revolt, a steady stream of unremarkable carts and wagons flowed from the capital, bearing a secret cargo to the far reaches of Wraeclast. By the time House Perandus fell, Cadiro had managed to steal the entirety of the kingdom's treasury.

--https://www.pathofexile.com/forum/view-thread/1595088

Indebted Guardians

Like many wealthy families of their day, the Perandus family were quick to lend and quicker still to charge interest. They had many debtors. Normally death forgives a debt, but not when a sum is owed to an adherent of Prospero. After the Cataclysm, the deity bound the slain Perandus debtors in eternal servitude, bidding them to forever guard the family's wealth. You will find them near Cadiro's caches, waiting tirelessly for their master's return.

--https://www.pathofexile.com/forum/view-thread/1595088

Stolen Treasures

In the wake of the Cataclysm, the locations of the kingdom's stolen treasures, secreted away in caches throughout the land, were lost to record and tale. Of the Perandus family, only Cadiro remains alive, forever sustained by his devotion to Prospero. He wanders the countryside in search of his lost caches, eager to reclaim them and their riches.

--https://www.pathofexile.com/forum/view-thread/1595088

Now you have the look of a connoisseur, an educated appreciator of all things exquisite and dangerous.

And I, Cadiro, am one who provides such delights. Once a lord of influence and opulence, I am now but a humble peddler seeking to recover his lost fortunes. Gold coins of Perandus mintage, secreted away in gilded chests so as to escape the grasping digits of that puritanical usurper, Voll of Thebrus. Perhaps you have seen such chests on you travels?

If so, I could offer you antiquities of remarkable potency, paraphernalia of pernicious craftsmanship. All I would ask in return is the conveyance of the contents of said chests to my person.

As fortune would have it, I have such a wonder in stock even now. A relic of such formidable agency that I shudder to think what it could do in the hands of one predisposed to use it.

For a little coin, those hands could be yours.

--Cadiro, "Introduction"

Yes, you are quite right to query my curious penchant for obsolete currency.

Once there was a time when my personal symphony was composed, quite completely, of the delightful tinklings of coinage. Nowadays, I'm dancing to someone else's tune.

I have a backer, you see, who generously supports my ongoing liquidity. Naturally, he expects a good return on his investment, and it transpires that only coinage of the golden variety will satiate that expectation.

--Cadiro, "Perandus Coins"

When you're a *fat purse* such as I, you are wise to insure yourself against being slit and emptied. In the face of Voll's ridiculous crusade to Highgate, I thought it only prudent to bolster my insurance policies.

It was in our household god, Prospero, that I found my ideal underwriter. While my relations paid tithe and lip service to Prospero the symbol, Prospero the myth, I chose to dig a little deeper than that.

To my delight, it transpired that our god was not only real, but of a similar opinion regarding the near, uncertain future of the Empire.

We signed a contract, Prospero and I, and more than two centuries have borne witness to our successful partnership.

The best deal I ever made.

--Cadiro, "Cataclysm"

The god of lost souls and found treasures. Lord of the underworld and all its material bounty. Gems, precious metals, coal...a myriad of subterranean substances, exotic and volatile. If it has value and it can be unearthed with pick and shovel, it falls within Prospero's divine concerns. As do all those who trade in them.

Prospero was a god of our ancestors, the Azmerians. As we Eternals descended from those mountains, our gods descended with us.

To the mundane mind they are myths, nothing but stories. To those with a little more imagination, they can be so much more.

--Cadiro, "Prospero"

Upon death, our bodies return to the ground. Those that are marked with darkness nourish the corruption. Those that were mighty in life are stolen away.

They are carved and crafted, manipulated with malevolent creativity into becoming Malachai's servants. Forged into Ghasts of pure Nightmare.

--Tasuni, "Ghasts"

I haven't slept. No-one has slept. Not for three days, not since the black storm in the northern ranges. Not since the nightmares began.

Violent and twisted night terrors. They whisper to us, tempt us, threaten us, beguile us. They promise terrible things in return for even more terrible acts.

My husband, Denirus, went to Alliston to find a doctor who might help. He should have been back yesterday. I fear for him. I fear for all of us.

-Tani

--Etchings on Wood I

It has been a little over a week since the black storm.

My husband has not returned and sickness now sweeps through our village. Many have died and those that lived have... changed.

These were folk we once called neighbour and friend. Now they limp and stagger through the night, their deformities as grotesque as the madness in their eyes.

-Tani

--Etchings on Wood II

The moon was full the night of the black storm. It is full again.

They have come for me. They have come for my daughters. Bravalo called out while the others skulked and muttered in the darkness. Corin went to them, arms open, welcoming. The nightmares told her to.

My uncle tried to stop her. Bravalo crushed his skull with his smith's hammer. I barred the doors and windows but they screamed like monkeys and beat themselves bloody trying to get in.

I had no choice. I took my two youngest and fled through the cellar, following the tunnel to the mill.

All we can do is hide and hope. God help us.

-Tani

--Etchings on Wood III

Three lunari gone now, since it all began. Perhaps I am the only one who still looks upon Lunaris, who remembers her name. Soon, I will be gone and the moon will go on, alone.

My husband has returned and he hunts for me. My dead husband hunts me. Corin too, and my uncle. Corpses rise and walk and feed. My girls, they walk now... and feed.

God has forsaken us. Lunaris is my witness. Tonight, I return to my family.

-Tani

--Etchings on Wood IV

Arrol, the Merry Gull's cook, washed up on the rocks over yonder. Dead as a doornail he was. Buried him myself.

Then a few days later I see him on the beach... a little worse for wear, but upright, shuffling about. A land full of disturbing surprises, this Wraeclast.

--Bestel, "Drowned Dead"

The Eternal Empire has some right nasty leftovers. Whether it's something in the air or in the water, no one stays dead long in Wraeclast... not the first time. Can take a little while, but sooner or later corpses wake up and go looking for breakfast.

--Tarkleigh, "Drowned Dead"

THE CORRUPTION OF NATURE

There is land that has forgotten the Spirit. Some man told the rocks and water a different dream. Now, the rocks and water think they are Man.

--Yeena, "Elementals"

My father's writings frequently referenced the work of other researchers. In particular, the heretical belief that the environment can influence a creature's form. In Wraeclast, we see the effect that corruption has on beasts, humans, even the dead. ...

--Zana, "Corruption"

The forest children are ill. Once they drank from fruit, ate nuts and berries. Now they drink blood, eat brain and heart. This land is in a nightmare from which it cannot wake.

--Yeena, "Blood Apes"

THE AWAKENING (1599 IC)

...within, at the heart of the mountain, lies a terrible, slumbering evil.

Generations of Maraketh guarded the Deshret Seal, but their vigil has ended. The creature under Highgate, nightmare incarnate, has stirred from its sleep. It threatens to unleash a second cataclysm that will extinguish life on Wraeclast.

The Beast's Awakening is not gentle. The very core of Wraeclast trembles with the violence of its stirring. Its raw malevolence sends ripples of corruption coursing through the world. The creature grows stronger by the day. ...

--https://www.pathofexile.com/theawakening/actfour

THE TEMPLARS

... That sigil...? It's a Descry, from when the Templar truly stood for something. To the ancestors of Oriath, the Descry was a flickering torch in the night. A source of inspiration and comfort.

Sad thing about torches... they go out.

--Eramir, "Fellshrine Ruins"

You forget that your Templar leaders wear masks...

--Riker Maloney, on being betrayed by Elreon

INNOCENCE & THE FIRST HIGH TEMPLAR

The Sign of Purity... Apparently it was a gift from Innocence to the first High Templar, Maxarius. ...

--Vilenta, "The Sign of Purity"

Deep in the Templar's Ossuary, in the company of the dead, there lies the Sign of Purity.

Innocence bled himself for the creation of that cruel and desperate weapon. Tempered in his own ruby ichor, it was forged to be a transcendent tool of punishment and purification. The Sign is a living agent of righteousness, or at least, the dubious kind of righteousness that my brother subscribes to.

Innocence found, in the first High Templar, a most faithful servant and gifted the Sign to him, so that it might be used in times of great need. The great need of Innocence believers, that is. Humanity's general well-being has never been of particular concern to my brother.

--Sin, "The Sign of Purity"

The Sign of Purity? Let's see...a staff, bathed in innocent blood. No, sorry, bathed in the blood of Innocence. Yes, Innocence gave a part of his divine self to the thing and gifted it to the Templar.

Now that I recall, I read a tome about it when I was a cadet. Bloody long time ago. I skipped most of the boring pages, so only remember the bit where High Templar Maxarius 'smote with flame the army of the faithless with one ray of its hallowing light'. The book's words, not mine. ...

--Bannon, "The Sign of Purity"

THE KARUI SLAVE TRADE (CA. 1320 IC [BASED ON CHITUS' REIGN])

... The Karui haven't had an easy history. Colonised, enslaved, used as pawns in many a war...

--Tarkleigh, "Karui Revenants"

Take a deep breath. Inhale the twin stink of exploitation and oppression. Yes, these pens and cells have been our home away from home since the first Karui were brought here by Marceus Lioneye. Their great 'Hero of the Empire', one of the best slavers they ever had.

Not that he was the only one. Captain Sigmund Fairgraves funded many an expedition off the whipped backs of Karui children. High Templar Dominus was only the latest in a long line of men to grow rich by trading in misery.

Oriathan wealth was built on Karui poverty. Oriathan gold will forever be stained red by Karui blood.

--Utula, "Slave Pens"

Founded by Marceus Lioneye as a supply station for his campaigns against the Karui. In its day, Lioneye's Watch could be defended by just a small garrison of well-armed legionnaires. ...

--Tarkleigh, "Lioneye's Watch"

The Karui remember you, Fairgraves. Your death will be much celebrated.

--Marauder, on killing Fairgraves

... After the Purity Rebellion, the Kingdom of Kaom blockaded Oriath, preventing any trade or correspondence with the mainland. It's said that Kaom planned to invade. Only when the Karui retreated did Oriath get any news from Wraeclast, but by that time there wasn't really anyone left to tell the tale.

--Clarissa, "Cataclysm"

THE CATACLYSM (1336 IC)

This could've been Oriath, yet The Cataclysm didn't reach across the sea. Why not?

--Scion, on the Slums

At age thirteen, carving knife in hand, I killed beasts for the amusement of the filthy. At fifteen, they thought me worthy to fight a fellow man.

A butcher he was, twice as big and twice as stupid as I. I butchered the butcher and many like him, earned my way, kill by kill, out of the offal pit and into the Grand Arena.

I thought I would find wealth and glory in the arena. I was wrong. I found something far more precious. My Lady Merveil.

--Daresso, Plaque I

With one motion, I cleave a man in twain. A kick sends another flying, and the roar of the crowd swells. I am their idol!

I was always meant to be at the top of the pile. Nobody else can compare. And this tiny man, this new challenger, Daresso, will fall like the rest to the might of Barkhul.

-- Barkhul, Bloodsoaked Arena Memory

Welcome to the Grand Arena of Theopolis. It is here that I first laid eyes upon my true purpose, my lady Merveil. It is our inspiration that defines us. What do you fight for, Gladiator? Hundreds of warriors tried to lay claim to the same title as I, but I defeated them all. Victory goes not to the able, but to the ambitious.

--Daresso

I knelt in the sand of the Grand Arena, awaiting the killing blow. I raised my eyes to look upon my death.

Instead, I saw her. Merveil. Her beautiful eyes met mine, and I knew that she saw me too. I turned my opponent's strike and killed the man with his own dagger.

Fighting had always been about survival. The primal instinct to kill or be killed. Now the fight became about something else. Love.

--Daresso, Plaque II

"To know for what you fight. To get up again when you've been stuck down. To outmaneuver someone faster, trick someone smarter, crush someone stronger. That's what it takes to claim the crown."

- Daresso, the King of Swords

--The King's Blade

The previous King of Swords was a giant of a man, both faster and stronger than I. Yet I needed only look up at my Lady Merveil to know that I had no choice. I could not die this day.

I made him shiver under ever parry, striking with all my might, so that my arms felt they might snap with every impact. All the while, I studied his face, watching for that moment when he began to doubt. It took an hour, but finally it was there.

Burning with pain, empty with exhaustion, I stepped inside his faltering swing and I slit the giant's throat.

I did not take my victory bow. I knelt in the sand, looked to Merveil, and cried out for my Lady's hand in marriage.

From that day forth, I wore the Crown of Swords upon my head and a ring of eternal love upon my finger.

--Daresso, Plaque III

I offer to you an eternal oath that binds your heart to mine; a bond that not even death will break. Will you accept?

- Daresso, to his beloved

--Star of Wraeclast Ruby Amulet

Standing behind iron bars, Daresso thought of his adoring fans cheering his name, his wife's warm embrace waiting for him, and of the celebrations that would soon be thrown in his name. But when the arena gate lifted, he thought only of the fight.

--Combat Focus Crimson Jewel

If the history books are to be believed, Daresso the Daring presented the necklace to Merveil on bended knee. And from the moment he placed that little chunk of Wraeclast at her throat, Merveil began to sing. It's told her sweet voice grew to fill even the largest concert halls of Oriath, and brought warmth to even the coldest of hearts.

But then she began to change. Her mind and body twisted, as did her songs. The sweetness remained while the sanity fled. Knowing what little I do about the powers that lie dormant here in Wraeclast, I'd surmise that if you have Merveil's necklace, you have the Siren's voice.

--Captain Fairgraves, "Merveil's Necklace"

Daresso gave me the gem, kissed me, promised that he would be by my side forever. I sang for him. I sang for Oriath with his gem at my throat. Kalisa's gem. Kalisa's voice.

I sang in her echo, performing arias that had once made the Empire weep. I listened to Kalisa's lullabies in my dreams. I gave myself to her music. Mind...and body.

Daresso left me, for Sarn, with a promise to free me from Kalisa. I begged him not to go. Tried to show him the wonder of my transformation, the beautiful daughters he would soon meet. He couldn't see. None of them could see. I fled from their hatred.

When Daresso returns I will cast his cure away. I will teach him what true love is.

--Merveil, Damp Diary

It's him! He sails back to me, my Daresso! I shall sing for him. I shall show him the way. Come, my love. Come to me. We shall be together at last.

No, turn away! Don't listen to my singing, you'll die upon the rocks! Turn away...! Turn away... Turn away...

-- Merveil, Eroded Chamber Memory

If you have to quench your curiosity about Merveil, go look at the corsairs that haunt the grave of ships. Like any mother, Merveil's got hungry mouths to feed.

--Tarkleigh, "Merveil"

It's a bit of an embarrassing affair, truth be told.

Thought I could return to the golden days, you know? Be a terror of the high seas like in me youth. Problem was, they'd all forgotten me. Those young blighters sailing about, they had no clue who I even were! Figured if I could complete another great feat, like slaying that sea-bitch Merveil, maybe that'd earn me my respect back.

Arr, suppose I don't need to tell you; that girlie's stronger than she looks. All it took were one slip of the old hands and next I knew, the Black Crest were wrecked against the coast and I'm getting meself eaten alive by that hag.

Peeled each separate muscle from my bones, she did. I'll tell you, it weren't pretty.

--Weylam Roth, "Merveil"

Welcome, husband. We knew in our hearts that you would find us. Come, Daresso, Ambrosia and Amarissa must meet their father. Come, my love. Return to your family.

--Merveil, Sailor's Skin

Daresso? Yes, Petarus has spoken of him. The disturbing question is this:

How does a man who, by all accounts, has been dead for over a hundred years end up as a Nightmare monarch in the bowels of Highgate?

Unlike Kaom, there is utterly no trace of his passing, and we have scouted every footstep of this mountain and its surrounds. There is no other entrance. No physical entrance. ...

--Oyun, "Daresso"

Petarus: Daresso? He's down there, inside the mountain?

Vanja: Are we talking about *the* Daresso? The Sword King?

Petarus: Seems like it. But... how did he get in there? He left Oriath about a century and a half ago, hoping to find a cure for his lady, Merveil. He would have had to fight his way through the Maraketh, but... Oyun's never mentioned anything of the sort.

Vanja: Maybe he didn't go in alive.

Petarus: What do you mean?

Vanja: We live in a land where the dead walk and *things* like Dialla live for centuries.

Petarus: You think he died somewhere else and then the Beast got hold of him?

Vanja: Could be.

Petarus: Well, if the Beast can do that, then... what bloody good was Deshret's Seal?

Vanja: Exactly.

--Petarus and Vanja, "Daresso"

The Beast eats the souls of its prey, devouring their very life force. Those consumed become a part of the creature, existing forevermore as a thrall of twisted nightmare. This fate befell many of Wraeclast's most legendary figures.

Daresso the Sword King - A peerless gladiator, the best the world has ever seen. Daresso ascended from humble orphaned slave beginnings to the pinnacle of gladiatorial glory. Driven by a mad hope to purify his lost love Merveil, he abandoned reason and caution. Daresso's living nightmare chronicles the arc of his pitiable legacy, a story of loss, desire and reckless ambition. ...

--https://www.pathofexile.com/theawakening/actfour

... Daresso, King of Swords. Damned by Desire. Oh, aren't we all? He's down here too, and Desire's curse remains his to bear. ...

--Lady Dialla, "The Eternal Nightmare"

HIGH TEMPLAR VENARIUS

I was a happy child, before the cruel truth was revealed to me. I fight so that the children may remain ignorant.

--Circle of Nostalgia Amethyst Ring

A man in uniform visits. He is from the Courts. He says the Templar have alms for widows like my mother, but she must collect it in person. We go to the church together, and I wait outside in the gardens. The sun is setting. I don't know how long I've been sitting here.

Mother comes from around the rear. She looks pale. Her eyes are red, and her clothes are torn. She doesn't look at me but she grabs my hand. We walk home in silence. I lay awake in bed. I hear her crying. The man comes over often after that, with toys and food, but I don't like him...

--Venarius, Palace Grounds Memory

People stream down the street towards Oriath Square. I hear their shouts and cheers, and when Mother isn't looking, sneak out to join the merry crowd. Just outside the pens, a Karui boy, no older than I, stands atop the gallows.

I see by the sign around his neck he has been caught stealing. I swear I will not look away, but fear overtakes me. I hear the rope snap taut and the crowd cheer, but I fight back the tears...

--Venarius, City Park Memory

The stench convenes around me thicker than the press of the vagabonds themselves. Though starving, their strength while holding on to one another is surprising. I'm trapped in a knot of ragged bodies, and the men of the Church clap me in irons despite my cries.

I'm not one of them! Can't you hear me? I'm not Maraketh, nor homeless, and have committed no sins. That ship is not for me! Why won't you listen?

... I feel it: at eight years old, I was almost exiled by mere happenstance. If my mother had not found me and gotten the Templars to release me, I would have been lost...

--Venarius, Distant Landing Memory

I sacrificed a life of love for one of responsibility, so that she, and others like her, might be kept safe.

--Circle of Regret Topaz Ring

... Yes, I remember watching their mighty parades through Oriath Square as a child, and I can still feel that sense of satisfaction the day I truly donned the mantle. All of the pain and sacrifice was worth it, to do good, to protect mankind... to protect the children...

--Cavas, "Cavas' Past"

The Courts are burning. Accusations fly. Sinner! Heretic! I am but an initiate, and my patron urges silence. We will keep our heads down while one High Templar supplants another. It's all about power, my patron whispers, and we have none.

Should an accusation fall our way, we shall be doomed to die with the other accused. Be unseen and unheard, he whispers. This is what happens when men who seek power refuse to wait. I learned a valuable lesson that day: Trust without leverage is vulnerability.

--Venarius, Distant Courthouse Memory

... That was the moment Venarius decided to seize life and vie for power. That was the moment doom for men like my father was assured.

--Zana, on Distant Courthouse Memory

The judge determines worthiness by comparison to the paragon: himself.

--Mask of the Tribunal Magistrate Crown

I condemned an innocent man to the pyres, but to admit this mistake is to condemn myself. My only choice is to strive harder.

--Circle of Anguish Ruby Ring

My subordinates circled me eternally, attuned to the slightest weakness, ready to tear me apart for their own gains.

--Circle of Fear Sapphire Ring

I was a Templar, yes, but now I remember that I secretly despised them. I understood that they were a diseased organization prone to brutal oppression. ... I cannot imagine my resentment would have gone over well with my superiors. Maybe I kept my thoughts to myself and lived a life of quiet desperation, but I feel like I was the kind of man to act.

So what did I do?

--Cavas, "Cavas' Past"

Out of sight, out of mind. No one speaks of the cursed land anymore. That has made it quite simple to send our smugglers out in search of powerful Eternal artifacts.

We knew of the gems, but we did not know of what Malachai called his 'muse.' The smugglers have returned with rubbings of the device they found. They call it 'miraculous.' I know a thing or two about miracles, so I will be the judge of that.

--Venarius, Distant Landing Memory

What is it? You know I am not to be disturbed during my communion with God-- it's here? Well get it to the lab immediately, and do not disturb me again, lest I take your head!

I feel a rush of excitement as I review the contents of the crate. The pieces, aged as they are, still hum with energy. I can feel its potential, and it fills me with hope and terror. I cannot assemble it, but I know who can. I need only apply a little pressure...

--Venarius, Ritual Memory

THE ELDER AND ITS DREAMLANDS

...the Templar kept many artefacts hidden deep beneath the city streets...they hoped to hide forever.

I think it's time to pull back the veil. There's an entrance to the Templar Laboratory not far from here. My father used to sneak me inside as a child. He never could stand the long work days apart...

--Zana, "The Templar Laboratory"

I am Valdo Caeserius, chief Arkhon of the Oriath academy in Theopolis. Servant of the High Templar Venarius.

I begin these writings as a record of events transpired, in hopes that the penning of such horrors will help bring sense to the matters at present. Some time ago, I was commissioned in the repairing of a strange device delivered into my hands. A golden machine found broken in the ruins of Wraeclast. Believing it to contain some dark infernal secret, the High Templar asked that I restore it and weaponize whatever powers it might contain.

Though I saw it as mostly inconsequential at the time, it is worth noting, my daughter, a quiet young thing of five, suffered nightmares and tantrums unlike any I'd seen, during those former weeks I

spent working on the device. I'd assumed that she missed her mother and was going through a rough patch grieving. Now, however, I can't help but wonder if perhaps it was a sign.

I'd considered refusing Venarius, though not in any serious nature. Though my personal politics remain my own, I've often struggled to follow his instructions and rule - filled with such malice and hunger. Regretfully, I accepted his orders, for I know of many families who have refused the High Templar before. They have all vanished now.

--Book of Memories, Page 1

It's all a blur... My father was the chief Arkhon for High Templar Venarius - a cruel and pernicious ruler. Venarius wished to hold the world ransom with his occult relics from the rubble of Wraeclast, he believed they could venerate him even higher in his status.

My father was forced to experiment on the map device for him, in hopes that he would uncover some kind of weapon. I don't need to tell you that my father found something worthy of attention. And instead of handing it over, he made sure its power could not be misused, a surety that cost him his freedom and me... my childhood.

--Zana, "The Shaper"

The device lay on my work table, shattered and in pieces. I'm ashamed to admit now that not once did I ask of what design it belonged to. Rather, I busied myself on all the little pieces, ignoring the sum of its parts. I pondered on how it had been structured for days on end, until at last, a creeping dread submerged me.

I was unable to rebuild this relic - whatever it was. Though it seemed to be mostly functioning, something... important appeared to be missing. Worse still, it seemed as if the part required, well... it didn't exist. Not in our reality anyhow. The thing that made it tick, the thing that was mysteriously vacant, I could only conceive of in the half-baked imaginings of my own mind.

My thoughts felt like a fleeting dream during the first few minutes of waking. I worked tirelessly in search of answers, exhausting myself beyond what I'd ever done before, until finally, at the base of that cruel device, I fell into a deep, deep sleep.

--Book of Memories, Page 2

I awoke in the most beautiful of places. The skies were blue, unlike the greyness of Oriath. Birds fluttered through the air, singing pleasantly. Around me, a warm wind brushed my face, and tall grass tickled playfully against my skin. I couldn't know where I was, though even then I suspected the place was somehow connected to the infernal mechanism lying dormant on my workbench.

As I wandered this strange new land, I felt a growing sense of realization that I was not alone. Exploring the fields of tall grass, I sought a peace within the brush. It was in that moment that I met a fellow wanderer. It was a Shade - a whisper of embodied smoke, barely heard or seen amongst the

vegetation. It rose and spoke to me not through language, but through thoughts and pictures, colours and emotions, bursting into my mind like water, billowing up through cracks in the earth.

The Shade welcomed me to its land and asked how it was that I arrived. Eager for answers, I found myself enthusiastically volunteering information in detail of Oriath, of my daughter and of course, the strange and mysterious device I suspected had lead [sic] me to this place.

--Book of Memories, Page 3

...like a temptress, the dreamlands seduced him...

--Zana, on receiving Memory Fragment 3

With the patience of a prowling lion, the Shade watched the Scholar.

--Cyclopean Coil Leather Belt

The Shade nodded thoughtfully. It knew of the device. The machine was a doorway between my world and the dreamlands, I was told. The device had been lost. Broken and torn apart by villains and thieves. The Shade was overjoyed to hear it found, and offered to help me rebuild that final missing part.

It seemed too good to be true. We would open the gateway between worlds, and then, all the goodness of these lands would flow out into Oriath leading us into a new age of prosperity. I agreed wholeheartedly - for I feared, and I still do fear, what will become of my daughter under High Templar Venarius' reign. All that the Shade asked of me was to return the favour, when the time came.

And as I lay down in the cool grass bathing myself in the soothing sun, I found that sleep once more took my body, only this time, when I closed my eyes there, I also opened them in the cold, empty darkness of my study...

--Book of Memories, Page 4

Weeks passed. The sun set and the moon rose countless times. And every night, I found myself asleep at the foot of the strange device, awoken to the reality of another world inside my own. I would transition into the dreamlands.

In my sleep, I would apprentice myself to the Shade, allowing it to teach me the ways of this strange place. I learnt how to shape and build things from my imagination, forming them in thin air as if by some great, thaumaturgical marvel. It was through this tempering of the mind that I, under its instructions began rebuilding the missing component of the device. And most exciting of all, how to transport such phantasmagorical treasures back into the world of man.

When High Templar Venarius visited during Oriath hours, I'd lie to him and make excuses. Arrogantly, I didn't want him to know of the power I'd uncovered. I wanted these dreamlands to be my secret, to belong to me and me alone. Not even my daughter could know...

--Book of Memories, Page 5

The day came when the missing part of the great device had finally been formed. A bizarre segment meant to hold mystical images of ancient maps. It was on this day that the Shade requested its one favour.

I was shown suddenly images of the past, of the Shade's once proud rule as King of all the dreamlands. I saw his good and noble kingdom, and the shadow that fell upon his domain. A sect of hateful men and women - The Watchers of Decay rose up to destroy the Shade. Questing to control the land, these terrorists fashioned a powerful blade meant to divorce the King's spirit from his body and curse it to wander his former kingdom while his body blistered in stone.

I was mortified! How could people do such cruel things to this humble creature? And where were these villains now? Had they been the same ones whom had made off with the device? Had they been the ones who severed the connection between worlds and ruined its function?

The Shade led me deep into a dark forest and revealed to me in the depths of a forgotten cave, a statue, cast from black marble, pierced by what I assumed to be the very same sword from my visions. The effigy was frightening. Utterly terrifying to behold. The creature it depicted - a violent and abhorrent thing, stood amidst an altar of ancient wood and bone. I felt a chill go up my spine as in that moment, the Shade closed in behind...

--Book of Memories, Page 6

Pull the blade from my chest. [sic] the Shade imposed upon my mind in both image and thought, "remove [sic] the sword. Free me." But as I found myself reaching out to do as asked, a great horror came upon me and for the first time, doubt entered my mind. I wondered if this creature was who it had told me. I resolved to hold off for a moment, to ask more questions and discover a greater understanding of the Shade, and so in trepidation, I refused.

At merely the suggestion of rebellion, the Shade flew into a fury! It flamed red, full of rage! And though it could not speak, it made its intentions very clear. I felt my mind torn asunder as images of murder and mutilation were forced upon me. I was... doing things. Terrible things to the ones I loved... to my daughter.

I fled in a panic, running from the cave, through the dark forest, cursing myself for ever trusting such a strange creature so blindly. At last, in desperation, I found a small, abandoned fox-hole and burrowed inside. The Shade passed by, still flaming in anger, searching desperately for me. It was in that dark damp hole that I trembled with revulsion and terror, weeping in silence until at last I fell into sleep returning once more to my laboratory.

Once back, I fled into the streets, arriving home in the dead of night. Bursting through my daughter's bedroom, I woke her and hugged her tight, shaking and crying as I did so. Promising that I would never, ever, let her go again.

--Book of Memories, Page 7

Months have now passed since my horrifying descent into that fox-hole, since the Shade revealed its true nature. Every day, the slimed and poisoned tendrils of fear grip ever tighter into my flesh, and each morning, I lock myself inside my study, delving into the darkest tomes one can find, searching for some infernal, occult knowledge that might save us from the thing I fled.

I'd almost given up hope, so little did I really know about the Shade and its "dreamlands". That is, until this morning when a shipment arrived for me from Eramir, a scholar whom I greatly admire. Sifting through the countless fragments of parchments and books he has sent me, I have found at last, some information which could be of some use.

These Watchers of Decay did indeed exist at one time in our world's distant past, and now, I've some of their work! The truth of their history... it's... it is so unutterable that I hesitate even now, to write it down, to put the words to my own journal. Yet I am an Arkhon and us Arkhons record all...

--Book of Memories, Page 8

They called it the Elder. A creature of malignant madness, born of that oblivion from before time itself began. Once only an abstract expression, the Elder was given physical form. It entered our realm. It fashioned for itself a bauble of chaos and secret worlds to use as a kind of... hunting ground. This "bauble" is undoubtedly the dreamlands I've uncovered.

The Elder came here out of hunger. Preferring victims of a younger flesh, it became the bogeyman, dragging our children off into the night, casting them into its realm of shadow and feasting upon their nightmares undisturbed, for it was imagination that truly satiated it.

With such sustenance, the Elder deigned to cultivate something. To... sustain and birth forth its true goal. Its true self. The Oblivion from outside time and space. The Decay.

By the gods... Even now as I write this, I feel my hand trembling, and I struggle to keep my mind on the task ahead... The Elder. It cannot be killed. The Watchers, they built the device, so as to travel to and lock tight its kingdom of torment, bringing with them the blade I saw - Starforge - it [sic] was called. A weapon capable of divorcing agency from form, to give the Elder a kind of eternal rest... There in its den, amongst the gibbering nightmares of child victims, the Elder became trapped. Starved. Unable to hunt. Held in ungodly chains.

The Elder's form may be trapped in stone. But its agency roams free. I have met it. What if someone else were to enter the dreamlands and encounter the Shade? What if Venarius...? My meeting with the Elder, must have invigorated and refreshed its fervour. I must find a way to put a stop to it, before it finds a path to freedom. If not for my own sake, then for that of my daughter...

--Book of Memories, Page 9

They hoped that, trapped in its prison, the creature would age and perish. But time would not touch the fiend.

--Nebuloch Nightmare Mace

Though its body was locked in stone, its essence wandered the infinite, learning, and preparing.

--Impresence Onyx Amulet

It appears my Father encountered this "Elder" sometime before his entrapment in its lair. Many of his most recent diaries make reference to the creature and his learnings around it. There wasn't much, just second-hand myths from the research journals of the Watchers of Decay.

One concept however, came up time and time again. This Elder is not a lord unto itself. It serves a greater master, or... a greater purpose... I'm unsure. It's confusing; both my father and the Watchers refer to the Elder as "coming from the nothing" while also being "a carrier for the nothing." There are also mentions of an unholy desire to spoil and decay... perhaps it all relates somehow to those fungal growths we've seen in the maps...

--Zana, "The Elder"

Time has passed since my last entry, of that I am aware. I've spent every waking hour since, trying to find a way to end this unholy Elder, though nothing has, yet, fit.

Within my secret study, I've begun work on a device of my own. Whereas the Watcher's [sic] map device was designed to enter and lock tight the Elder's pocket dimension, my machine is of a different nature, though not entirely dissimilar.

Day and night, I have toiled away, tinkering and shaping this invention. When I'm finished, this Elder will never bother our world again. The creature cannot be killed, and divorcing its spirit from its body has not kept it silent, but maybe... just maybe... It can be exiled...

--Book of Memories, Page 10

How could I have been so stupid? So caught up in this whole nightmare that I forgot my work as an Arkhon! My "supposed" lack of progress on the Map Device has given the High Templar cause for suspicion.

At noon, as I neared the completion of my work, he and his guards interrupted my tinkering with a furious rage! Tossing my machine to the ground, he destroyed much of my research, demanding to know why I no longer focused on the task given to me. Clapped in irons I was led off to the Theopolis prisons for my insubordination.

I write this now, due only to the kindness of a friend in the Templar guard, he [sic] knows of my partiality to journaling and so as soon as he heard of my capture, managed to sneak in a diary for me scribble upon.

I don't know what Venarius plans to do with me. I've heard whispers of public shaming and lashes, but none of that is certain. What is certain, is that the Elder is coming for us. It's coming for us all. No matter whether you are High Templar or the lowest of the Karui slaves, the Elder knocks at the threshold. Bringing Decay... I must find my way from these chains at all costs. Only I can save us from this blasphemy that has fallen upon Oriath...

--Book of Memories, Page 11

My daughter... My darling daughter... By the gods. So much has transpired since last I wrote. So much horror... I've not a moment to lose, but I need to... I have to... I must write down what has occurred. It's the only way I shall keep my sanity. I believe I'm safe for the moment, so I shall rest and reflect, in the hope that it will give me new insight on how to proceed in this current disaster.

Venarius, that bastard... Enraged by my lack of progress on his occult weaponry, he marched me through the streets. "This man has betrayed me!" he shouted as his men stripped me of my robes and beat me with sticks. When I was but an inch from death, he took me aside once more, demanding to know why I'd failed him. In my... in my foolishness, I... I told him everything.

I'd hoped to appeal to his better nature, to his higher self, that he might rally the Templar army behind me. Together we could defeat the Elder once and for all! But you should never appeal to a man's better nature. He may not have one. Venarius... he... he took Zana! Held her at knife point. Demanded... demanded that I take all of us through, into the dreamlands - to meet with the Elder!

Please, whoever you are, reading this - do not think wrong of me. If it were your daughter's life at risk, would you have done this any differently? I... I did as I was asked. Using the Map Device, we stepped through a gateway and I found myself once more setting foot in this atlas of worlds...

--Book of Memories, Page 12

The land was as beautiful as it'd been when last I'd visited. The breeze rippled across the meadows and the sun beat affectionately down on our necks. The High Templar and his men marvelled at such wonders. My daughter cried in fear. I felt sick to my bones.

As we trampled through the wilderness, it wasn't long before we were met by the overwhelming presence of the Shade itself. The very essence of the Elder stood silently before us. I felt its eyes bore deep into my skin. Demanding of me in visions to tell it why I had returned. But before I could answer, Venarius stepped forward and greeted the phantom, offering his words up into the air:

"He tells me you are King of this land," he said, "My [sic] poor, poor scholar says that you are imprisoned, that you need a key."

As he spoke, the shade stayed quiet, listening and smouldering smugly.

"I can be that key for you." The High Templar announced.

For a moment more, the Shade did not respond. A perverse, pensive, pregnant pause lay heavily upon us all. Then finally, casting an image at once upon all of our minds, we felt it ask of Venarius:

"What dost thou want?"

The High Templar smiled. "Why, power, of course." He [sic] replied.

--Book of Memories, Page 13

The shade spluttered into a great shimmering blaze, moving rapidly forward into trees up ahead. The High Templar gave chase, his soldiers dragging my daughter and I along behind. I recognized where we were headed. The forest was as dark as I remembered, and the cave, just as terrible. Before we knew it, we stood at the base of that blasphemous effigy seated atop its crude pagan altar.

"Pull the sword from my chest."

The Elder imposed and the man, in all his vanity, didn't hesitate for a second. He took the sword and yanked it forward. A great earthquake shook the land! It was as if the very ground itself was cowering in the face of the Elder's reunion with its frigid body.

Bursting forth from cold stone, the Elder approached us all. The blade dropped from Venarius' quivering hand and clattered to the ground, a white light in the hilt flickered and shrank until it at last was put out by the great darkness of a tentacular void.

Realizing what it meant to look upon its face, I turned and shielded my daughter's eyes, and [sic] as the true scope of the Elder befell the High Templar and his men. I could hear screaming and mad gibbering! The Elder did not speak. Visions no longer left its mind. It was free. It had no need to communicate with mankind any longer.

As the richness of life fled from the quickly shrivelling bodies of the High Templar and his men, I readied myself and my daughter to flee. While the Elder began to feed, starved from millennium upon millennium of constraint, I took up the Map Device Venarius had dropped and together, we ran...

--Book of Memories, Page 14

I fear this to be the end. Not just the end for me, but the end of all things. The Elder has been freed. Soon it will feast on me and then, my daughter. Once it has finished with us, it will turn its sights on the rest of the world.

Times will become as they were in the days of old, when the Watchers of Decay were formed. Children will go missing from their beds. Parents will mourn, darkness will descend, and then birthed from that carnage, the Decay will arrive, finding its physical form in our dimension - for that is the Elder's true master! The fungal monstrosity will manifest and spread forth its mighty tendrils. The mould from before time and space began, will seek out the destruction of all things...

As we fled through the forest, I focused my resolve. It was too late for me. I knew of the shaping powers. Only I could have a hope at defeating the Elder. Preoccupied with its feast, the eldritch abomination had somehow forgotten us, and as we made our way back, retracing our steps, I found myself standing once more before the portal home. Not even stopping to look behind, I dove through the shimmering window, and together, we collapsed into Oriath.

With not a minute to waste, I took a nearby tool and jammed it into the infernal device, where it hummed, ominously entrenched in my laboratory floor. The Elder had to be stopped, and so... I left her there, bidding her to hide in a closet or beneath a work table. Then, with the portal flickering and shrinking steadily, I turned back and stepped forward into the dreamlands, one final time.

--Book of Memories, Page 15

My last waking moments looked very much like this place... I miss it. I miss her.

--The Shaper, on Laboratory Map

My dearest Zana,

Where are you now? I hope, as a father often does, that you are happy and tucked away in the safest of places. I hope you grow up kind and strong, that you love and are loved. It is my life's greatest regret that I will not see you again, but I must do what I can to protect you from the evils of this outer dark.

I have failed against the Elder. To be honest, I never had a chance. The creature was too strong, too well versed in the shaping ways. If Venarius had not damaged the weapon I built, that day he arrested me in my study, then perhaps I could've opened a void, forced it from its physical shell and out of this reality. But I no longer possess such a device and the Elder has suckled at my mind so many times now, that I fear I could not remember how to rebuild it, even if I tried.

My war with the creature is far from over however. I've no upper hand. But like a cornered animal, I will bite until I am gone. I've attempted to sleep and awaken in Oriath, many times. Hoped that one night I might get to hold you in my arms once again. But instead of my study, I dream of nothing.

I know this letter might never reach you, but I write it anyway - if not for you, then for the sake of my own fragile wits. I love you my darling daughter, and hope the best for you, far away from all this... cosmic darkness. You've made me very proud, and I've considered each day a blessing that I've been able to call you my daughter...

I must keep moving. I must keep fighting. Perhaps one day, if the gods allow it, we shall see each other once more. I love you greatly.

Your Papa, Valdo Caeserius

--Book of Memories, Page 16

Another child was taken last night, so tonight we wait, praying the demon does not return, but it does. It soars through the air and passes through the wall of the hut. We catch only a glimpse of its grey skin beneath the moonlight. We pursue the demon on foot to the edge of the woods. The child it carries does not cry out.

Anaris follows closely, but I hesitate out of fear. I gather my will and I leap into the shadows, tracking the demon by the tendrils left in its wake. But I am too late. The demon and child are gone, and Anaris stands frozen, pale as the moon. He whispers something I do not understand and falls, dead. I fear we will be hunted to extinction.

--Unknown, Grim Woods Memory

I've been doing more research into the Elder and its battle with the Watchers of Decay. It's truly mortifying the things they've endured at the creature's hands.

These Watchers, they were all... parents. It seems the Elder prefers its prey young. These men and women fought tooth and nail to avenge their children, perhaps even succeeding for a time... But the Elder has been free for the better part of two decades. Its taste in food could explain the steady disappearance of children in the upper class of Oriath.

What if those children are still here, in this place? Twisted, tormented creatures, clinging to whatever fragments of happy memories they've left... We must alleviate their sufferings.

--Zana, "The Elder's Victims"

... we are not the first people to have set foot in this world. There are signs of the Elder's victims everywhere, as well as memories and references to those who first stood against it.

The Watchers of Decay. A sect we could perhaps learn a great deal from. ... I took some time to explore my Father's Laboratory once more in search of any references he might have collected regarding these "Watchers." Though I couldn't ascertain anything relating to them in our modern age, there were some remaining scrolls hidden beneath the floorboards that detailed this group as having existed far back in the smoke of history.

The Watchers claim to have gotten their start when a nameless god of Wraeclast endowed an Azmeri mother with knowledge of the Elder's existence. She had lost her boy to it months before, you see, and sought revenge. Somehow the god saw it fit to help the woman in her quest. Perhaps he took pity on her? Or did he consider the knowledge a curse?

--Zana, "The Watchers of Decay"

One by one, they stood their ground against a creature they had no hope of understanding, let alone defeating, and one by one, they became a part of it.

--Watcher's Eye Prismatic Jewel

ZANA AND THE ATLAS OF WORLDS

My father was a very well educated man. He worked as a researcher in Oriath, back when they were allowed to research more than just holy texts. Sadly, he's gone now.

But his research remained, hidden in our attic. I took what I could and read it in secret as I was moved between foster homes. I read of the mortal founders whose bones were hidden deep in the Ossuary. I read of the false saints who continue to be revered in the Temple of Innocence. I read his writings over and over again. Memorised them. They were the last connection I had to him.

His research became something of an escape, I suppose. I wanted to build on it, especially the maps he described in such great detail.

--Zana, "Research"

My mother died not long after I was born, and my father, too, was gone only a handful of years later. Orphaned, my family's assets were seized and I was handed off to a series of well-off foster homes as an indentured servant.

But children are curious creatures, and even by those standards I was extremely curious indeed. I grew up reading everything I could get my hands on, and questioning everything they tried to teach me. I was too smart for my own good, I suppose, because eventually, I started drawing the attention of the Templar.

Luckily for me, Dominus was much less subtle than the previous High Templars, so I managed to leave Oriath on my own terms, mostly, before my impending exile.

--Zana, "Exile"

...my map device... I found designs for it in my father's belongings and I spent much of my youth working on it. I wouldn't be able to forgive myself if I let it be damaged somehow. ...

--Zana, on moving to hideout

... This isn't Oriath, nor is it Wraeclast. I don't even think it's our world. These maps, they hold many secrets... I know, it almost looks familiar, but the creatures here - they're... different. More aggressive. More dangerous.

We must work fast, exploring and collecting what knowledge we can. In the past, my initial expeditions were accompanied by mercenaries and thieves. Nearly all were driven mad. ...

--Zana, "Complete the Map"

... I've spent some time out there, exploring the maps, and despite their apparent randomness, there are threads that connect them. ...

The more we understand these connections, the more each of these maps can offer us, and the closer we'll be to finding out the secrets that twist them.

This is the Atlas of Worlds, and we can use it to track these connections; we can use it to chart a path.

--Zana, "The Atlas"

My father's writings frequently referenced the work of other researchers. In particular, the heretical belief that the environment can influence a creature's form. In Wraeclast, we see the effect that corruption has on beasts, humans, even the dead.

Through my map device we see something similar... but possibly even worse. Something disturbed is out there. I used to think perhaps Wraeclast's corruption was seeping through into the Atlas, but what if it's the reverse? What if whatever is distorting the maps is-... What if it's seeping out here, into our world? That's why this work is so important.

--Zana, "Corruption"

I think I understand it now... This Atlas, these maps... they aren't so much worlds as they are like the performance stage in the Theopolis Amphitheatre. These worlds are merely disguises for what truly lies behind the curtain.

This place... this is the nexus of the Elder's worlds, the place from which all its hunting grounds are formed... We are close to the void from which it was birthed, yet my Father [sic] has chosen this as his home. Curious indeed. Hiding in plain sight perhaps? Though, what captain regularly frequents the bowels of his ship? Maybe the Elder rarely visits this place. It is busy, I suppose, hunting and feasting elsewhere in the maps...

--Zana, on The Shaper's Realm

THE RISE OF THE SHAPER

These worlds, they've changed since last I remember. They've become darker, more... twisted in a way that betrays their true origin.

I no longer believe these are realms of chance, rather, they must have been formulated by a sentient mind... a designer or architect. Every shadow in this place creeps about with an unforeseen purpose. ...

--Zana, "The Hidden Architect"

That creature you encountered out in the maps, he was... shaping things. Perhaps he's the architect we seek. ...

--Zana, "The Shaper"

... When I was a child, my father and I, we were... separated. I was told he was lost to that unearthly realm when the Atlas closed, and the men who feared it took it apart. I spent my whole life trying to track down its pieces and repair his machine. A few years ago, I did just that. But now that we've found him, something is not right... My father was a kind, temperate man. A good person and a loving human being. Nothing like that... thing you just saw! ...

--Zana, "The Hidden Architect"

... I've scouted these worlds and I'm certain my father lies deep within the centre of the Atlas, but as suspected, he does not reside there unguarded. Four great brutes surround him, unpassable by me. If you were to go on ahead and remove those threats, then we will have a clear path to my father, and our little "operation" can begin.

--Zana, "The Shaper's Guardians"

One of my captors wore many faces, yet kept her true face hidden. Now she cannot escape her true face.

--Lair of the Hydra Map

One of my captors refused redemption. He did not see value in a new life. Now new life surrounds him.

--Forge of the Phoenix Map

One of my captors felt no emotion. He did not hesitate to inflict pain. Now all he feels is intense, unstoppable agony.

--Maze of the Minotaur Map

One of my captors hid a beast within his heart. Now his true self can be seen by all.

--Pit of the Chimera Map

THE FATE OF VENARIUS

... I-... I don't know where I am or how I got here. I don't remember my name... I don't-... I don't remember anything. I suppose for now you can call me... Cavas...

--Cavas, "Introduction"

I feel the moral weight of what I must to do to protect Wraeclast. I accept my guilt without shame. It is my gift to humanity.

--Circle of Guilt Iron Ring

HIGH TEMPLAR DOMINUS (CA. 1579-1599 IC)

The last three weeks feel like they've passed in an instant. The atmosphere here since the High Templar's disappearance has been so relaxed, but, while enjoying the sun on my roof this morning, I saw the black smoke billowing from the Chamber of Innocence turn red.

The Seneschals have at last elected a new High Templar. Rumour has it they've sought young blood. Someone who can revitalise the Templar. Someone who can bring them into the modern age. Whoever it is, he can't be worse than the last one. The bastard set us back fifty years!

--Unknown, Rooftops Memory

GRANTING PATRONAGE TO PIETY

Halfway across the world and yet the tie between Vinia and I endures. That was Piety's real name back in Theopolis, before her rise to greatness.

Vinia sold her thaumaturgy in the day, her body at night. Sought after, she was. Enough so to become one of my best buyers.

But money never meant much to Vinia. No, she was striving for something better...nobler. Used to tell me that "Life needn't be this hard. It's time you all realized that." ...

--Clarissa, "Piety"

Vinia was arrested for 'Consorting with the Unholy' and condemned to the pyre. This was before the banishments. Dominus shared a last supper with her, heard her confession. Most think Vinia

earned Dominus' patronage on her back. I don't. Vinia gave Dominus her 'better life' and got a new name in return. You can count on one thing: Piety's grand future won't include the likes of you, me, or Tolman.

--Clarissa, "Vinia"

You can change your name, but you cannot change your history.

--Vinia's Token

STUDYING THE THAUMATURGICAL

PIETY & VILENTA

"We shall peer at these cosmic wonderments as they wake and writhe within that deep and nameless dark."

- Vilenta, 'Miasmeter: A Thesis'

--Miasmeter

Piety and I have devoted ourselves to the betterment of the human condition. As for our methods, Piety had a saying that summed it up nicely. "Would you consider the feelings of the stones when constructing a glorious cathedral in the name of God?"

Casticus supplied us with slaves, mostly Karui, and I put them to good use. In fact, I believe their participation in my experiments elevated them from squalor to splendor. Our subjects were able to give their otherwise meaningless lives to something greater than themselves.

Isn't that what we all want in the end?

--Vilenta, "Research"

To be perfectly honest with you, I don't trust her. Yeah, I've got my reasons. Piety kept her work pretty quiet but her results were brutally clear. The people she took, the people she...changed. Slaves mostly, and a few 'enemies of God'. Enemies of bloody Dominus more like it. I don't go in for black and white definitions of good and evil, but with Piety and her ilk, I make an exception.

Whatever's lurking inside Vilenta, it ain't 'good', not by a long shot.

--Bannon, "Vilenta"

The Sign of Purity, yes...a descry staff that Piety sent me to study at one point. Apparently it was a gift from Innocence to the first High Templar, Maxarius. Dominus couldn't even bear to touch the thing so he had it locked up in the Ossuary. Quite reactive behaviour for a man of such formidable intellect, yet now it's making a little more sense.

The staff was certainly able to conduct and store energy, yet remained inert when I applied corruption to it. It must only respond to divine energy, and with corruption and divinity being diametrically opposed, it's no wonder that my experiments failed to excite the thing!

Meaning, if the Sign of Purity is a repository for the power of Innocence, Dominus could never have wielded it, being steeped as he was in the opposing power of the Beast. ...

--Vilenta, "The Sign of Purity"

DOMINUS

Dominus adopted Chitus Cathedral as his personal laboratory. He decked it out with everything his miraculous mind could conceive of. His great work in Sarn, that which you destroyed, it all began there.

--Vilenta, "Chitus Cathedral"

I embraced the patronage that High Templar Dominus offered my struggling museum. I took his favour and conducted his research into the thaumaturgical arts practiced within the Eternal Empire.

I wish I'd known then what I know now. That I was pandering to the warped dreams of a madman.

--Eramir, "Dominus"

... To my shame, I did Dominus' dirty work in the selfish hopes of scholarly advancement. I scoured fragments of documents brought back by Fairgraves - and Daresso, before his disgrace. I unearthed all I could on the Eternal Empire's masters and mistresses of thaumaturgy, a subject of keen interest to our supposedly devout High Templar. ...

--Eramir, "The Chamber of Sins"

I used to pride myself on taking care of these tomes, but the ancient treatises concerning the Vaal... should be burned. He's making me research for him, and the things I'm reading about concern the destruction of all mankind.

I would think my fears of the end of the world ridiculous... except... it's happened before. I must run... I must flee... and take my secrets with me.

--Eramir, Distant Repository Memory

I thought Dominus was a leader of vision, of purpose. The man who would resurrect the Eternal Empire. In truth, Dominus is only after power... the black, thaumaturgical power locked within the Virtue Gems. He wishes to create a new empire, one in his own image. I drank every night to try and wipe that image from my mind. It's still there.

--Helena, "Dominus"

DAVARO AND THE ARTEFACTS OF THE VAAL

The artefacts which High Templar Dominus returned to our city have finally offered up to me one of their secrets. Though, I am certain there is much to be found within the relics, I'm exhilarated and brought to awe by what I have discovered as of yesterday's studies. I have uncovered a hidden frequency of corruption within the relics - oh, how they now sing to me! They are as mirrors, dimly reflecting shadows and echoings of the past.

I have seen signs of blood and ancient sacrifice in the ghostings of our precious city! Such as what the Vaal would commit in their homelands. Could it be that these echoes point to Vaal culture having extended all the way to the shores of Oriath? Perhaps we are not the first empire to pull itself up from the mire of this land?

I must listen to the relics further, I need to understand, but the singing, it pains me to listen for very long. My work must progress slowly, but it shall progress. Much is at stake here. I can feel it!

- Templar Davaro of Theopolis

--Research Journal I

I am Templar Thaumaturgist Davaro, the ecstatic, the knower of hidden things, the key to ancient wonder!

In such a short time, everything has changed. The singing of the relics to me no longer pains my ears, in fact, I hear music in them, songs revealing great truths to me. My theory that the Vaal once dwelt in this land has proven fruitful, one of their ancient sites lies not far from here. There is great power dormant in the ruins, one that I am yet to tap fully, but it will come soon enough.

Through my thaumaturgy, I was granted special sight, I saw the ancient Vaal city that once stood in this place. All around me were signs of the legendary Queen Atziri ruling from afar. I saw, as I stood at the base of a great pyramid, the sacrifice of new harvest unfold. The steps ran red with a river of blood, a crimson tide, cascading towards me and washing over my skin. In it, I felt my being shake, as if lightning was reverberating through my body. I felt the strength of that blood ritual, and then returning to my senses, I found myself once more standing in ancient ruins. I thought it to be all a dream, only, when I reached up to touch my face, I found it both horrifyingly and marvelously, pelted with that same salted vermillion.

- Templar Davaro of Theopolis, Key to Ancient Wonder

--Research Journal II

I have been plagued by a sickness as of late. A kind of blood marking. This curse stalks me in both waking life and the world of dream. The relics no longer sing to me of power, they scream to me of hunger and the ruins call out like needy children for blood, oh, so much more blood! Now that I am aware of their ancient existence, they will not remain silent!

What was - at first - revitalising, is now a torment. I can't, no matter how hard I try, clean the blood from my face and hands. Nobody ever sees the red, but for me, yet this does not mean it doesn't exist!

I purchased three Karui slaves from the marketplace the other morning. Strapping young lads of seventeen. At the blood site in the ancient ruins, they pleaded with me. Something about the place, the corruption engrained in the stonework... it spoke to them, and they knew. The powers demand blood, so I gave it to them. I opened the throats of those Karui lads and poured out their essence onto Atziri's altar. As the sanguine liquid was sucked up by the stone, my mind frayed and I saw the Queen herself, naked and aroused, bathing in a pool of blood while her hand reached between her thighs.

I... I can't shake her image from my mind, even now as I lay on my bed, I shiver with fear and anticipation. I have never felt lust for a woman in this magnitude. I fear the Queen shall be the death of me. When I close my eyes I see her, reaching out to embrace me.

- Templar Davaro

--Research Journal III

My beautiful Queen is all I see. She dwells in another world, I know this now. Our worlds are separate realities, but not entirely ones without doors and bridges to offer transport. In our dreams we make love amidst the coagulation of our victims blood. The red is our passion and the gore has become our wedding bed.

Soon, I will be with my love, she will be closer to me than my own flesh. I have learnt a spell. Blood Thaumaturgy - forbidden by the Templars, but they have no idea as to the power they have ignored...

In the streets outside, Theopolis is in a panic. Two children belonging to noble families have gone missing in the night. As I look out my window, I see the guards questioning beggars and citizens alike. They will not find the boy or the girl. Such precious beings, they were. The young girl passed from consciousness before I took her. The boy, so brave, never screamed once, not even as my blade cut into the soft of his belly.

They are both silent now. Unmoving. And shortly I will join them, and together we shall unite with my queen - a happy family. Husband, Wife, Daughter, Son. My knife still drips beside me. I leave this

final account in hopes that those who may find us will yearn for the same pleasures I have found, and join us in eternity.

- Templar Thaumaturgist, Davaro

--Research Journal IV

DOMINUS' EXILES

Some say that Dominus exiled the dregs of Oriath to the shores of Wraeclast. No, he exiled anyone who was going to give him trouble, who was going to cause ripples in his progressive theocracy. ...

--https://www.pathofexile.com/forum/view-thread/985043

Hillock of Slaugh

You have transgressed against your God and your fellow Man. You have been a willing vessel for the following Sins.

Mortal Wrath

Six counts of Common Homicide

One count of Infanticide

Two counts of Homicide with post-mortem Desecration

Unlawful Avarice

Twelve counts of Extortion through Threat of Mortal Harm

Seven counts of Armed Larceny

Two counts of Armed Larceny resulting in Mortal Harm

Unsolicited Lust

Four counts of Rape

Two counts of Attempted Rape

Mortal Wrath

One count of Rape resulting in Mortality

God has charged me with your redemption. You are hereby Exiled to Wraeclast where, it is hoped, you shall come to repent your Sins, and make your peace with your beloved Father.

- High Templar Dominus

--Letter of Exile

[The remaining Letters of Exile would go here; no real need to reproduce them all]

The storm is bad now. The ship rocks to and fro. The other exiles exchange glances as a guard struggles to regain his footing. Then, we hit the rocks.

When I come to, I'm alone on a tiny island. Little more than a rock, really. I can't see any other land. Even Wraeclast would've been better than this.

--Unknown, Rockpools Memory

EXPEDITIONS TO WRAECLAST

Captain Tevarus,

Altitude is imperative to forging a stable connection with the Prime Resonator in Theopolis. Power source is equally vital. Locate a fissure in the mountainside and lower a conductive cable into it, the deeper the better. It will take an immense amount of thaumaturgical energy to execute the successful disintegration and transmission of objects, both inanimate and animate, between Highgate and Theopolis. For that kind of power, we must tap the origin.

I needn't remind you of the consequences should either of those elements prove deficient. That is why I would like you, Tevarus, to be the first to test the Resonator once it is operational.

Accountability is the perfect counterweight to ambition.

High Templar Dominus

--Resonator Instructions

I gave Piety everything, devoted my life to her work. What did that thankless bitch do for me in return? Left me here to polish her beakers while she pursued glory in Wraeclast. ...

--Vilenta, "Piety"

My loyal Declan,

Give our Lady Piety your absolute support and watch her with absolute scrutiny. There is much to learn from the likes of the Inquisitor, the Umbra and the Soulless One. I would hate for Piety to feel that she need shoulder such perilous wisdom alone.

- Dominus

--Order of Protection

STUDYING THE WORKS OF SHAVRONNE

Our expedition made camp in the western forest while Piety took a few men through the pass to Axiom Prison. She was after the research notes of one Shavronne of Umbra, a witch who devoted herself to the study of transfiguration during the latter days of the Eternal Empire.

Piety returned alone and disturbingly happy with her findings. I've learned that when Piety is happy, misery is soon to follow for everyone else.

--Helena, "Prisoner's Gate"

[In-game events up to Piety closing Shavronne's barricade (Act 1).]

Piety has become a true mistress of thaumaturgy. I wonder what else she has learned in her time here. ...

--Scion, on Piety at Prisoner's Gate

STUDYING THE WORKS OF MALIGARO

Arteri, my beautiful captain.

I wish it were not you, but I cannot bring myself to trust any other with this most vital of tasks.

This is the only pass between the inner and outer Empire. No further exiles are to enter the inner Empire. We have material enough for our work.

Ensure that the barricade remains in place, and if any exile should somehow pass through, kill them.

I will send for you when my work is complete in Sarn.

Until we share our next night together,

Piety

--Arteri's Letter

The High Templar's Blackguards? They're here, rubbing shoulders with us mere exiles? A mystery indeed, and so near the Chamber of Sins. Whatever they want with that foul place, it won't be for the betterment of humanity.

--Eramir, "Blackguards"

Piety led us into that wretched place in the hopes of finding a device named simply 'The Spike'. Fashioned by Inquisitor Maligaro, it was said to enable the injection of 'Calibric Extantia' into living flesh. Calibric Extantia being the corrupt energies locked within virtue gems.

We couldn't find the Spike, yet we met its most successful application.

--Helena, "Maligaro's Spike"

Piety was after a creation of Maligaro's called the 'Baleful Gem'. It's nearby, and it's something that heartless bitch must never get her hands on. ...

--Helena, on being rescued

... The Vaal were a powerful civilization predating even the Eternal Empire and Piety very much wanted to see what toys the Vaal might have left for her to play with behind those stone doors. Yet we couldn't budge them, not with that giant of a tree holding them fast in her roots.

--Helena, "Lorrata"

[In-game events up to rescuing Helena from the Chamber of Sins (Act 2).]

STUDYING THE WORKS OF MALACHAI

Dominus and his Ebony Legion arrived some time ago. Now the Blackguards scour Sarn like hungry maggots on a carcass. What're they looking for? Only that which is best left unfound.

--Maramoa, "Ebony Legion"

You find a high enough spot and you can see the Lunaris Temple over the river, at the western edge of the city.

Since the Blackguards arrived, the clouds above that temple have been stained with the blackest of smoke. You can see it sometimes, when the westerly blows. It stinks worse than death.

--Clarissa, "The Lunaris Temple"

I don't know much longer I can do this. Every day, we cart in the poor folk the General has rounded up for the Witch's experiments. I used to count, but I stopped at two thousand.

This is not the career the Blackguards promised me. We're worse than monsters. Look at this place! Rivers of blood! Piles of corpses! We were just following orders...

--Unknown, Bloodbath Memory

Gravicius is the mailed and bloodied right hand of Dominus. ...

--Hargan, "General Gravicius"

The cockroaches will come again. They want the Twist. That cockroach emperor...the other bugs shout his name. Gravicius. ...

--Dialla, "The Sewers"

I tried to penetrate the Solaris Temple in the north-east. Almost got myself killed by the bloody Ribbons that guard the place. Bizarre floating tapestries they are, creatures of cloth and thaumaturgy. Fortunately, a few legionnaires got in the way. While the Ribbons eviscerated them, I ran... straight into Gravicius.

He dragged me over the bridge, to the Lunaris Temple in the west, and put me in Piety's "tender care". Didn't say a single word to me the whole time. I was nothing but a spoil of war to him.

--Grigor, "General Gravicius"

I no longer dream when I sleep. I have a nightmare, the same nightmare, over and over. The Mirror. It's never my reflection looking back.

The first time that mirror appeared to me, it was Kole I saw. A rapist from Oriath I had the displeasure of sharing a pen with in Gravicius' stockade. Piety took him for her experiments and that night, I saw her handiwork while I slept.

This time, it was Tolman. Flesh dried to leather. Organs shrunk to husks. Blood trickling through his skeleton like red dust in an hourglass. It's Piety's gift to me, that mirror. ...

--Grigor, "Tolman"

Piety's a genius sculpting mere human clay into "divine" Gemlings. At least, that's what she told me when she opened me up and buried a Virtue Gem in my entrails. ...

--Grigor, "Gemlings"

When Piety was...experimenting on me, my consciousness was mercifully fleeting. In those moments of numbing darkness, I met a presence.

Intelligence, power, immensity beyond the limits of my pitiable mortal senses. To this creature, I was but a rain drop falling into the sea.

I heard Piety speak to her lackeys of 'the Beast.' It is the source of her thaumaturgy, and the object of her ambitions. I believe Piety's 'Beast' and that dark entity are one and the same.

Wherever it is, whatever it is, The Beast is the cause of my malformation. It would not be a stretch of reason to consider The Beast the source of all malformation in Wraeclast.

--Grigor, "The Beast"

Vanja: I'd heard of the Beast before coming here. Piety talked about it. I suppose she saw no point in keeping secrets from the people she was planning to murder.

Petarus: I'm so sorry, Vanja.

Vanja: God, it's not your fault, Petarus! Piety used to say that the Beast was the source of her power, how she managed to turn poor men and women into those...things. She kept using a phrase...what was it?

Petarus: Universal transmogrification. I heard her assistants talk about it, too.

Vanja: The power to change the world into anything you like.

Petarus: Bloody scary power in the hands of someone like Piety.

Vanja: Bloody scary power, full stop!

--Petarus and Vanja, "The Beast"

Captain Vincenti,

The Highgate holds the secret to the true origin of the gems. Cleanse the mountain of those Maraketh parasites and secure the entrance to those Mines.

Do not disappoint me, Vincenti. As you well know, my displeasure can change a man.

-Piety

--Note

[In-game events up to killing Piety in the Lunaris Temple (Act 3).]

Piety dies amongst her abominations, her warped dream taunting her, maddeningly out of reach. ...

--Grigor

[In-game events up to killing Dominus (Act 3).]

Dominus is dead, but the source of his fearsome power remains. ...

--https://www.pathofexile.com/theawakening

PIETY'S RESURRECTION

It was Malachai who reached out to me, who wrapped me in Nightmare...made me his slave.

He has shown me greatness beyond imagining, so much that I thought my mind would shatter under its weight. And although my mind remains intact, my dreams were not so fortunate.

Malachai is in the Beast's black core right now, harnessing all that the Beast is, and will be. He will destroy this world and forge it anew in the divine image of Nightmare. ...

--Piety, "Malachai"

... You know, it is no mere 'freak of nightmare' that fashioned that monstrous version of myself...

The Godless Three took great pains in getting me looking... 'just so'. They were none too gentle about it either. ...

--Piety, on receiving one organ

... You know, prior to meeting Maligaro, Shavronne and Doedre, I rather admired them. Their work, their accomplishments... sheer genius! As it turns out, genius is something better appreciated from afar. ...

--Piety, on receiving two organs

[In-game events up to defeating Piety in The Belly of the Beast (Act 4).]

Before we walk this path together, it's important that you understand one thing about me.

I don't regret a single thing that I've done. I set out to raise humanity up from the cloying mud of its fleshly ignorance. My mistake was not in the aspiration, but in the execution.

Now I intend to correct that mistake. ...

--Piety, "Malachai's Organs"

[In-game events up to killing the Beast (Act 4)]

HIGH TEMPLAR AVARIUS

With Dominus away in Wraeclast, someone had to keep the wheels of oppression turning. Avarius was only too happy to take the job. He'd had plenty of practice already, of course.

It was Avarius who led some of the largest and most crippling raids upon the Ngamakanui and the Ngakuramakoi. It was on his orders that men, women and children were shackled and shipped like cattle to Theopolis.

And it was Avarius who spent five thousand Karui lives building his Templar Courts and his Chamber of Innocence. Who had wives and daughters scrub their husbands' and fathers' blood from the stones so as to preserve their 'purity'. ...

--Utula, "High Templar Avarius"

Avarius, Innocence...I'm not sure there's a great deal of difference. Around the time I heard the Beast's mortal scream, the newly appointed High Templar Avarius went through something of a...revelation.

The manner in which he speaks and acts now would indicate that he believes, without doubt, that he is some earthly embodiment of God. That's Faith for you. It'll reduce grown men to the madness of infancy.

--Vilenta, "High Templar Avarius"

THE RETURN OF THE GODS

People have talked about the 'return of the gods' since the birth of Oriath. It's a gambit, employed by charlatans to fleece the weak minded and morally desperate.

Or so it seemed.

Avarius and his Templar drones now greet the dawn filled with power and glorious purpose. Kitava has risen from whatever ethereal cesspit he's been hiding in for the last few millennia.

So what let the cats out of their proverbial bags? I'm a scholar, not a prophet, yet there's one occurrence that absolutely reeks with evidential causality.

You killed the Beast.

--Vilenta, "Gods"

In the twisting, shifting black smoke of my dreaming, I saw the Beast, lying slain at your feet. I saw the rise of the old gods, their rigid, dusty remains, springing in sudden haste to life. I saw the growing of their power as the corruption began to fade. ....

--Tasuni, "The Beast"

... We gods, we were driven into slumbering darkness, to dream away eternity whilst the gentle Beast watched over us.

I would desire that we return to that blissful state, but my brothers and sisters of deism shall never submit to banishment. They have tasted freedom once more and they shall not let go of this world until it is pried from their cold, dead hands.

--Sin, "The Rise of the Gods"

THE FALL OF ORIATH

INNOCENCE, GOD-EMPEROR OF ETERNITY

For a long time now, I thought my God's intentions were being twisted by his supposed servants. Did I speak up? No. The pyre would have been my only answer. I did what I was told and drew the lines of morality where I could.

Now I understand the truth. It wasn't Innocence's intention being twisted. It was Innocence himself, perverted by the selfish convictions of the men and women who worshipped Him.

A god answers to the believer as the believer answers to their god.

--Bannon, "Innocence"

Old red eyes. He's been quiet for a long time. Just like Kitava...and Tukohama. All of the old gods. Now Innocence has woken up, and with him, power like I've never seen the Templar wield before.
...

I don't rightly know where the gods have been or what's brought them crawling back. Nor do I really care. All I need to know, my friend, is that we're not alone anymore.

--Utula, "Innocence"

KITAVA, FATHER OF CHAOS

Waves crashed upon the shores of Oriath.
Waves of Hunger.
Waves of Desire.
The Ravenous God and His starving multitude,
Rising with the tide,
Flooding our streets with death and depravity.
Until Innocence cried out, "No more!"
Bathing our city in fire,
Scorching the wicked to ash and bone.
The Ravenous God fled,
Into the embrace of our glorious Saviour.
Driven down He was, into soil, stone and beyond,
Into damnation,
By the Will and Light of our Innocence.

- High Templar Avarius

--Triumph of Innocence

Well... I know his other names. The Black Spirit. The Cannibal King. The Ravenous One. He was all of those things, before Tukohama slashed out his eyes, before Valako drowned him in the sea, before Hinekora whipped him and condemned him to immortal darkness.

Kitava has learned from the suffering inflicted upon him. Learned what cruelty is from his own flesh and blood. Learned what it means to be a slave.

Now he hungers for freedom. Not merely for himself. For all of us who have suffered under whip and shackle.

Kitava is the Tormented One, destined to rise up from the darkness and banish cruelty from this world. And we, his children, rise with him.

--Utula, "Kitava"

I wear the armor of a Templar, and I walk among the guards, but I am not one of them. My soul is Kitava's to consume.

The time nears. At the appointed hour, I will open the gates... all the gates.

--Unknown, Slave Blocks Memory

Utula has used the fall of Innocence to summon Kitava, the Ravenous God. ...

--Quest "The King's Feast"

... Things replace other things, it's the most fundamental of laws. The larger the thing you remove, the bigger the rush to fill the space it's left behind.

Innocence was the nexus of power in Oriath. Remove him and something of equal or greater power was always going to take his spot. Any idiot could have predicted that Kitava was going to be that something...unless, of course, you thought it was going to be you.

--Vilenta, "Innocence"

... I don't profess to understand the mind of a god, but I know the stories. Kitava is patient. He waited in the darkest pit of Hinekora's realm. He will bide his time while his hunger spreads like the plague it is, and when his tribe is replenished, a hundred times over, Kitava will rise one final time to finish the feast that he has started. Oriath is merely the appetiser. There's a whole world out there for Kitava to taste. ...

--Lani, "Utula"

Relish in hunger, dear faithful. For hunger is the one true state of spiritual abundance. When one is hungry, they desire more, and therefore align themselves with the will of the mighty Kitava. Beware, my followers, of the satisfied man, for he is the very pattern and image of blasphemy.

- The Holy Book of Hunger by High Priest Utula

--Cultist Tract I

And our father, the great Kitava will split asunder the rocks of the earth, pulling himself out of the miry clay. He shall lay a banquet table before us and we shall feast on his divine bounty.

- The Holy Book of Hunger by High Priest Utula

--Cultist Tract II

This is how it shall end. Kitava will rise, and a great cloud of black smoke will cover the sky. The glorious smell of cooking flesh shall entice even the most ardent of unbelievers to the faith, and together we will celebrate and eat at Kitava's table.

- The Holy Book of Hunger by High Priest Utula

--Cultist Tract III

... Kitava remembers nothing and cares for nothing but his own hunger and greed. He is an endless pit of gnashing teeth and churning guts.

While other gods rise on the mainland and fight for the meagre scraps of what was, Kitava has the most fecund and formidable civilisation of this age at his disposal. He can feed when he likes and he grows ever stronger with each morsel. All of Oriath shall soon belong to Kitava, and if that happens, he will rise beyond even our reach.

--Sin, "Kitava"

I'd not believe you if I had not witnessed the boats lurching onto the shores of Wraeclast myself. So... The gods have returned, and Oriath has fallen. ...

--Jun Ortoi, "Oriath"

THE COAST

TUKOHAMA, FATHER OF WAR

With Kitava now stomping around Oriath, it seems mythology is fast turning into reality.

Then again, the gods didn't just spring out of some poet's head. I certainly couldn't pen an ode to the God of Eternally Flowing Ale and then just stick me mug out to catch the free brew.

No, I imagine the gods once dined, danced and defecated just like you or I. Now they seem ready to take another stab at it...at life, I mean.

Take the Karui Father of War, for instance. Old Tukohama. All comfily tucked up in Kaom's holdfast and playing war like a few thousand years was only a quiet weekend for him.

Come to think of it...perhaps it was!

--Bestel, "Tukohama"

Seems Tukohama's raised up a host out of whatever afterlife the Karui believe in. I feel for those poor bastards, if I'm to be honest. The Karui haven't had an easy history. Colonised, enslaved, used as pawns in many a war, and now abused in death by their own bloody god.

This is why I don't follow any deity. They're all as bad as each other.

--Tarkleigh, "Karui Revenants" (non-Marauder version)

By command of fallen blood, leave your habitat and fill the cup of Tukohama. Cleave the heads of our enemies from shoulders unworthy, and adorn the belt of Tukohama.

And to the Lord of War, I kneel, with boldness at your feet and demand to be drowned in your Valour. Let me look upon my foes without fear, drive me to kill without hesitation, and sear that sinful voice of conscience so I will not feel remorse. For this is war and you, my lord, are its father.

--Karui Carving

ABBERATH, THE CLOVEN ONE

There's many a way to die in Wraeclast. Most of them are mercifully quick. But you get caught alive by the goatmen, you'll wish by any god you believe in that you hadn't.

I've heard some of the more superstitious exiles say there's a deity these goatmen worship. Abberath, Eater of Agony. Sounds like a right bastard, if you ask me. So if the goatmen hand you an invitation to go have dinner with their god, tell them where to stick it.

--Tarkleigh, "Goatmen"

... Abberath, a deranged old goat with a thirst for human souls whose cloven hooves now stand astride the old prisoners road. ...

--Sin, "The Cloven One"

RYSLATHA, THE PUPPET MISTRESS

With the road to the Phrecian Forest clear again, I trekked through to the forests beyond, to see if the strangeness we're seeing on the coast is also happening inland. What I saw nearly froze my heart solid.

The animals there, poor wretches...overtaken by some sort of parasite. As close as I can reckon they're like termites, burrowing into flesh and mind instead of wood. If I'm right, there'll be a nest somewhere, and a queen. ...

--Tarkleigh, "The Puppet Mistress"

... A primitive deity from a primitive time, crawling up out of the dirt with a view to enslaving us all with its creepy bloody offspring. ...

--Tarkleigh, "The Puppet Mistress"

Mother Matriarch, Ryslatha, white worm that corrupts the earth, long may I rest in the sweetness of your breast, and suckle deep from the teat of your nurturing juices.

O' Mighty mother, for yours is an unstoppable fecundity, it is power and fertility. I would straddle the walls of your fruitful womb and watch as our children disciple [sic] this decaying world. That I should lie sleeping amongst the folds of your flesh, replete, as the loving consort of your queendom come.

--Worn Carving

TSOAGOTH, THE BRINE KING

Yeah, I know the Brine King. What pirate doesn't? Drowned me fair share of mutineers under the full moon... to keep the old king's slumber when storms threaten, you see.

If he's been roused from the depths, it be nothing but ill tidings for those of us with air in our lungs.

He'll be getting back to raping and eating us ocean-going folk soon enough. Stealing wombs in which to spawn his slithering offspring. ...

--Lilly Roth, "The Brine King"

Lord of Salt and Scale's what we used to call him. They say when the gods got the boot from our lands, that monstrosity went to sleep down in the deep. Dreamed the kinda dreams that cause all

sorts of gilled abominations to rise up, to plague and hunt us for what he thinks we must've done to him.

Was a time we got ordered to hunt them things near extinction. Free the trade routes from Old Briney's tyranny. Even so, not a sailor worth his salt who won't sacrifice a lousy deckhand or two by light of the full moon, just to keep that overgrown crab slumbering in the Oriathan trench.

If he's risen again, you bet your bloody arse we're all buggered.

--Weylam Roth, "The Brine King"

If God wills it, the final account of First Mate Piken, castaway on the rock somewhere off the Twilight Strand.

Near as I can tell, the rest of the crew, along with Captain Caruso, be dead... or worse. What happened? I'd not have believed it myself had I not seen it with me own two eyes.

At dawn, a light, green and dark, rose from 'neath the waves and into the sky. While most of us stood back in awe, I heard a cry rise up from the lower deck. Casting me eyes in that direction, I saw the waves upchuck, and a swarm of ocean crabs cover the vessel. Ravenous and of countless numbers they were, making quick work of the sailors about them. Nothing but bones and tatters of cloth!

We fled to the longboats as fast we could, hoping to leave them ungodly crustaceans behind us, but lo, from within that green pillar of light, I saw him! The Brine King, like a bloated whale he breached the familiar waters and turned the ship beneath our feet to match-wood. I was flung into the sea, yet managed to cling to some flotsam and make my way to rest on this damnable rock.

Seems that ancient Tsoagoth has a mind to take dominion of these seas once more. Captain Caruso was right to drown those mutineers in the old king's name. A shame we'd not found more. For now, beneath the waves, I hear the whispers of me own passing in a thousand clicking pincers. May God have mercy on me, and may someone benefit from this warning.

--Message in a Bottle

My motley crew, neither fit to lick my boots nor curl my moustache, have bloody well betrayed me. And I was only trying to save them, those that remained true. Even now, floating prostrate upon a plank of wood, bathed in the dying embers of the evening sun, I hear the clitter-clatter of a million tiny claws. If I close my eyes, I see those tentacles reaching up to me out of the deep.

I don't know why the Brine King chose me. For weeks I've heard the voices, whispering of his return, gurgling of doom and slavery to us all. I tried to warn the simple men of my ship, made examples of those more violent disbelievers. Yet my prophecies only served to drive the rest into obstinate ignorance. They cast me overboard, perhaps in the vain hope that in my death, none of my utterances would come true.

Alas, as the morning sun peeked over the horizon, a pillar of green light rose up from the waves, vindicating my darkest fears. The old god ascended from the depths and laid waste to my ship and

all aboard her. Now, without food nor water, I shan't last the night. My bones shall be plucked clean by the pincered multitude that haunts me even now.

May this message find land, and by the unholy revelation that Tsoagoth has risen, may my reputation be restored.

- Captain Caruso of the Lady in Waiting

--Leatherbound Logbook

...I beg of you, Mercutio, if you have any care for the friendship we once had, grant me this one favour. It is true I have my own boat, but that is for hauling in fish! It is not fit to travel the waters I must navigate. My wife needs me, my friend. I know it reeks of madness, but Abi has been taken, kidnapped by the King of Brine himself. I fear too that he intends to make her one of his fishwives, just as the old stories warned us!

Please, Mercutio, I've heard tell of your success as a merchant in recent years. Surely you can spare one ship? Let me voyage out and rescue her, or at least, bring her body back to rest on dry land. Help me silence the insanity in my own mind.

Every night, I dream of pale, slime-slick creatures that pursue my boat through the thick, dark waters. I try not to look at them, but I also do. And they look back, their eyes wide with sadness and longing. They are not eyes born of the sea, Mercutio. God help me...they are Abi's eyes.

- Benric of Gulton

--Letter Fragment

General Marcovius,
Commander of the Templar Fleet
Operation Ocean Blades

An urgent Report on:
The Massacre of Pondium Strait.

"We were sent here to crush the Brinerot pirates, but something far more troubling has occupied our attentions. Of the surviving men, a few of the older, more superstitious types call it the Brine King. Apparently some false deity of the sea we've long since scoured from our holy scriptures.

Whatever the damned thing is, it's big. I've seen it myself, though as little more than a vast shadow far below us, veritably dwarfing the hulls of our fleet.

Most of our ships are gone, dragged beneath the waves by this malevolent leviathan. We could do little but watch in horror as the waters about us blossomed red. We are nearing the Beacon, what's left of us, and the wind blows strongly towards home.

High Templar Avarius, please understand that I am not a man cut from the coward's cloth, but this situation... this game of cat and mouse has gone on too long. There is nothing to be gained in

continuing on to Pondium. We shall turn our sails and catch the trade wind back to Oriath. I only pray we can outrun this thalassic fiend.

May Innocence guide and protect us.

General Marcovius [sic: no closing quotes]

--Templar Report

O' Lord of Salt and Scale, your servants attend to thee.
Praise thee Tsoagoth!
Without life yet living, the Brine King sleeps.
We send our prayers to thee, so that you might eternally slumber.
O' great one, we offer up this human soul as slave for you in your drowned city.
Take this life and bid the seas be calm and plentiful.
Woe to the Sailor who does not offer tribute to thee!
Such a man is cast off from our ocean kingdom!
He shall be made pariah, with neither captain nor commission.
Judge us not by unworthy sails,
Look to us as your servants.
Your kin of salt and scale.
O' praise thee Tsoagoth, praise thee!

--Shrine to the Brine King

PHRECIA

RALAKESH, MASTER OF A MILLION FACES

High Lord Ralakesh, I am but lowly outlaw scum, yet you, a god of a thousand faces, have looked at me and deemed me worthy of your cause!

I've offered willingly my flesh and blood. You shall now have my thoughts to use as you see fit. I only ask that you let me serve forever as one of your Holy Claws. Allow me to bring the light of your belonging to this whole bloody continent. My greatest desire is to see your ancient kingdom remade and your enemies cower at your feet.

--Ode to Ralakesh

GRUTHKUL, MOTHER OF DESPAIR

... Gruthkul's pain has transcended ages and she will vent that pain upon any and all she encounters until her grief is finally laid to rest.

--Eramir, "Gruthkul"

ARAKAALI, SPINNER OF SHADOWS

... Now she has returned, but it is not vengeance she wants. She is no mindless Gruthkul. Arakaali, Goddess of Love, wishes only to embrace the world as she wishes she had been embraced.

The Widow

--Shrine to Arakaali V

... Arakaali will suck all life from this land, leave only empty husks and dusty bones. There will be no Spirit, no us, no thing left to love and laugh.

Only husks and dust...and Arakaali.

--Yeena, "Arakaali"

Your soft whispers beneath earth tingle my skin, like breath of lover against my loins. I sleep not. I hear your name inside my skull. Arakaali. No name tasted so sweet on my tongue.

Stories I have heard, tales of cursed beauty. Visage of woman, jewel that walks the streets in final days of a great empire. Heard tell you sought victims, but I know truth. You sought man to love you, to break spell. You hoped true love might allow you to shed eight-leg body, to become goddess of love once more.

I pledge myself to you, my lady of Vaal. I promise love, for I am that man you have waited on. Corrupt corpse-lovers claim to worship you, call you Spinner of Shadows, but you have spun only shadows of desire about my heart.

Sweet Arakaali, I have found your altar. I will speak the call. I will return you to beauty. I will raise you from black pits of despair and together we shall rule Wraeclast in glory... forever.

--Love Letter

YUGUL, REFLECTION OF TERROR

In Izaro's grotesque little garden, you'll find an old friend of mine.

The yawning maw that is Yugul...but a self-portrait of what that pathetic creature has come to believe about the nature of fear. Those who look upon him see their own fears reflected in his horrifying visage.

--Sin, "Reflection of Terror"

SOLARIS, ETERNAL SUN & LUNARIS, ETERNAL MOON

... Lunaris, Eternal goddess of the Moon and her sister, Solaris of the Sun, have risen to reclaim what was once their own. Siblings equal in strength, mighty twin rivers converging, sweeping all before them.

We are cornered animals, awaiting the deluge that will surely drown us. Yet there exists a pair of ancient treasures, the Sun Orb and the Moon Orb. They are our hope...our desperation.

--Maramoa, "Solaris and Lunaris"

These owl eyes of mine have been watching the sun goddess from afar. The Sun Orb lies within her temple, guarded by her most ardent devotee. An exile who, in his insanity, has taken to calling himself, 'The Dawn'. ...

--Maramoa, "The Sun Orb"

I've been keeping a close eye on that exile-turned-sycophant who calls himself, 'The Dusk'. Dusk carried the Moon Orb into the Lunaris and has not returned with it, not as far as I have seen.

No doubt he clings to that orb like it's his adopted mother's own nurturing breast. ...

--Maramoa, "The Moon Orb"

If we are to see the dawn of a new era for humankind, the sun must be taught to behave herself.

Upon that mighty span between Sarn's left hand and its right, Solaris burns to consume every single moment of existence. Sparing no thought for life and its needs, she would see the world parched barren before she yields to reason.

The sun must be allowed to set so that it may rise again as a blessing, not a curse.

--Sin, "The Eternal Sun"

... Lunaris, in her cold fury, has forgotten that the warming sun of morning is as life-giving as the cooling damp of evening.

The empire Lunaris dreams of shall be lit by moon and twinkling stars, and life itself shall wither away in the perpetual night.

--Sin, "The Eternal Moon"

VASTIRI

GARUKHAN, QUEEN OF THE WIND

Garukhan wished once more for the skies. If she were to die, she wanted it to be up there in the clouds. This world had never been her home. She required greater things. She required adventure.

But die she would, here in the dirt...

--Captured Soul of Stalker of the Endless Dunes

SHAKARI, QUEEN OF THE SANDS

...now Shakari, the mother of all black bugs rises from the sands! ...

--Irasha, "Shakari"

... Shakari was supposed to be our divine teacher, said to guide us into womanhood. All she ever gave was death. ...

--Irasha, "Shakari"

In the Maraketh desert, an Oasis lies to the east, its waters shielded from prying eyes by a preternatural storm. The sand will rip the very flesh from your bones, should you be so foolish as to enter into its dark shroud. Yet, enter you must.

The goddess Shakari hides within that golden blizzard, festering with revenge as she resurrects and rebuilds her ancient army - an army that once threatened to shake the very balance of these lands.

Should she be allowed to revitalise her troops, the whole of Maraketh will finally fall under the cruelty of her selfish reign. ...

--Sin, "Shakari"

So it's true. Shakari [sic] thought, as she took her final breath. "My father, Sin, wishes me dead. And he has sent his rabid dog to do it..."

--Captured Soul of Terror of the Infinite Drifts

THE SILENCE OF THE GODS

Aside from my own presence, I no longer feel the vibrations of other gods. Though there may yet be more out there, for now, Wraeclast can breathe a sigh of relief. ...

--Sin, "The Gods"

MISCELLANEOUS LORE

GIANTS

Through droughts, fires, floods and frost, the ancient giants stand resolute, while deep in the rich, dark earth, their grasp stretches ever farther.

--Arborix Assassin Bow

The monstrous men of yore used bows, they were just bigger.

--Giantsbane Bronze Gauntlets

Of ancient giants, none remain,
Their only trace is timeless pain.

--Hrimsorrow Goathide Gloves

Giant's blood you cannot tame,
as wild as an unwatched flame.

--Hrimburn Goathide Gloves

THE GREAT FIRE

Our forefathers danced and drank and ate their fill and did not honour the First Ones for their gifts. So the First Ones filled the sky with fire.

--Feastbind Rustic Sash

When the fires spilled out of the mountain, The First of the Night wove a net and was carried into the night on its hot winds. Though we cannot live without danger, we can learn to live with it.

--Fenumus' Spinnerets Assassin's Boots

Long ago, the ocean was a puddle where a golden fish dwelt, who lit the ocean from within and kept the water fresh. When the sky burned, the fish dived deep, never to return, and the waters turned sour.

--Blightwell Clutching Talisman

From north to south the sea of fire swept,
Rolling waves of gorging flame,
Growing taller and hungrier,
With every land they consumed.

--Rolling Flames Cobalt Jewel

When the inferno spread across the land, it was the First of the Sky who singed his feathers as he brought the flames to a standstill.

--Saqawal's Winds Soldier Gloves

After the fires swept down from the sky and swallowed the city, all that lingered, as if locked in time, was a memory of that which was gone, a whisper of deeds undone.

--Balefire Opal Sceptre

Few living things survived the cleansing flames.
Those that did thrived...
And changed...

--Mutated Growth Cobalt Jewel

After the Great Fire, the land lay barren and our forefathers grew weak. Mother Gull took pity on them and gave them grain and water.

--Faminebind Rustic Sash

But the grain grew twisted and the water turned dark and those who partook of Mother Gull's gift birthed monsters that fed on the flesh of one another.

--The Retch Rustic Sash

BASILISKS

Basilisk Acid drips from the hearts of those venomous monsters, though I cannot blame them for their disposition.

They are tragic creatures. Theirs is a sorry tale more closely tied to my own than I care to dwell upon. Alas, the forging of my Dark Ember produced some rather unfortunate byproducts.

But we shall not see any success if I am to dwell on those past errors.

--Sin, "Chimeric Acid"

Nobility once thought to capture the Basilisks and keep them as exotic pets. This only served to fatten the vileness of their hearts, and with a hateful acid that festered inside, the creatures became soured to their very bones.

--Basilisk Acid

THE PALE COUNCIL

When the rains stopped, the Lord fed his farms with the blood of the beasts. But blood carries corruption with it, and the crops soon towered, monstrous and thorned. In the thick jungle of his own making, it was not only he who turned feral.

--Navali, regarding Yriel (the Feral Lord)

Lord of the Wild, of the feral and frenzied, of the uncivilized, the untamed, the untouched.

--Yriel's Key

Six moons have passed since the earth supped the rain. The riverbed is dry, and the lake is but a puddle. The beasts here have become desperate and dangerous.

There are rumours that Lord Yriel's blood-fed crops have swelled, but the fruit they bear can send a man mad. We look to our children for the answer. A child cannot hunt, but it can still provide. The taste is hard to forget.

--Unknown, Salted Earth Memory

The old red ones left this land barren. Crops grew stunted and disease filled the air. If you don't feed an animal it will soon cast a hungry eye upon its brothers and sisters, and man is no different. The Plaguemaw and his people soon feasted on their own, devouring the very life essence of the young and innocent.

--Navali, regarding Eber (the Plaguemaw)

Mouth of the Masses, whose greatness spreads by our breath and touch, who feeds the starving with the starved, the strong with the weak.

--Eber's Key

Sometimes death is a thief, quick on its feet and quicker with a blade. Sometimes it is a vine, slowly growing tighter and tighter around your neck. But death is not a toy. The unbreathing queen has raised an army of soulless corpses. Her actions mock death, turning it into little more than an obstacle for her puppetry of the flesh.

--Navali, regarding Volkuur (the Unbreathing Queen)

She of Many Bodies, whose very flesh unites all, whose dark whispers draw forth our souls, unfettered.

--Volkuur's Key

Wisdom and knowledge are not one and the same. The queen's thirst for learning was unending. As she tore through the pages of countless tomes, her knowledge grew and her wisdom slipped away, buckling beneath the weight of insanity.

--Navali, regarding Inya (the Unbearable Whispers)

The Infinite Mind, unbound by the tethers of sanity, whose thirst for knowledge is all-consuming, whose every word stands our hair on end.

--Inya's Key

My Council,

The sky turns black as ink.

We must gather at once, for I fear the end draws close.

I have uncovered a tome that illustrates certain forbidden techniques used to prolong life far beyond ordinary means. We shall fracture our very souls, and keep safe a piece of one another's very being. With this, none of us may perish unless all of us perish at once.

It is not without a cost, for life granted requires life be paid, but it need not be any of ours. Bring your most loyal and healthy retainers, and bid the rest farewell, for we shall not see them again.

Make haste and do not speak of where you are going. Immortality is within our grasp, but there are countless who would risk death--who would kill--for a chance at eternal life.

- Inya

--Dark Tome

Dark minds hide in dark places, but it was not always so.

The wise Red rulers were long-dead, and the strong seized power. But an unwise leader pulls the people towards ruin. So it came to pass that milk fresh from the nipple was soured, grass grew hard and sharp, and flesh walked the earth without a soul. Hinekora cast her net towards the new kings and queens, but four slipped through the holes and fled into darkness. There they remain. Beyond the reach of the Mother of Death. But not beyond her sight.

--Navali, regarding the Pale Council

TORMENTED SPIRITS

...the spirits of tormented criminals that yield their ill-gotten gains when slain. Eager to protect their trove, these spirits flee when encountered and imbue nearby monsters with dangerous powers... It's also possible for spirits to possess rare and unique enemies, greatly increasing their threat (and value!) to treasure-seeking exiles. ...

--https://www.pathofexile.com/forum/view-thread/1111831

An era so ingrained with decadence, greed and cruelty that even the graves of murderers were gilded.

--Ashes of the Condemned Strongbox

"A sprinkle of liquid encouragement is often required to garnish the perfect confession."

- Brutus, Warden of Axiom

--Brutus' Lead Sprinkler Ritual Sceptre

The truth lies inside every man, if you dig around. Many a confession was found in the bowels of Axiom.

--The Rat Cage Sharkskin Tunic

WARBANDS

I designed the Mutewind so I can offer a few of my behind-the-scenes intentions for them:

I always imagine the reason they're hostile to you is that to them you're no different from the Rogue Exiles - a dangerous criminal made even more so by embracing the dark powers of a corrupted land.

I also intended them to have a very merit-based heirarchy [sic]. Their headgear is made from beasts they've hunted, and if we had the 3D art to show it would probably be personalized for each member. This philosophy is reflected in their succession rite [Mutewind Seal Unset Ring].

The three highest ranking Mutewind members have the most distinctive headgear - each is the result of a legendary hunt.

They also talk about their "bloodline" [Mutewind Whispersteps Serpentscale Boots] being free of corruption, but they aren't all blood relatives. I see it as meaning they consider each other family, in the "once you're in, you're one of us and you've forsaken all of your previous ties" sense.

Disclaimer: The fact this stuff isn't explicitly said in the game means it could be contradicted at a later date, but hopefully it's interesting on its own.

--Dan_GGG, https://www.pathofexile.com/forum/view-thread/1659337

For Warbands, the flavour texts for each unique item told you something about the band. The shield was the motto, and the boots spoke of their motivation. The Ring told of their succession method. The Warband Cache's [sic] each talk about the homeland of the respective Warband.

--Qarl, https://www.pathofexile.com/forum/view-thread/1659337

REDBLADE

Blood shed is blood shared.

--Redblade Banner Painted Tower Shield

The caustic fumes that rise from the caldera kill nearly everything downwind eventually. The Redblade, however, just go mad.

--Redblade Cache Strongbox

To ascend to leadership, the child of a Redblade warlord must pull the band from the still-hot ashes of their father.

--Redblade Band Unset Ring

Our home was swallowed beneath the great mountain for our complacency. Now we must prove our value to the Molten One by sating his hunger for life.

--Redblade Tramplers Ancient Greaves

MUTEWIND

Embrace the snow or be buried.

--Mutewind Pennant Enameled Buckler

Little makes it across the dry plains to the foot of the mountain alive. The mountain dwellers ensure nothing reaches the top.

--Mutewind Cache Strongbox

When a fallen leader's body is taken to the funeral peak, those who seek power must ascend together. One returns with the seal. The rest do not return at all.

--Mutewind Seal Unset Ring

Corruption sweeps across this land, but our bloodline is clear. It is our duty to keep it so.

--Mutewind Whispersteps Serpentscale Boots

Rami waits at the cavern entrance for the passing aspirants. One at a time he pulls them in from the snowstorm and covers their mouth as I slice their throats. Blood stains the cavern floor.

Rami pulls in the last straggler and we make quick work of her. Just we two remain. Before Rami makes this realisation I plunge my blade into his eye. I alone will lead the Mutewind.

--Unknown, Glacial Cavern Memory

Nineteen more days in the mountains... I'll never survive, never earn my Mutewind name... I'm already starving and dying after ten... and is that... a wolf?!

Kindest friend, kindred wolf. You kept me warm for nineteen days. I will return one day, when I am old, and let your descendants feast upon my remains.

--Unknown, Distant Frozen Drift Memory

BRINEROT

The lords of the sea bow to no one.

--Brinerot Flag Tarnished Spirit Shield

For generations, the gentle Pondium tides sheltered the smugglers, murderers and thieves, and let their resentments and population flourish.

--Brinerot Cache Strongbox

Each time, it is granted to the most senior captain of the fleet, and each time, the ring soon washes ashore once more, still wrapped around a severed finger.

--Brinerot Mark Unset Ring

Those Theopolis fatcats put a price on our heads. Let's see what they'll pay for their own.

--Brinerot Whalers Trapper Boots

Think of the worst place ye can imagine. That's Pondium. Now think of the gods-be-damned best whore house you've ever had the pleasure of. That's Pondium. A 'pirate paradise' full of bodies to stab, holes to fill, and devious liquor to imbibe.

Brinerots control the whole island, and make sure it lives up to the lowest of expectations.

Can't imagine much has changed since I was there last. Still, it's a good place to swash your buckle and make love to a bawdy buxom bunter out back of a boozy bar!

--Weylam Roth, "Pondium"

May the lubbers feel fear in their nethers, and may our blades follow.

- Rot-tooth's Rallying Cry

--The Black Flag

Aye, them Brinerots be a nasty bunch. Led by me very own flesh and blood. Me baby sister, Lussi! The "Rotmother" they call her now. Used to be that I were their leader, back when the Brinerots were about one thing and one thing only - raiding, pillaging and plundering their scrawny black guts out!

Old Lussi were me first mate for years, but she got a whiff of the power that being Captain could gain her, and mutineered me! Me own sister! Dropped me on some deserted island off the coast of somewhere, the bitch. Took months to make it back to the mainland.

That Brinerot clan's been trouble ever since. Used to have some good old fashioned pirate honour, and now they're raving mad lunatics out for their next fix of fear and fortune.

--Weylam Roth, "The Brinerot Clan"

You'll not find a more renowned pirate as Weylam 'Rot Tooth' Roth. In times when Fairgraves was still a whelp earning his sea legs, Rot-tooth was prowling the Strait of Oriath in his ship, the 'Black Crest'.

It's said he build [sic] it hisself, lining its hull with the bones of some great sea beast he slew with nothing but a harpoon and a bottle o' rum. Never was there a more nimble, more ferocious vessel. Like that leviathan's spirit still lived and breathed in its timbers. ...

--Bestel, "Weylam Roth"

Weylam Roth... here, let me share something I remember from me granddaddy's stories.

No sooner had the others turned in fear from the great, white Leviathan, did Weylam load the ballista with his final harpoon. And right then he vowed, to sea and sky, that he and he alone would be the one to finally kill this bastard son of the Brine King.

The ballista fired and the harpoon smote that creature right between the ribs as it made to dive back under the angry sea. Thick clouds of blood bloomed beneath the waves, roses flowering in the black water, and impossible though it seemed, the already shadowed ocean grew darker still...

He used the bones of the great beast to reinforce the hull of his ship, the Black Crest. Old Rot-tooth, he's a true legend. A real pirate hero. I can only hope, one day, me own stories will reach his ears and make him proud of the granddaughter he had to leave behind.

--Lilly Roth, "Weylam Roth"

Lilly Roth? Granddaughter of the legendary Rot-tooth Roth? Oh, apologies if I seem a little... giddy. It's not any old day you get to meet marine royalty. I mean, you know how I feel about pirates and all, but the Roths have as much in common with those scurvy sea rats as a... as a shark does with a goldfish.

Lilly has her granddaddy's blood in her veins; it's plain for all to see. Look at the lustre in her eyes, the ruddy blush of her skin. That there's a pirate princess, and no mistake.

--Bestel, "Lilly"

RENEGADES

Be not blinded by the light.

--Broken Faith Archon Kite Shield

As if pulled by divine strings, the powerful are drawn to the powerful, breaking any morals and laws that might stand in the way.

--Renegades Cache Strongbox

A man who changes his loyalties often, soon finds he has none.

--The Pariah Unset Ring

To fight an enemy on their lands is a tactical mistake. Make those lands your own, and the mistake becomes theirs.

--Steppan Eard Sorcerer Boots

HARBINGERS

Warriors of a distant land, you embark on a journey from which you may not return, but which we will be all the better for.

--The Landing





--The Flow Untethered Cloth Belt



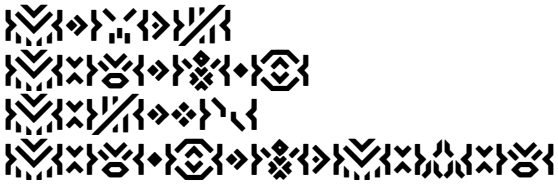
--The Tempest's Binding Callous Mask



--The Fracturing Spinner Blunt Arrow Quiver



--The Unshattered Will Archon Kite Shield



--The Enmity Divine Imperial Staff



--The Rippling Thoughts Legion Sword



--The Beachhead Harbinger Map

THE ORDER OF THE DJINN

... This dusty pit was once the Forbidden Vault, and I its guardian. That you have not heard of it is not surprising; it was kept in absolute secrecy for countless generations, known only to my akhara, the-... the Order of the Djinn.

It feels so strange to tell someone. To speak so plainly would have been a sin of the highest order, punishable by death. It seems harsh to an outsider like yourself, but you do not know the importance of what we did...

--Jun Ortoi, "Jun's Secret"

My akhara, my people, were long ago tasked with protecting the people of Wraeclast from themselves. Many artifacts of great power exist - you have come across some such in your travels. But there are some artifacts whose power is so great that to use them would put the world in jeopardy. Artifacts like the Horns of Kulemak. We, the Order of the Djinn, existed to keep such power sealed away and secret. Better that the world forget that it, and we, exist, than fight for control of a power they have no hope of controlling.

--Jun Ortoi, "The Forbidden Vault"

The rules of my akhara forbid women ever feeling the touch of a man. No families, no loose lips, no loose ends. But it makes no mention of two women...

--Jun Ortoi, "Zana"

You have not heard of us because you were never meant to hear of us. I say us... in truth, it is just me left. We came from all walks of life, but we were all orphans, taken in and raised by the Order, and taught never to speak of it under punishment of death. It sounds harsh, I understand, but such was the importance of our duty that a life of solitude and secrecy was necessary.

For hundreds, maybe thousands of years, we remained secret, until Janus Perandus... that... that imbecile... He sold us out. Reaching for the last vestiges of his ancestral glory. Just like his great grandfather Chitus, he may have doomed us all.

--Jun Ortoi, "Order of the Djinn"

You have heard of the famed Perandus family, I have no doubt. Wealthy and powerful and responsible for putting Malachai in position to bring Wraeclast to ruin all those centuries ago. Though Emperor Chitus is the most famous of the Perandus family, some remnants of his vile bloodline linger even still.

Janus was one such remnant. He too was orphaned, but with the Perandus coffers dry and the Perandus name worth its weight in gold, no one took him in. No one except my akhara.

That he is the only other survivor, and is now a powerful member of the Immortal Syndicate leaves no doubt in my mind that it was he who sold us out.

If there is but one silver lining in all of this, it is that I may get to sink my blades into his flesh over, and over, and over again.

--Jun Ortoi, "Janus Perandus"

MEMBERS & RESEARCH

Your visions led the Azmeri down into a world left abandoned by the Vaal. They cast you out, young Egrin, but the Order of the Djinn accepts you.

Speaker of unclean truths, Egrin of the Dark Between Stars. We curse you whose soul echoes the madness of the void!

Egrin of the Dark Between Stars, Forger of the Sealing Blade, let your name be redeemed by your unexpected sacrifice.

--Rusted, Polished, & Gilded Elder Scarabs

Consider yourself an orphaned Eternal no longer, young Betucia. The Order of the Djinn is your family now.

For your loyalty and valour, honoured Betucia, we are proud to put the requisition of dream-artefacts in your capable hands.

Betucia, Bearer of the Sealing Blade, the Order of the Djinn survives because of your sacrifice, but will be forever wounded by your loss.

--Rusted, Polished, & Gilded Cartography Scarabs

The Peak-dwellers saw you as impure, young Qianga, but the Order of the Djinn sees you as all the stronger for your uniqueness.

Bold dreamer, Qianga of the Stars, she of the Celestial Cold! These titles we bestow upon the one among us whose soul speaks to the ineffable.

Qianga of the Stars, Deliverer of the Sealing Blade to the Watchers, go now, and let your half-dreamt life be troubled by nightmares of achromic hunger no more.

--Rusted, Polished, & Gilded Shaper Scarabs

You were a casualty of callous Karui warfare, ageless Narumoa, but the Order mended your wounds. You are bound to us now by your own code.

Though your peers fear you, Narumoa, the elders have decided that your second sight is ideal for handling all artefacts that seek to subvert Fate.

Your centuries of service have been invaluable to us, Narumoa. Go now, return to Hinekora, and join your ancient kin in the halls of the dead.

--Rusted, Polished, & Gilded Divination Scarabs

The Maraketh left you to die alone in the desert, young Sumei, but we saw the potential in you. The Order of the Djinn is your akhara now.

As the best of our lorekeepers, honoured Sumei, it is now your task to investigate the mysterious duplication of artefacts of power.

Go to your rest now, Sumei, Master Lorekeeper. The Order shall keep contained the terrible secret that burdened your final years.

--Rusted, Polished, & Gilded Relquary Scarabs

Feuding Ezomytes slaughtered your kin, young Agnar, but we pulled you from the flames. The Order of the Djinn is your clan now.

None among us understand the beasts of this world better than you, honoured Agnar. You will root out the mysteries of wild-artefacts.

The Order was your clan in life, Agnar, Beastmaster, but the First Ones call back their favoured son. The gift of their Visions will pass to another.

--Rusted, Polished, & Gilded Bestiary Scarabs

The Ember-dwellers sought to throw you to their volcanic god, young Omid, but we caught you instead. The Order of the Djinn is your tribe now.

We task you, honoured Omid, with the investigation of this mysterious 'Xoph' and artefacts related to rifts in the boundaries of our world.

Omid, Master Researcher, has left a final commandment upon his death: the world must never know.

--Rusted, Polished, & Gilded Breach Scarabs

Young Tsarsk, you were a broken and forgotten child lying glassy-eyed in a flesh-pit in Trarthus, but the Order found and cleansed you.

Your tortured soul long kept you isolated from your peers, Tsarsk, but has attracted new kindred in kind. You are tasked with appeasing these anguished spirits.

Though you were swallowed by your own darkness, you saved countless others from eternal misery, young Tsarsk. You were not nothing, as you feared.

--Rusted, Polished, & Gilded Torment Scarabs

We plucked you from Malachai's torturous grasp, Icius Perandus, for a reason. Mankind is in grave peril. By accepting this scarab, you pledge your life.

By planning against the theft and plundering of artefacts by your family's patron, Cadiro, you have shown your intellect, Icius. The Order of the Djinn puts its faith in you.

The dark day has come, Icius Perandus. Today either we succeed or humanity dies. Enact your plan. Prevent the fate of the Vaal from befalling the Eternal Empire!

--Rusted, Polished, & Gilded Perandus Scarabs

As the first Brinerot to join the Order, you have much to prove, young Raethan. We are confident you will succeed.

For harnessing and controlling the power of lightning, you, Raethan, are now charged with researching this new energy.

Let him not be called Raethan the Betrayer. His discovery was too important to keep locked away. Now, for good or ill, it is in civilisation's hands.

--Rusted, Polished, & Gilded Sulphite Scarabs

Your outlaw camp abandoned you when their surprise attack failed, young Rindwik. Now that you know we exist, we cannot let you go. You have two choices.

Your people were renegades, Rindwik, but you have proven your loyalty. You will lead the martial defence of our expeditions.

Master Warrior Rindwik fell to one opponent alone: old age. Only the greatest soldiers can say as much.

--Rusted, Polished, & Gilded Ambush Scarabs

Your ancestry has been much maligned by history, young Sarina Titucius, but to the Order of the Djinn, you are born anew.

For deciphering the language of the inscrutable ones, honoured Sarina, we charge you with investigating their intent in our land.

For your valour beyond the Gate, Sarina Titucius, we honour you with the first Gilded Scarab awarded while its recipient still lives. Remain vigilant.

--Rusted, Polished, & Gilded Harbinger Scarabs

THE IMMORTAL SYNDICATE

The Syndicate is not just a cluster of like-minded individuals. We have a very wealthy benefactor...

--Vorici, on bargaining for items

Some of the members we have come across... well... they have come back from the dead. I don't have any better way of putting it.

They are no mindless zombies. Somehow they are returning... whole. This must be why they call themselves the Immortal Syndicate. Immortality is dangerous, even in the hands of those with good intentions.

--Jun Ortoi, "Syndicate Members"

At last, we have a name; Catarina. I know of her. She was a powerful necromancer whose talents were... misdirected. I do not know for certain how she learned to raise the dead back to true life, but... I have my suspicions. And I have reason to believe that such power does not come without a great price.

It is likely she is paying that price in very inhumane ways. ...

--Jun Ortoi, "Catarina"

The picture is at last clear. Catarina has obtained the Horns of Kulemak, an artifact capable of shifting the very energies of life freely. She sought power, not just magical, but political power. To be able to grant immortality is a powerful bargaining tool indeed.

Wraeclast is fractured. Many little societies separated by vast tracts of land. But it will not always be so, and Catarina knows this. She is playing the long game. She sees herself as an immortal Queen just biding her time.

Her subordinates dare not cross her, for she has the power to gift them immortality, but also to take it away.

There is a reason my Order hid the Horns for so long, and we are seeing it play out before our very eyes.

--Jun Ortoi, "The Syndicate Leader"

... She is a tyrant in the making, and the longer we let her accumulate power, the harder it will be to depose her.

--Jun Ortoi, "The Syndicate Leader"

We were only taught what was passed down for generations. We believed the Horns to be the ultimate tool of life and death; capable of siphoning the very breath of life from any living thing. We do not know where it came from. Perhaps the remains of a powerful, long-dead animal. Perhaps a creation of the gods themselves.

Regardless of its provenance, I believe the Horns are what have given the Immortal Syndicate their miraculous ability to return from the dead unscathed.

--Jun Ortoi, "Horns of Kulemak"

... I believe the Syndicate has been planning to form a new government. The Templar were cruel, but at least they were mortal. If the Syndicate's power continues to grow, they will be able to rule Wraeclast and beyond without fear of reprisal, and we mere mortals will have no choice but to serve, or fuel their cycle of death and rebirth.

--Jun Ortoi, "Oriath"

The world is an ancient stone, rigid and immovable, and we are but water, rolling across its surface, leaving an ephemeral trail before we sink beneath its skin. So short are our lives that the stone seemingly remains unchanged.

Given enough time, the rain can shape a stone. Each drop's minute contribution, adding up over time, hews the stone's rough edges. But there is no grand design here. There is no individual guiding the stone into a useful form, only natural forces. Chaos.

But what if that weren't the case? What if there was someone guiding the rain? Someone able to plan far past the fleeting lives that limit us?

What new potential would we unlock?

--Lifegiver's Manifesto 1

What new thing have you learned today? Or this week? How far have you come in your lifetime? If you died today, how much of what you have learned would be lost for all time?

We advance as a society by building upon previous knowledge. Bricks stacked atop bricks. Too often are key advances lost due to an unforeseen death, leaving a gap in the wall. How long until someone climbs high enough once more to continue to build?

We cannot all live forever. Sacrifices must be made. But with sufficient time to build our knowledge, what we fuel with the blood of our brothers and sisters today may come freely tomorrow.

--Lifegiver's Manifesto 2

Each great movement has detractors - the powers that be naturally fight against any threat to their dominance. But steel is not forged in cool air, it is forged in vicious heat.

The heat is coming, brothers and sisters. They will try to destroy us, pit us against each other, and put us in impossible situations, but, throughout, we must stand united.

Though we crawl through the mud, acting in secrecy and silence, we are destined to become Wraeclast's saviours. Each sacrifice we must make is but a twig in the flames of our forge, and the day will come when our blade has been tempered into a mighty weapon and we may slice through the spectre of death once and for all.

--Lifegiver's Manifesto 3

We bury the dead. Insects feed on the flesh and bone... Rot takes hold... An entire lifetime reduced to feed for the grass above. A waste. But the soul, oh, the soul... The soul does not even feed the earth. It drifts invisibly into the ether, never harnessed, never used. Gone.

What greater waste of life is there than to let the soul flutter away into nothingness? We hope and wish for something more, but here and now we have tools that will guarantee no afterlife be necessary. We have the tools to build a utopian life here, in Wraeclast, through thaumaturgy. The only thing we lacked was time, but the gift of the Horns has given us that too.

Brothers and sisters, there's a new empire in the making, and we are its founders. Those that die for our cause will live on within us, and their names will be etched into the foundations of our utopia.

--Lifegiver's Manifesto 4

People need a strong leader. As Oriath bubbles over and spills into Wraeclast, the ragged and the hungry will look to someone to keep them safe from harm. For now, it is merely a matter of survival, but it in time, a true society will form, and someone must step in to rule.

A city is not built in a day, nor even a lifetime. Sarn was being cobbled together up to the day it burned. With so many hands involved in its construction, fractures and slips were inevitable. People would fall through the cracks. Factions would form.

Oriath didn't learn from Sarn's mistakes, but they cannot be blamed. The death of a ruler always has and always will throw an empire's direction into the wind.

With an Eternal Queen, this is a problem we will never have to face.

--Lifegiver's Manifesto 5

BEREK AND THE UNTAMED

"She begged the Earth to spare her Son;
Out of love the Earth agreed.
To the other Elements she did not speak
And out of spite They plotted."

- Berek and the Untamed

--Immortal Flesh Leather Belt

"Berek hid from Storm's lightning wrath
In the embrace of oblivious Frost
Repelled by ice, blinded by blizzards
Storm raged in vain
While Berek slept."

- Berek and the Untamed

--Berek's Grip Two-Stone Ring

"From Frost's ice-bound pass
Berek taunted and jeered
Until furious Flame scaled the mountain
Berek escaped through the thaw
And Frost's tortured moans."

- Berek and the Untamed

--Berek's Pass Two-Stone Ring

"With Flame licking at his heels
Berek berated the clouds
Until vengeful Storm spewed forth his rains
And Berek held on tight
As Fire screamed and steamed
And fled."

- Berek and the Untamed

--Berek's Respite Two-Stone Ring

"Moon after moon did Berek make fools
Of the great and Untamed Three
Until malice for a Brother
Slew the hatred of the Other
And Berek did hunt
Alone and free."

- Berek and the Untamed

--The Taming Prismatic Ring

THE QUEEN

The nobles wanted to take her throne.
She let the peasants take their wealth.
The peasants wanted to take her wealth.
She let the soldiers take their heads.
The soldiers wanted to take her head.
She sat on her throne and wept.

--Queen's Decree Ornate Sword

The soldiers stormed her throne room.
The guards held them at bay.
The peasants overwhelmed the guards.
The nobles paid for their lives.
The nobles took her throne,
and so she fled to the woods.

--Queen's Escape Ornate Sword

Shedding away her regal past,
she forged a new destiny.
Sacrificing the ephemeral joys of man,
she embraced the eternal grasp of nature.
Seizing her one true wish,
she found peace at last.

--Queen of the Forest Destiny Leather

She paints her offer in wicked hues
An off-white grin, an elegant bruise.
To the nascent scourge she sings the ruse:
"With me in hand, what else need you use?"

--The Goddess Bound Whalebone Rapier

Her purpose seems done; the oath is fulfilled.
Rust dulls her smirk with the last demon killed.
The embers grow dim and yet hope burns her lips:
"An old flame renewed can define our eclipse!"

--The Goddess Scorned Elegant Sword

As a maiden I was bound; as a crone was I scorned
Promised power rarely found, delivered fury fairly thorned.
Not enough?...Fine. Now I am become both and another
To take your hand and cradle your talents, not smother
The consummate flames. So hush, dear, say not a word.
Bequeathed, betrayed...beloved. At last, I am the third.

--The Goddess Unleashed Eternal Sword

APPENDIX A: SYNOPSIS

Thousands of years ago the continent of Wraeclast was a gloomy waste inhabited by a race of repulsive beings known as the Lightless.

An unkown amount of time later, the sun appeared and the Lightless were driven underground and forgotten about. Wraeclast was now populated by several different races of humans, including the Vaal, Azmeri, Karui, Maraketh and Ezomytes. During this time, men and women were able to ascend to godhood through sufficient ambition, rareness of quality and the adoration of their people. However, many of these gods abused their power, plaguing Wraeclast and the nearby island of Oriath with war and strife. One god, named Sin, wanted to free humanity from the influence of the petty and destructive gods and give it a chance to choose its own fate. He therefore created an entity that came to be known as Nightmare or the Beast within a mountain. The Beast's influence suppressed the power of the gods and caused them to pass into slumbering darkness.

However, some men and women throughout history became aware of the tremendous power of the Beast that slept within the mountain and sought to take control of it for their own ends. This happened several times across a period of aeons, each time resulting in a cataclysmic event.

Another apparent byproduct of the Beast was the creation of gems within the mountain which, when socketed into weapons or armour--and even moreso when directly implanted in the flesh--bestowed humans with extraordinary abilities referred to as *thaumaturgy*. These gems became known as Tears of the Maji and later Virtue Gems.

THE VAAL

The Vaal were the earliest known civilisation to become deeply involved in the use of Virtue Gems, and were described as having their flesh adorned with them. While apparently fearsome warriors (their gems were powered by the sacrifice of their foes), the Vaal revered peace and sent ambassadors to other lands. In doing so they contacted the comparatively primitive Azmeri.

The Vaal shared all their knowledge with the Azmeri, save for their knowledge of the Virtue Gems, and helped raise their civilization.

About 500 years later the Vaal queen Atziri came to power. Some accounts depicted her quite positively, though she was said to be obsessed with youth and longevity. She instructed her thaumaturgist, Doryani, to help her achieve these--at any cost.

Doryani learned of the existence of the Beast and believed its power could be used to achieve immortality for the Vaal people. He attempted a communion with it in which the Vaal gathered their Virtue Gems together in a cradle on the night of the harvest moon. His actions wounded the Beast, and in the Beast's effort to defend itself the Vaal civilization was wiped out in an event later known as the Fall. Out of millions, only about 3,000 Vaal survived. These survivors traveled to the home of the Azmeri and integrated into their civilization.

THE ETERNAL EMPIRE

About 400 years after the Fall, an Azmerian named Tarcus Veruso led his people down from the mountains and into the ruins of the Vaal civilization. There he established a new nation known as the Eternal Empire. He outlawed the use of thaumaturgy and Virtue Gems, believing them to be responsible for the Fall.

The reigns of Tarcus and his successor were fraught with trouble caused by a dark being (probably the Vaal Oversoul) as well as mindless constructs and abominations left over in the wake of the Fall. A general named Alano Phrecia managed to subdue the dark being and seal it away, and as a result was proclaimed emperor. Thus began a long and unbroken line of Phrecian emperors for over a thousand years.

The last Phrecian emperor was a man named Izaro. Unable to conceive an heir, he decided to choose a successor using the ancient Azmerian custom of selecting a ruler by choosing the first person to successfully navigate a labyrinth filled with beasts and vicious traps. The man who managed to successfully navigate Izaro's labyrinth was named Chitus. A member of the wealthy and influential Perandus family, Chitus bribed and deceived his way through many of the labyrinth's obstacles in order to become emperor.

As emperor, Chitus began aggressively expanding the empire into neighboring nations, making slaves of many of the conquered.

A thaumaturgist named Malachai earned Chitus' favour and convinced the emperor that he could make the citizens of the empire more "eternal" through the use of Virtue Gems, as the Vaal had. He successfully began implanting gems in many imperial citizens, who became known as Gemlings. His finest work, a woman named Dialla, became known as the Gemling Queen.

Three other thaumaturgists apprenticed under Malachai, studying his work and attempting to take it in new directions. The result was the creation of some powerful abominations. These three students were Shavronne, Maligaro and Doedre.

While becoming a Gemling was popular among the nobility, discontent grew among many of the common imperial citizens who were often mistreated and underfed. The slaves also clamored for freedom and the conquered nations sought a return of their lands. Some, including a poet named Victario Nevalius, saw the Gemlings as unnatural or perversions. As a result of these factors, a rebellion arose to overthrow Chitus and once again abolish the use of Virtue Gems.

The leader of this Purity Rebellion was High Templar Voll. With Vicatio's help he recruited other groups to his cause, and war broke out. First the Karui, led by Kaom, invaded the southern coast of Wraeclast and overthrew General Marceus Lioneye, who had previously led slave raids against the Karui. Then the Maraketh, led by Deshret, fought and conquered General Hector Titucius and reclaimed their lands that Chitus had stolen. Next the Ezomytes, led by Rigwald, overthrew the slavemaster General Gaius Sentari.

Led by Voll, they together began a siege of Sarn, the imperial capital. After about a year, Emperor Chitus was assassinated and the city fell. Voll was crowned emperor.

Voll condemned Malachai to death for his creation of the Gemlings and the ethical abuses involved. However, Malachai, aware of the existence of the Beast, claimed he could help Voll destroy it and

thus cleanse Wraeclast of the source of all thaumaturgy. Voll spared him, and Malachai created the Rapture Device.

Voll led Malachai, Dialla and the device north to the mountain where the Beast resided. There, Malachai betrayed the others by using the Rapture Device to enter the black core of the Beast and take control of it (as had been his plan all along) instead of destroying it. He then used the Beast's power of Nightmare to incite the Cataclysm, an event similar to the Fall, which wiped out the Eternal Empire and most of its citizens. He also resurrected his three students--Shavronne, Maligaro and Doedre--who had been killed during the Purity Rebellion, to act as his servants.

As a result of the Cataclysm, the Gemlings were warped into creatures known as the Undying, the dead began to rise and hunt the living, and animals that were formerly docile herbivores became violent carnivores.

This is the condition of Wraeclast at the start of the events of the game.

ORIATH

After the Cataclysm, all that remained of the Eternal Empire was the island of Oriath, populated by the Templars. Some of them began collecting and studying documents and relics from the ruins of Wraeclast, despite officially outlawing the use of such thaumaturgy as heretical.

One such person was High Templar Dominus, along with his thaumaturgist Piety. They began traveling to Wraeclast to dredge up the secrets of thaumaturgy. At the same time, on Oriath, Dominus began punishing crimes with exile to Wraeclast. Piety intercepted many of the exiles who survived there and used them in her horrific experiments, attempting to recreate the works of Malachai and his apprentices.

EVENTS OF THE GAME

The player character is from Oriath and is exiled by Dominus to Wraeclast (for reasons mostly unknown), where he/she is thrown from a ship and washes ashore.

Acts 1 and 2 primarily concern the player trying to survive and find a better existence in Wraeclast than the meagre conditions of the southern coast. This includes killing several monsters and villains that are making life miserable for the exiles.

The player also learns that Dominus and Piety are themselves in Wraeclast, secretly experimenting on and murdering masses of people, and decides to stop them. This is Act 3.

Act 4 concerns the player traveling to Highgate where the Beast resides, in order to stop Malachai and his Cataclysm that is continuing to corrupt all of Wraeclast. In killing Malachai the player also kills the Beast.

In Act 5 the player returns to Oriath, only to learn that the gods, formerly asleep, are now rising again due to the death of the Beast. Some of them appear to once more be gathering followers and abusing their power to enslave and murder humanity, so the exile begins a quest to destroy them.

Acts 6 - 10 continue this story of the player traveling throughout Wraeclast and Oriath, killing gods (and the once-again-resurrected Shavronne, Maligaro and Doedre) to free humanity from their

oppression while at the same time gaining some of their powers in order to defeat the strongest of them, Kitava.

APPENDIX B: CHARACTERS

GODS

The first section of the above document contains a list of gods with known lore.

PROTO-VAAL

Aul, the Last King: a slave who was made to quarry stone for the king's fortress. He eventually rose to be king himself and was renowned for his leadership, as well as being fearless, ferocious and a tactical genius. Aul resided in a citadel that was later buried deep underground, deeper even than the domains of the Lightless. He became known as the Crystal King due to his association with the mineral azurite.

VAAL

Xibaqua: the precursor to the Vaal. Xibaqua was said to have been born from the flesh of the gods, but later betrayed them. The gods reclaimed their flesh, leaving nothing left of Xibaqua save for a droplet of pure light, which was the first Vaal.

Ahuatotli, the Blind: the Grand Architect of the Vaal Outpost, a city which was eventually buried beneath the Eternal Empire.

Tetzlapokal: a Vaal queen sometimes referred to as a "waif of disturbing proclivities." She was a devotee of Arakaali and supposedly had a deep fascination with mortality and the inert human form. It was said she would request that her subjects deposit the bodies of their deceased loved ones upon the steps of her palace, to be taken inside and used for disturbing purposes.

Kishara: a Vaal sailor said to have explored every coast, cove and bay of Wraeclast. She was aided by the Star, an artefact she obtained on her first voyage. Said to be humming with thaumaturgy, it was able to guide Kishara wherever she wanted to go. She somehow drew the ire of Queen Atziri, who took her ship and made sacrifices of her crew. Kishara is said to have hidden her Star before escaping the Vaal empire and going into hiding.

Zerphi: a Vaalish noble and infamous serial killer who tortured and murdered thirteen people. He lived to be 168, but at the time of his death had the body of a 20-year-old. This inspired Atziri in her pursuit of youth and longevity.

Atziri: the last queen of the Vaal. Inspired by Zerphi, she sought out youth and longevity at the cost of sacrificing her own people. While believed to have died in the Fall, she somehow remained behind in a nightmare realm that is beginning to leak back into Wraeclast.

Doryani: a Vaal thaumaturgist who served under Queen Atziri. He assisted her in her pursuit of youth and longevity at the cost of human sacrifice and experimentation. He orchestrated some sort of communion with the Beast involving Virtue Gems and the harvest moon, hoping to achieve immortality for his people. He wounded the Beast, and the result was the Fall and the destruction of Vaal civilization.

Jaetai: a Vaal Queen's Advisor.

Atalui: a Vaal priestess.

Zeel: a Vaal tinkerer in search of the secret of Matter Metamorphosis.

Kiravi: a Vaal archer.

Rumi: a Vaal person.

ARCHITECTS OF THE TEMPLE OF ATZOATL

Ahuana, Architect of Ceremonies: a male Vaal architect who led countless human sacrifices. He designed the Sacrificial Chamber, Hall of Offerings, and Apex of Ascension.

Atmohua, Architect of Iron: a male Vaal architect who designed the Armourer's Workshop, Armoury, and Chamber of Iron.

Azcapa, Architect of the Guild: a male Vaal architect and notoriously talented jeweler. He designed the Jeweller's Workshop, Jewellery Forge, and Glittering Halls.

Cholotl, Architect of the War: a male Vaal architect who designed the Guardhouse, Barracks, and Hall of War.

Citaqualotl, Architect of the Swarm: a male Vaal architect and crazed scientist who created moving devices of strange metals and later combined metal and insects. He designed the Hatchery, Automaton Lab, and Hybridisation Chamber.

Estazunti, Architect of the Vault: a male Vaal architect who designed the Vault, Treasury, and Wealth of the Vaal.

Guatelitzi, Architect of Flesh: a male Vaal architect who designed the Pools of Restoration, Sanctum of Vitality, and Sanctum of Immortality.

Hayoxi, Architect of Destruction: a Vaal architect who designed the Explosives Room, Demolition Lab, and Shrine of Unmaking.

Jiquani, Architect of Industry: a male Vaal architect obsessed with finding new and creative ways to get things done. He designed the Workshop, Engineering Department, and Factory.

Juatalotli, Architect of the Hoard: a male Vaal architect who designed the Storage Room, Warehouses, and Museum of Artifacts.

Matatl, Architect of Fortifications: a male Vaal architect who designed the Trap Workshop, Temple Defense Workshop, and Defense Research Lab.

Paquate, Architect of Corruption: a male Vaal architect who performed nefarious experiments. He designed the Corruption Chamber, Catalyst of Corruption, and Locus of Corruption.

Puhuarte, Architect of the Forge: a Vaal architect who designed the Flame Workshop, Omnitect Forge, and Crucible of Flame.

Quipolatl, Architect of the Nexus: a Vaal architect who designed the Shrine of Empowerment, Sanctum of Unity, and Temple Nexus.

Tacati, Architect of Toxins: a male Vaal architect who designed the Poison Garden, Cultivar Chamber, and Toxic Grove.

Ticaba, Architect of the Arena: a male Vaal architect who designed the Sparring Room, Arena of Valour, and Hall of Champions.

Topotante, Architect of Storms: a Vaal architect who designed the Tempest Generator, Hurricane Engine, and Storm of Corruption.

Tzamoto, Architect of Torment: a male Vaal architect who designed the Torment Cells, Torture Cages, and Sadist's Den.

Uromoti, Architect of Expansion: a male Vaal architect who designed the Surveyor's Study, Office of Cartography, and Atlas of Worlds.

Xipocado, Royal Architect: a male Vaal architect who designed the Royal Meeting Room, Hall of Lords, and Throne of Atziri.

Xopec, Architect of Power: a Vaal architect who experimented into electrical lifebloods. Xopec designed the Lightning Workshop, Omnitect Reactor Plant, and Conduit of Lightning.

Zalatl, Architect of Thaumaturgy: a Vaal architect who designed the Gemcutter's Workshop, Department of Thaumaturgy, and Doryani's Institute.

Zantipi, Architect of Concealment: a male Vaal architect who designed the Strongbox Chamber, Hall of Locks, and Court of Sealed Death.

Zilquapa, Architect of the Breach: a male Vaal architect who designed the Splinter Research Lab, Breach Containment Chamber, and House of the Others.

EMPERORS

Tarcus Veruso: an Azmerian shepherd boy who--after supposedly receiving a vision from God--led his people down from the mountains and established the Eternal Empire, becoming its first emperor. He was reported to have been a ruthless despot. He outlawed the use of thaumaturgy and Virtue Gems in the empire, referring to them as "Vaalish folly," and burned those who used them at the stake. However, when his wife Chiara died in childbirth, he himself resorted to thaumaturgy, using an artefact supposedly gifted to him from the Vaal known as the Ankh of Eternity in an attempt to revive her. He had one son, who died attempting to complete the labyrinth. Mount Veruso, where Highgate is located, was named after him.

Caspiro: a low-born legionnaire who became the second Eternal Emperor after surviving the labyrinth. He was dismembered by a dark being (probably the Vaal Oversoul).

Alano Phrecia: an Azmerian general who managed to defeat the dark being that had killed Emperor Caspiro. For this achievement he was named the third Eternal Emperor. His descendants ruled for over a thousand years, abandoning succession by labyrinth for succession by inheritance, until Chitus Perandus took the throne. Phrecia, the area of Wraeclast surrounding Sarn, was named after him and his line.

Romira Phrecia/Phrecius: the Eternal Emperor who ruled during the Night of a Thousand Ribbons, when Sarn burned. He was known for being a cannibal. His wife had two sons that were fathered by his brother. It is implied that he got revenge by holding a banquet in his wife's honor in which he served her her two sons.

Izaro Phrecius: the last Phrecian Eternal Emperor. He was unable to conceive an heir, so built a new labyrinth based on the ones used in Azmerian tradition in order to choose a successor. He was betrayed by the Perandus family, who pushed Chitus Perandus to power. Chitus locked Izaro in his own labyrinth, where he remains trapped along with the goddess he worshipped.

Chitus Perandus: the Eternal Emperor who succeeded Izaro by successfully navigating Izaro's labyrinth. A member of the wealthy Perandus family, he tricked his way into becoming emperor by stealing detailed plans of the labyrinth's construction, bribing others to place caches of supplies within the labyrinth itself, and deceiving an Ezomyte warrior named Weylin into helping him fight his way through it. (Per Path of Exile: Origins, Chitus is not only a Perandus but also a descendant of Tarcus Veruso.) After his coronation he immediately began expanding the empire and making slaves of the conquered. With the help of Malachai, he began the use of thaumaturgy and Virtue Gems in the empire, which had been forbidden since its founding. During the Purity Rebellion he was stabbed and killed with a poisoned blade by his friend, Lord Mayor Ondar of Sarn. Since he'd had a Virtue Gem implanted above his heart that was linked to all of the Gemling legionnaires, his death also resulted in the death of all but a few of the Gemling legionnaires. This event thus brought the Purity Rebellion to a successful

conclusion. Chitus was buried in the Hedge Maze next to the Imperial Gardens, and a plum tree was planted upon his grave.

Voll of Thebrus, the Brittle Emperor: the leader of the Purity Rebellion and last Eternal Emperor. Voll was the High Templar during the reign of Chitus. He disapproved of the emperor's use of thaumaturgy and Virtue Gems, which had been outlawed since the empire's founding, and vowed to cleanse them from the empire. He started the Purity Rebellion and recruited others to his cause. After inciting uprisings by the Karui, Maraketh and Ezomytes, he himself laid siege to Sarn. After the death of Chitus, Voll was crowned emperor. He had Malachai's thaumaturgists put to death, but spared Malachai and took him to Highgate based on his promise to destroy the Beast, the source of all thaumaturgy. However, Malachai betrayed Voll and instead harnessed the power of the Beast to incite a Cataclysm that destroyed the empire and corrupted or killed its citizens. Voll himself was corrupted into an undead creature that began to attack the living, including the Maraketh who guarded Highgate. Voll himself killed Deshret, the Red Sekhema.

NOTABLE FIGURES DURING THE PURITY REBELLION

Cadiro Perandus: Lord of the Coin and minister of finance who assisted Chitus in becoming emperor. Prior to the fall of the Eternal Empire he managed to empty the kingdom's treasury and hide its riches in secret caches throughout Wraeclast. Cadiro himself remains alive, sustained by his devotion to his household god, Prospero, continuing to search out these caches.

Lazhwar: an old archbishop of the Eternal Faith who secretly conducted dark experiments, using thaumaturgy to create his own miniature worlds (maps) in which he could rule as a god. Malachai studied his work with interest, using Lazhwar’s designs as the foundation for his Eternal Laboratory. When Emperor Voll took power, Malachai freely gave Lazhwar over to the Purity Courts. Lazhwar was burned at the stake for "fraternizing with unholy forces."

Malachai, the Soulless: a thaumaturgist who received the favor of Chitus. After studying the works of the Vaal with the unwilling help of Icius Perandus, he rediscovered the art of implanting Virtue Gems into people. He used this to turn imperial citizens into Gemlings, to create the powerful Gemling legionnaires, and to turn the empire's slaves into creatures more fit for their assigned labor. He was given Dialla, a former concubine of Chitus', who he fell in love with and turned into the Gemling Queen. He also experimented with maps, inspired by Lazhwar's designs as well as visions from the Beast. Following the Purity Rebellion and the death of Chitus, he convinced Voll to spare him by claiming he could destroy the Beast and thus wipe out the source of all thaumaturgy. However, he betrayed Voll and abandoned Dialla, and instead used the Rapture Device to enter and take control of the Beast. He used the Beast's power of Nightmare to incite a Cataclysm that destroyed the Eternal Empire and wiped out any resistance to his plan of shaping the world into his own vision. He also resurrected Shavronne, Maligaro, Doedre and Piety to act as his servants.

Icius Perandus: (see the Order of the Djinn.)

Shavronne of Umbra: a student under Malachai who became one of the Godless Three. She experimented with transfiguration and the implantation of Virtue Gems into people. During the Purity Rebellion she created a thaumaturgical barrier to prevent the Karui invaders from reaching the inner empire. She also turned Brutus, the Warden of Axiom Prison, into a monster to stop the Karui from advancing beyond the prison. Brutus turned on her and killed her. She was later resurrected by Malachai after the Cataclysm and resided in the Harvest guarding Malachai's entrails.

Brutus: the Warden of Axiom Prison. During the Purity Rebellion Brutus chose to have Shavronne of Umbra transform him into a powerful creature, who Shavronne intended to use to stop the Karui from entering the inner empire after they had defeated Marceus Lioneye. Brutus himself turned on and killed Shavronne.

Maligaro: a student under Malachai who became one of the Godless Three. He used thaumaturgy and the extracted essence of Virtue Gems to create a number of monsters, including the Great White Beast. He turned his own assistant, Raulo, into a creature named Fideltas. During the Purity Rebellion Maligaro was burned at the stake by High Templar Voll on his way to lay siege to Sarn. He was later resurrected by Malachai after the Cataclysm and resided in the Harvest guarding Malachai's heart.

Fidelitas, the Mourning: formerly a man named Raulo, who was Maligaro's assistant. Maligaro injected the extracted essence of a Virtue Gem into Raulo, turning him into a creature who he named *Fidelitas* (Latin for "faithfulness" or "loyalty") in honor of his sacrifice. Fidelitas remained alive in the Chamber of Sins until discovered by Piety more than 250 years later.

Doedre "Darktongue" Stamatis: a student under Malachai who became one of the Godless Three. Maligaro was her master and was responsible for removing her tongue, earning her her nickname. During the Purity Rebellion she was burned at the stake by High Templar Voll on his way to lay siege to Sarn. She was later resurrected by Malachai after the Cataclysm and resided in the Harvest guarding Malachai's lungs.

Lady Dialla, the Gemling Queen: a former concubine of Chitus' who was given to Malachai for talking too much and asking too many questions. During the Purity Rebellion she met and befriended Victario Nevalius. Malachai turned her into a Gemling that he considered to be his finest work, and she became known as the Gemling Queen. As a Gemling, she betrayed Victario and killed his lover, Marylene. She loved Malachai and after the Rebellion wished to remain with him. However, he secretly planned to take control of the Beast and harness its power, and knew (despite loving her) that he couldn't take her with him. He therefore told her she'd have to die in order for him to kill the Beast, knowing she'd refuse and that it would break her heart, but also knowing it would cause her to leave and thus spare her from his Cataclysm. Not having been aware of his plans, Dialla was left believing she was to blame for the Rapture Device failing to kill the Beast, when in actuality Malachai had never built it for that purpose.

Victario Nevalius, the People's Poet: a key figure in the Purity Rebellion, he helped High Templar Voll recruit others, including the Karui and Ezoytes, to the cause. Initially he convinced Emperor Chitus to allow him to visit the front lines of the rebellion to act as a chronicler, until he was discovered as a spy for the rebellion by Malachai. Afterwards he went underground and promoted the rebellion among the common people of Sarn, operating from the sewers. He was a friend of Dialla's before she became a Gemling, and was briefly the lover of Marylene before

she was killed protecting him. He stole a powerful toxin capable of killing Gemlings from Maligaro, which Lord Mayor Ondar later used to kill Emperor Chitus. Victario died in the Cataclysm.

"Fair" Marylene: a skilled fighter in Sarn arena and one of the leaders of the Purity Rebellion. She was raised in the slums by her maidservant mother. The identity of her father remains a mystery but was possibly Kre Faarblood. She was called "Fair" due to her dance-like style of fighting. She was a leader of the Purity Rebellion among the common people of Sarn, operating from the sewers. Victario Nevalius was briefly her lover. She was killed while protecting Victario early in the siege of Sarn by Dialla, who'd been newly turned into a Gemling.

Kalisa Maas: an opera singer who became a Gemling when she had a Virtue Gem implanted in her throat. She gave her final performance in Sarn arena before Malachai unveiled his Gemling legionnaires. Her gem was later set into a necklace known as the Star of Wraeclast and given by Daresso, King of Swords in Oriath, to his beloved Lady Merveil. The gem twisted Merveil into a monster.

Captain Alsarus: captain of what Malachai considered to be his finest group of Gemling legionnaires. During the siege of Sarn, Malachai ordered him and his legionnaires to remain at the warehouse, far enough from Emperor Chitus that they would not be affected by his heart gem if he were killed. His men and women are likely the only Gemling legionnaires to have survived following the Purity Rebellion and Cataclysm.

Marceus Lioneye: a lord and general for the Eternal Empire. He led campaigns against the Karui and imprisoned them on Oriath, using Lioneye's Watch as a supply station. He was called "Lioneye" due to having his left eye taken out and replaced with a Virtue Gem. During the Purity Rebellion the Karui, led by Kaom, invaded the coast and defeated Lioneye and his legion. It is said that after killing him, Kaom wore Lioneye's head on his belt.

Hector Titucius: a general who served under Emperor Chitus. He was an Ezomyte by birth. During Chitus' reign he had Malachai replace his joints with Virtue Gems. He was general of the Vastiri legion and charged by Chitus with subduing the Maraketh and holding their conquered lands, earning himself the nickname "Scourage of the Maraketh." Sekhema Asenath united the Maraketh tribes against the empire and attacked Sarn, but was defeated and killed by Hector. During the Purity Rebellion, Sekhema Deshret led her *akhara* to war against him in order to win back their conquered lands. They were successful, and Hector was killed. Deshret is said to have fashioned a rhoa saddle from his skin. Despite this, Hector was reanimated by the Cataclysm and remained in the Bath House, where his tomb was located.

Gaius Sentari: a governor and general who served under Emperor Chitus and ran the "civilisation camps" that held the enslaved Ezomytes. During the Purity Rebellion the Ezomyte slaves rebelled, led by Thane Rigwald. Gaius fought back, but was ultimately defeated and killed by Rigwald in what became known as the Bloody Flowers' Rebellion.

Commander Adus: the legionnaire responsible for controlling the Karui, Maraketh and Ezomyte slaves who mined Highgate in search of Virtue Gems. He is said to have treated the slaves fairly and as human beings. During the Purity Rebellion he sided with High Templar Voll. He had a secret penchant for archaeology and discovered a Maraketh artefact, the Calendar, in the foothills outside of Highgate. After the fall of the empire he was reanimated by the Cataclysm.

Archbishop Geofri of Phrecia, the Abashed: a Templar and theologian who deplored anything thaumaturgical and therefore sided with Voll during the Purity Rebellion. It was Geofri who coined the title "Chamber of Sins" for Maligaro's lab, located near Geofri's Phrecia Cathedral (now the Fellshrine ruins). He sent his men to destroy Maligaro and his work, but Maligaro stopped them and struck back, attacking Phrecia Cathedral. Geofri was slain with Maligaro's Etcher at the foot of Saint Corutino the Golden Hand's Shrine. Geofri was reanimated by the Cataclysm into a Brittle Templar of some power.

Ondar: the Lord Mayor of Sarn during the Purity Rebellion. While he was a friend of Emperor Chitus, he secretly sided with the rebels. During the celebration of the Night of a Thousand Ribbons, Ondar stabbed and killed Chitus with blades tainted with a virulent poison (which Vicatario Nevalius had stolen from Maligaro). Before dying, Chitus managed to cleave Ondar in twain, and both died on the steps of the Sceptre of God. It was this event that brought the Purity Rebellion to a successful end and resulted in the coronation of High Templar Voll as emperor. After the Cataclysm Ondar's ghost remained behind, roaming the Grand Promenade.

MINOR FIGURES

Chiara: the wife of Tarcus Veruso. She died giving birth to his son, causing him to resort to thaumaturgy in an attempt to fully revive her. He used the Ankh of Eternity combined with an Azmerian ritual. While reports say he was successful, this is highly suspect.

Medici Perandus: Prefect to the Treasury (date unknown).

Trinian: Intellectus Prime who wrote about the history of the Vaal and the founding of the Eternal Empire. He was a Gemling who had a Virtue Gem implanted in his cranium. When the Cataclysm began and Sarn fell, he became one of the Undying and remained in the Archives within Sarn's Library.

Garivaldi: Chronicler to the Empire who recorded the events of the Purity Rebellion and its aftermath leading up to the Cataclysm.

Kre Faarblood: the duelist and swordsman who trained Chitus for the labyrinth. He was possibly Fair Marylene's father. Chitus discovered he was a commoner and only pretending to be of noble blood, and had Cadiro quietly try and execute him.

Elano: a cousin of Chitus who was a secret bastard and not a Perandus by name. He was used by Chitus in an unsuccessful plot to assassinate Izaro prior to the labyrinth's completion.

Xirgil: a trapbuilder in Izaro's labyrinth, implied to have been killed by one of his own traps.

Lorenzi: first violinist of the Sarn Symphonic and friend of Victario Nevalius. He became a Gemling by having Malachai embed a Virtue Gem in his left palm so that he could have the fastest fingers in the empire. Victario disapproved of this as he felt it perverted Lorenzi into something other than a person, and he wrote about it to promote the Purity Rebellion.

Governor Kastov: Governor of Stridevolf and an ally of High Templar Voll's during the Purity Rebellion.

Aramil: Cartographer to Emperor Chitus.

Tani: a woman who lived in a village between Phrecia Cathedral and the Chamber of Sins during the fall of the Eternal Empire. She recorded some of the events of the Cataclysm in the form of wood etchings, before likely falling victim to the reanimated dead.

Denirus: Tani's husband. After the Cataclysm began to cause people to have violent and twisted night terrors, he went to Alliston in search of a doctor who could help. He did not return for three lunari, and when he did it was in the form of an undead creature who hunted Tani.

Corin: one of Tani's daughters, who had nightmares as a result of the Cataclysm. When the corrupted villagers came for her, she went to them with open arms. She was killed and reanimated, and began to hunt Tani.

Bravalo: a smith in Tani's village who was twisted by the Cataclysm. He hunted Tani and killed her uncle. He remains to this day in the Crossroads, animated by the Cataclysm.

Erasmus: Imperial Gemcutter.

Kadavrus the Defiler: Surgeon to the Umbra and a necromancer.

Saint Corutino: a Templar known as "the Golden Hand" who lived in Phrecia Cathedral.

Brektov: a composer who wrote an opera sung by Kalisa Maas.

PERANDUS GUARDIANS

Junith Perandus, Keeper of Vaults: a member of the Perandus family sustained by Prospero to guard the family's caches of wealth.

Tantalo Perandus, Seller of Secrets: a member of the Perandus family sustained by Prospero to guard the family's caches of wealth.

Actaeo Perandus, Master of Beasts: a member of the Perandus family sustained by Prospero to guard the family's caches of wealth.

Vitorica Perandus, Maker of Marvels: a member of the Perandus family sustained by Prospero to guard the family's caches of wealth.

Stasius Perandus, Merchant of Corpses: a member of the Perandus family sustained by Prospero to guard the family's caches of wealth.

Darsia Perandus, Collector of Debts: a member of the Perandus family sustained by Prospero to guard the family's caches of wealth.

Milo Perandus, Handler of Swords: a member of the Perandus family sustained by Prospero to guard the family's caches of wealth.

Celona, Vault Sentry: a Perandus associate bound by Prospero to guard the family's wealth.

Hortus, Knee Breaker: a Perandus associate bound by Prospero to guard the family's wealth.

Kuto, Hired Muscle: a Perandus associate bound by Prospero to guard the family's wealth.

Luthis, Bounty Hunter: a Perandus associate bound by Prospero to guard the family's wealth.

Belatra, Hired Assassin: a Perandus associate bound by Prospero to guard the family's wealth.

Liana, Indebted Peasant: a slain Perandus debtor bound by Prospero in eternal servitude to guard the family's wealth.

Marius, Indebted Smuggler: a slain Perandus debtor bound by Prospero in eternal servitude to guard the family's wealth.

Vera, Indebted Aristocrat: a slain Perandus debtor bound by Prospero in eternal servitude to guard the family's wealth.

Percia, Indebted Poacher: a slain Perandus debtor bound by Prospero in eternal servitude to guard the family's wealth.

KARUI

Kaom: the leader of the Karui during the Purity Rebellion. Voll recruited him into the rebellion, promising him freedom in return for war. Kaom slaughtered the weakest Karui tribe leaders one by one until the others leapt to join his cause. He led them in a successful invasion of Wareclast, defeating Marceus Lioneye and his legion on the southern coast. Kaom cleansed the area of all eternal citizens, including killing the women and children, intending to establish himself as king of a new Karui kingdom in Wraeclast. He also intended to invade and conquer Oriath, as had been agreed upon with Voll. However, Kaom's new kingdom was devastated by the Cataclysm, causing the dead to rise and the animals to attack the living. Kaom had a vision leading him to take his bravest 500 warriors north to Highgate and descend into the mountain to put an end to the Cataclysm. However, he became corrupted by Malachai's influence and went mad, killing his own 500 men. From then on he remained trapped within his own dream within the mountain.

Lavianga Ngamako: advisor to Kaom and Guardian of the Karui Way. He was present for the Karui invasion of Wraeclast, though remained behind when Kaom took his 500 warriors north to Highgate. When Kaom did not return, Hyrri led the Karui, including Lavianga, back to their native Ngamakanui. Lavianga is the author of the carvings along the coast chronicling the invasion and its aftermath.

Hyrri Ngamaku: Kaom's niece. Prior to the Karui invasion of Wraeclast, she traveled to Thebrus and studied archery with Voll's finest military tutors. Marceus Lioneye believed the Karui laws forbade the use of archers, not knowing this prohibition did not extend to women. Thus he was unprepared for the attack by Hyrri's archers, and his legionnaires were defeated. She later joined Voll for the siege of Sarn. After the Cataclysm devastated her people and Kaom left for Highgate without returning, Hyrri led her remaining people back to their native Ngamakanui.

Kiloava: he was given a ring as a gift by Valako, appointing him as the Herald of War. He and his bloodline were wiped out by Kaom.

Rakiata: a chieftan who was given a ring as a gift by Tasalio. Kaom cut off his head and hand.

Akoya: he was given a ring as a gift by Ngamahu. He was beheaded in combat by Kaom. (His name is spelled Akayo in Path of Exile: Origins.)

Siosa Foaga: a Karui slave of the Eternal Empire during the Purity Rebellion who apparently survived the Cataclysm due to being bound to a painting by a Karui *motiata*. He still resides in the Sarn library.

Oba: the Conqueror of Corruption.

MARAKETH

Asenath, the Golden Sekhema: the Maraketh *sekhema* and archer who united the Maraketh tribes against the Eternal Empire. She was the last person to bear the Wings of Vastiri, which bestowed her with the title of "Sekhema of Sekhemas." She led the united Maraketh against Sarn, but was defeated and killed by General Hector Titucius.

Deshret, the Red Sekhema: the commander who led the Maraketh during the Purity Rebellion. Voll promised her the return of the Maraketh grazing lands stolen during the imperial conquest of the Vastiri Plains in return for her military support in the rebellion. She agreed, and led her *akhara* in an attack against General Hector Titucius' legionnaires. They were successful, and Deshret is said to have fashioned a rhoa saddle from his skin. She later joined Voll for the siege of Sarn. Following the Cataclysm, she led her *akhara* to Highgate to stop the Beast. However, she instead chose to seal off the mines and order her *akhara* to guard them. She was later killed by Emperor Voll after he'd been corrupted into a monster by the Cataclysm. After death her spirit fell into the hands of Malachai's Godless Three, who each had their wicked way with her, attempting to subsume her into the collective corruption. They failed, leaving her spirit trapped within the mines.

EZOMYTES

Skothe: the king of the Ezomytes prior to the Purity Rebellion. He was apparently loyal to Chitus despite his people being enslaved and left to starve, so he was killed by Thane Rigwald.

Thane Rigwald: a Thane and leader of the Ezomytes after killing King Skothe. He was recruited into the Purity Rebellion by Victario Nevalius and led his people in revolt against Governor Gaius Sentari in what became known as the Bloody Flowers' Rebellion. The Ezomytes were successful, and Rigwald himself chased down and killed Gaius Sentari. He later joined Voll for the siege of Sarn. Seeing that a single Gemling legionnaire could defeat three Ezomytes, he realized that the Purity Rebellion needed monsters of its own to combat the Gemlings. He therefore called upon the Greatwolf, one of the First Ones, to aid him. His call was answered and he gave himself over to the Greatwolf. After the rebellion, he left his people so that his new instincts to hunt would not cause him to hunt his own people. He remains in Wraeclast, endlessly hunting for the ancient talismans of the First Ones.

Weylin: an Ezomyte warrior who attempted to defeat Izaro's labyrinth in order to become emperor and help his people. In the labyrinth he allied himself with Chitus, and together they managed to reach its end. However, Chitus then betrayed and poisoned him, resulting in Chitus becoming emperor. Weylin chronicled his journey through the labyrinth with Chitus in a five-part poem.

Hrimnor: an Ezomyte.

OTHER WRAECLASTIANS

Tangmazu: a trickster who happened upon the domain of Solaris and Lunaris and who turned them against each other.

Kulric: a faithful follower of Solaris. When the goddess was imprisoned beneath the earth and tortured, he set her free and tended to her wounds.

Kulina: the last faithful follower of Lunaris. After the goddess was imprisoned and tortured by her sister, Kulina set her free and later urged her to go to war against Solaris.

Saresh: a necromancer. The goddess Garukhan went to battle against him and his undead horde.

THE PALE COUNCIL

Eber, the Plaguemaw, Mouth of the Masses: a man whose people began to starve after their land went barren, driving him and his people to turn cannibalistic and feast on their own.

Yriel, the Feral Lord, Lord of the Wild: a lord who fed his crops with blood during a drought, resulting in the flora becoming corrupted and turning into a jungle of thorny and monstrous plants.

Volkuur, the Unbreathing Queen, She of Many Bodies: a woman who raised an army of soulless corpses to act as her puppets, in mockery of death.

Inya, the Unbearable Whispers, the Infinite Mind: a queen with an unending thirst for knowledge, which she fed by reading countless tomes. As her knowledge grew her wisdom slipped away, driving her insane. It was Inya who arranged for the Pale Council to become immortal, unable to be killed unless all four were killed. She had the others bring their most loyal and healthy retainers as sacrifices.

WARBANDS

Uruk Baleh: a Redblade warband leader.

El'Abin, Bloodeater: a Redblade warband leader.

Leli Goya, Daughter of Ash: a Redblade warband leader.

Bin'aia, Crimson Rain: a Redblade warband leader.

Yorishi, Aurora-sage: a Mutewind warband leader.

Jeinei Yuushu: a Mutewind warband leader.

Otesha, the Giantslayer: a Mutewind warband leader.

Musky "Two-Eyes" Grenn: a Brinerot warband leader.

Susara, Siren of Pondium: a Brinerot warband leader.

Lussi "Rotmother" Roth: a Brinerot warband leader and the younger sister of Weylam Roth. She was Weylam's first mate for years until she mutinied and marooned him on an island off the coast of Wraeclast. Per Weylam, she is responsible for transforming the Brinerot from a clan of honourable pirates into raving lunatics.

Rama, The Kinslayer: a Renegades warband leader.

Kalria, The Fallen: a Renegades warband leader.

Invari, The Bloodshaper: a Renegades warband leader.

Lokan, The Deceiver: a Renegades warband leader.

Marchak, The Betrayer: a Renegades warband leader.

Berrots, The Breaker: a Renegades warband leader.

Vessider, The Unrivaled: a Renegades warband leader.

Morgrants, The Defeaning: a Renegades warband leader.

EXILES

Kole: a rapist exiled from Oriath. Piety experimented on him, turning him into a monster similar to Shavronne's Brutus, after which he guarded the Lunaris Temple.

Barden of Inkley: a person exiled to Wraeclast by High Templar Dominus for petty larceny and being unable to hold down a job.

Brylla of Cinderford: a person exiled to Wraeclast by High Templar Dominus for promoting heretical beliefs and practicing medicine with the proper qualifications.

Cafar of Beecham: a person exiled to Wraeclast by High Templar Dominus for possessing stolen goods and resisting Templar authority.

Carling of Mirfield: a person exiled to Wraeclast by High Templar Dominus for defaming a church official.

Ender of Romsey: a person exiled to Wraeclast by High Templar Dominus for petty and grand larceny.

Hadrey of Dayton: a person exiled to Wraeclast by High Templar Dominus for public heresy and challenging the authority of a church official.

Joy of Kimbey: a person exiled to Wraeclast by High Templar Dominus for habouring a sentenced exile.

Lothar of Wetherdale: a person exiled to Wraeclast by High Templar Dominus for undermining Templar authority and defaming a Templar of "highest reverence."

Maitlin of Theopolis: a person exiled to Wraeclast by High Templar Dominus for negligence leading to bodily and financial harm.

Missy of Nashe: a person exiled to Wraeclast by High Templar Dominus for operating a "house of ill repute" without a license.

Ollin of Theopolis: a person exiled to Wraeclast by High Templar Dominus for petty theft, resisting an officer of the Ebony Legion and accidental homicide.

Salem of Theopolis: a person exiled to Wraeclast by High Templar Dominus for unauthorized political satire, blasphemy, inciting public unrest and performing in public without a license.

LORDS OF LARCENY

Kraityn of Theopolis: a criminal from Oriath sometimes referred to as "the scarred one" who was caught while attempting to help Lilly Roth steal back the Teardrop from the Theopolis Reliquary. He was exiled to Wraeclast by High Templar Dominus for a long list of crimes. Together with Oak and Alira he survived some "ordeals" along the Siren Coast and made his way to the Forest Encampment. Shortly thereafter the three of them discovered a Vaal artefact (the Apex) that had the power to enhance one's innate strengths. They fought over it and broke it in trine, each taking a piece. Kraityn fled and established his own camp atop the Broken Bridge, where he struggled against Oak and Alira for control of the Phrecian Forest.

Oak: a criminal from Oriath who was caught while attempting to help Lilly Roth steal back the Teardrop from the Theopolis Reliquary. He was exiled to Wraeclast by High Templar Dominus. Together with Kraityn and Alira he survived some "ordeals" along the Siren Coast and made his way to the Forest Encampment. Shortly thereafter the three of them discovered a Vaal artefact (the Apex) that had the power to enhance one's innate strengths. They fought over it and broke it in trine, each taking a piece. Oak fled and established his own camp in the Wetlands, where he struggled against Kraityn and Alira for control of the Phrecian Forest.

Alira: a witch from Oriath who was caught while attempting to help Lilly Roth steal back the Teardrop from the Theopolis Reliquary. She was exiled to Wraeclast by High Templar Dominus. Together with Kraityn and Oak she survived some "ordeals" along the Siren Coast and made her way to the Forest Encampment. Shortly thereafter the three of them discovered a Vaal artefact (the Apex) that had the power to enhance one's innate strengths. They fought over it and broke it in trine, each taking a piece. Alira fled and established her own camp to the west, where she struggled against Kraityn and Oak for control of the Phrecian Forest.

ROGUE EXILES

Ailentia Rac: a Ranger rogue exile.

Antalie Napora: a Ranger rogue exile.

Armios Bell: a Duelist rogue exile.

Ash Lessard: a Shadow rogue exile.

Augustina Solaria: a Scion rogue exile.

Aurelio Voidsinger: a Templar rogue exile.

Bolt Brownfur: a Marauder rogue exile.

Damoi Tui: a Marauder rogue exile.

Dena Lorenni: a Witch rogue exile.

Eoin Greyfur: a Templar rogue exile.

Igna Phoenix: a Witch rogue exile.

Ion Darkshroud: a Shadow rogue exile.

Jonah Unchained: a Marauder rogue exile.

Lael Furia: a Templar rogue exile.

Magnus Stonethorn: a Templar rogue exile.

Minara Anemina: a Witch rogue exile.

Orra Greengate: a Ranger rogue exile.

Oyra Ona: a Deulist rogue exile.

Thena Moga: a Ranger rogue exile.

Tinevin Highdove: a Templar rogue exile.

Torr Olgosso: a Duelist rogue exile.

Ulysses Morvant: a Shadow rogue exile.

Vanth Agiel: a Scion rogue exile.

Vickas Giantbone: a Marauder rogue exile.

Wilorin Demontamer: a Shadow rogue exile.

Xandro Blooddrinker: a Marauder rogue exile.

Zacharie Desmarais: a Duelist rogue exile.

Antonio Bravadi: a Duelist rogue exile.

Aria Vindicia: a Witch rogue exile.

Doven Falsetongue: a Templar rogue exile.

Haki Karukaru: a Marauder rogue exile.

Jade: a Scion rogue exile.

Jarek Irontrap: a Shadow rogue exile.

Silva Fearsting: a Ranger rogue exile.

TEMPLARS

Maxarius: the first High Templar. He was gifted the Sign of Purity by the god Innocence, with which he "smote with flame the army of the faithless with one ray of its hallowing light."

Daresso: a man who came from nothing and rose to become the King of Swords in the Grand Arena of Theopolis. He was trained as a fighter from a young age, eventually beginning to fight in the Grand Arena. There he met and fell in love with Lady Merveil. Inspired by her, he defeated the previous King of Swords and then asked her to marry him. He presented her with the Star of Wraeclast, a necklace set with a Virtue Gem that had previously been implanted in Kalisa Maas' throat. Merveil was twisted by the gem into a monster, causing Daresso to travel to Sarn in search of a way to reverse the transformation. He brought documents on the subject of thaumaturgy back to Oriath. After traveling to Wraeclast a final time he never returned, but instead somehow became trapped in his own dream inside the Highgate Mines.

Barkhul: a man whom Daresso challenged and defeated in the fighting pits in Theopolis, possibly his first kill.

Merveil: a lady who attended fights at the Grand Arena of Theopolis. There she was seen by Daresso, who fell in love with her and was inspired to win the Crown of Swords. He asked her to marry him and presented her with the Star of Wraeclast, a necklace set with a Virtue Gem that had previously been implanted in Kalisa Maas' throat. The gem gave her a beautiful voice, enabling her to sing opera in the largest concert halls of Oriath. However, the gem also began to twist her into a monster. Daresso left and promised to travel to Sarn in search of a cure. However, he never succeeded. She fled from Oriath and took up residence on the southern coast of Wraeclast. There, she lured sailors to their deaths to feed her children.

Sigmund Fairgraves: a sailor, pirate, whaler and explorer who opened the door to new lands (often at the expense of the natives). Fairgraves funded a number of expeditions using Karui slaves. He recovered documents about thaumaturgy from Wraeclast and brought them back to Oriath for Dominus. After setting sail on another mission to Wraeclast, he disappeared for over thirty years. It was later found that based on a myth, he had searched the inner empire and discovered the Allflame, which bestowed him with a "unique gift" and also provided the wind for his ship's sails. After rescuing a slave girl from the flesh pits of Trarthus, she turned his first mate against him and stole the Allflame, leaving him marooned in Merveil's ship graveyard.

Venarius: a High Templar of Oriath. As a child he witnessed the brutal oppression of the Templars and grew to secretly despise them while rising through their ranks. He was determined to become powerful, and to this end sent smugglers to Wraeclast in search of powerful artefacts such as Malachai's map device, which he had Valdo Caeserius repair and attempt to weaponize.

The device allowed him entry to the dreamlands (maps) created by the Elder. Venarius met with the Elder and restored its shade to its body, after which it fed on him and his memories.

Dominus: the High Templar of Oriath who succeeded Venarius. He had a last supper with a condemned criminal named Vinia and heard her confession. She told him of things that were possible through the use of thaumaturgy, and he decided to spare her. He created a laboratory for himself within Chitus Cathedral to study thaumaturgy. After renaming Vinia to Piety, he gave her charge of an expedition to Wraeclast to uncover its secrets. He began sentencing criminals to be banished to Wraeclast instead of put to death (likely to serve as test subjects for Piety's experiments). Through the use of thaumaturgy he became powerful and took up residence atop the Sceptre of God in Sarn.

Piety (Vinia): a poor Oriathan witch who took to prostitution and selling her skills as a thaumaturgist to survive. She was arrested and condemned to death for "consorting with the unholy." Before her execution she had a last supper with High Templar Dominus, who heard her confession. She told him of things that were possible through the use of thaumaturgy, and he spared her. Renamed Piety, she was given charge of an expedition to Wraeclast to uncover its secrets. There she studied the works of the Godless Three and finally of Malachai himself. She experimented on numerous people, including those exiled from Oriath by Dominus, becoming quite proficient as a thaumaturgist. After being killed by an exile, she was revived by Malachai in the Belly of the Beast to be his servant.

Vilenta: a woman versed in medicine who devoted her life to Piety's work, experimenting on Karui slaves provided by Justicar Casticus. She created a device known as the miasmeter to sense and amplify the corruption in Wraeclast. When Piety began her expedition to Wraeclast Vilenta was left behind in Theopolis, leaving the latter furious. After the death of the Beast and the return of the gods, Vilenta got caught up in the Karui slave rebellion, but was spared by the rebels in return for saving Lani's life.

Davaro: a Templar who studied Vaal relics brought back to Theopolis from Wraeclast by High Templar Dominus. He discovered signs that the Vaal had dwelt on the island of Oriath. He became corrupted by the relics and began performing human sacrifice at one of their ancient sites. After doing so he began having visions of Queen Atziri. Falling in love with her, he kidnapped and sacrificed two children before killing himself, believing that in doing so they would join Atziri and become a family.

Casticus: a Templar justicar who supplied Karui slaves to Vilenta to experiment on for her research. When the slaves revolted, he was involved in attempting to quell the uprising.

Gravicius: (see the Immortal Syndicate.)

Declan: a person loyal to Dominus who was sent by him to protect and watch Piety as she studied the works of Shavronne, Maligaro and Malachai. A body probably belonging to Declan is found outside the Warden's chambers in Axiom Prison.

Arteri: a Blackguard captain and Piety's lover who she stationed in the western Phrecian Forest to prevent more exiles from entering the inner empire.

Aurelianus: a Blackguard captain stationed in the Solaris Concourse (which became known as the Battlefront) outside of the Solaris Temple to guard the Ribbon Spool and attempt to subdue the ribbons.

Vincenti: a Blackguard captain sent by Piety to Highgate to kill the remining Maraketh and secure the entrance to the mines. He failed, and he and most of his men were killed.

Avarius: the man who succeeded Dominus as High Templar. With Dominus away in Wraeclast, Avarius led some of the largest and most crippling raids against the Karui, bringing them back to Theopolis as slaves. He spent five thousand Karui lives building the Templar Courts and Chamber of Innocence. After the death of the Beast and return of the gods, Innocence took up residence inside him.

Marcovius: a general and commander of the Templar Fleet under High Templar Avarius. As part of Operation Ocean Blades he was sent to Pondium Strait to massacre the Brinerot warband, but on the voyage there his fleet was attacked and mostly destroyed by the Brine King. He turned the survivors around and headed back for Oriath.

Caruso: captain of the ship *Lady in Waiting*. After the death of the Beast, he began to hear voices speaking of the Brine King's return. He tried to warn his crew, and sacrificed mutineers in the Brine King's name in the hope of appeasing him. However, his own men threw him overboard. The next morning the Brine King destroyed his ship. Caruso was stranded on a plank in the sea without food or water, and hunted by the Brine King's crabs.

Piken: first mate of the ship *Lady in Waiting*. The Brine King destroyed the ship and he was thrown into the sea. He washed up on a rock off the coast of the Twilight Strand and was hunted by the Brine King's crabs.

Benric: a man from Gulton who sought help from his friend Mercutio in rescuing a girl named Abi--who may have been Benric's daughter--from the Brine King.

Abi: a girl (possibly Benric's daughter) who Benric sought to resuce from the Brine King.

Mercutio: a merchant and friend of Benric.

THE SHAPER & THE GUARDIANS OF THE VOID

The Shaper: a man named Valdo Caeserius who was the chief Arkhon of the Oriath academy in Theopolis. High Templar Venarius brought him a device recovered from Wraeclast and ordered him to repair and attempt to weaponize it. Valdo discovered that it opened the way to the dreamlands (maps) wherein dwelt the Elder, who taught him the ability of shaping things out of thin air. He attempted to hide this from Venaius, but the High Templar eventually learned the truth and forced Valdo to lead him to the Elder. Venarius restored the Elder to its physical body before being killed by it. Valdo damaged the map device to close the portal between Theopolis and the dreamlands, and exiled himself there with the intention of stopping the Elder and protecting his daughter Zana and the rest of Oriath.

Chimera: a male creature who guards the entrance to the Shaper's Realm.

Hydra: a female creature who guards the entrance to the Shaper's Realm.

Minotaur: a male creature who guards the entrance to the Shaper's Realm.

Phoenix: a male creature who guards the entrance to the Shaper's Realm.

NPCS AND RELATED CHARACTERS

LIONEYE'S WATCH

Nessa: a woman from Theopolis who used to live on an estate. The Ranger once stole a leg of venison from its grounds and was chased by her father's gamekeepers. She seems to have known the Duelist and Templar before they were exiled as well. Nessa's father was involved in trying to "save" the Karui from "ignorance and damnation," which ended up costing him his life. It is implied that he (along with everyone else she ever loved) died in a shipwreck. Nessa survived and made it to Wraeclast, where she resided in Lioneye's Watch caring for the exiles and other survivors who came through.

Bestel: the only survivor from the ship *Merry Gull*, which ran aground on the Tidal Island while fleeing from pirates. The other survivors were killed by cannibals. Tarkleigh found him hiding in the wreckage and brought him to Lioneye's Watch. He claimed to be the captain, though Tarkleigh says he saw Bestel steal the hat from the real captain's head.

Arrol: the *Merry Gull*'s cook. He was found dead and was buried by Bestel, though was reanimated by the Cataclysm within a few days.

Doctor "Shaky hands" Opden: the *Merry Gull*'s doctor. He was said to have been a poor surgeon but well versed with medicines and in possession of a large supply of opiates. He was spit-roasted and eaten by cannibals.

Tarkleigh: an exile from Oriath. He was the partner and lover of Lilly Roth for a time, and together they smuggled booze to make money. She began to fear that he planned to settle down and have children with her, so she betrayed him. She tied him up and abandoned him on Penance Quay, where he was captured by Blackguards and exiled to Wraeclast for his crimes. He remained at Lioneye's Watch, helping the other exiles survive.

PHRECIA

Eramir: an exile from Oriath. Prior to his exile, he was a scholar who worked at a museum. In return for Dominus' patronage, he conducted research into the thaumaturgical arts practiced within the Eternal Empire. He knew Valdo Caeserius and assisted him in uncovering information about the Elder and the Watchers of Decay. He also knew Valdo's daughter Zana,

who referred to him as "Uncle Eramir." After his exile he was taken in by the Azmerians in the Forest Encampment.

Greust: an Azmerian who resided in the Forest Encapment atop the dam in the Phrecian Forest.

Silk: an Azmerian warrior who resided in the Forest Encapment atop the dam in the Phrecian Forest.

Yeena: an Azmerian who resided in the Forest Encapment atop the dam in the Phrecian Forest. She served a god or entity she called the Spirit, which gave her knowledge of events beyond what she and others saw themselves as well as the ability to shapeshift into a fox.

SARN

Clarissa: a criminal who was exiled from Oriath. Her father lost the family fortune gambling, forcing them to move from the country to Theopolis. Vinia used to buy from her before she became Piety. After being exiled Clarissa took up residence in the ruins of Sarn.

Tolman: Clarissa's boyfriend (and probably an exile from Oriath). He was captured by Piety while foraging in Sarn with Clarissa.

Hargan: an exile from Theopolis. He acted as Clarissa's guardian in Theopolis before their exile, giving her work in exchange for food. After his exile he took up residence in the ruins of Sarn.

Maramoa Patua: a Karui woman originally from Ngamakanui. She was exiled from Oriath by High Templar Dominus for insubordination, inciting insurrection, assaulting an officer of the Ebony Legion and hericide. After her exile she took up residence in the ruins of Sarn.

Grigor: a man (probably an exile from Oriath) who was caught by General Gravicius while trying to get into the Solaris Temple to find the remains of the Gemling Queen. Gravicius gave him to Piety, who experimented on him. He was either let go or escaped back to the ruins of Sarn.

HIGHGATE

Oyun: the *sekhema* of the Kiyato *akhara*, which was charged by Deshret with guarding the Highgate mines. She successfully defended Highgate against the Ebony Legion attack led by Captain Vincenti, which had been ordered by Piety.

Kira: a *dekhara* of the Kiyato *akhara*, which was charged by Deshret with guarding the Highgate mines. She is a descendant of Deshret.

Tasuni: Kira's brother. He was born blind, and was left out on the plain overnight as per Maraketh tradition. However, he survived, which had never happened before. He claims to be an augur with the ability to see things others cannot.

Petarus: a captain in the Ebony Legion, like his father and grandfather. He met Vanja while she was a prisoner in Sarn, waiting to be experimented on by Piety. After falling in love with her, he

deserted his post and freed her. Together they escaped to Highgate, and Vanja convinced the Kiyato to take them in.

Vanja: an Oriathan who trained as a witch before being exiled to Wraeclast. There she was imprisoned in Sarn and awaiting experimentation by Piety when Petarus freed her. Together they escaped to Highgate, and Vanja convinced the Kiyato to take them in.

Irasha: a warrior of the Kiyato *akhara* and possible successor to Oyun.

THEOPOLIS

Utula Makora: a Karui slave in Oriath and adherent of Kitava who led a slave uprising against the Templars.

Irwen of Theopolis: the person who transcribed Utula's oral recounting of Kitava's history.

Lani: a woman born from the union of an Oriathan lord and a Karui woman. She was educated in Oriath but sided with the Karui slaves in their uprising. She helped pass information to the rebels that she obtained from the nobility of Theopolis. She was also a fighter, and when the slaves rebelled she killed two overseers before being wounded herself. Vilenta tended to her injuries and Lani credited her with saving her life.

Bannon: a Blackguard soldier who participated in a slave raid to Ngamakanui under High Templar Dominus. After the death of High Templar Avarius, the wounded god Innocence took up residence inside Bannon.

MASTERS & OTHER

Navali: a Karui *hatungo* who died and was greeted in the afterlife by her furry companion, Yama the White, holding a Seeing Stone. Yama and the Seeing Stone were both imbued with a hair of Hinekora's dark knowledge, allowing them to guide Navali through visions of the future. She came back to life in Wraeclast, where she was captured by the Faun in what she believes was a trick by Hinekora to remind her of her place.

Helena: an apprentice archaeologist from Oriath who claimed she could tell if a Vaal artefact was genuine simply by running her hand along it. She became convinced there was a pattern behind the absence of mythological artefacts and suspected a secret organization was at work, though her colleagues wouldn't listen. She accepted a position in the Ebony Legion to go on an expedition to Wraeclast, but defected after witnessing the horrors of Piety's work. She was taken in by the Azmerians in the Forest Encampment, though remained paranoid that the scattered Blackguards remaining in Wraeclast were still hunting her for being a traitor.

Einhar Frey, Beastmaster: an Ezomyte who sailed to Wraeclast alone. According to Jun Ortoi, he claims to be from Oriath. He hunts and studies beasts in the hope of learning the secrets of the First Ones. Einhar believes the world will end soon (within the next three years), and that when it does the First Ones will return and take those who have proven themselves to be "survivors" to the Great Grove.

Niko the Mad, Master of the Depths: an Oriathan who grew up selling Voltaxic Sulphite to the Templars for use in powering their strange experiments. Exposure to the substance eventually caused him to start hearing voices that told him secrets, and he began to think he was a prophet. He reported this to the Templars, thinking they would help him, but was instead committed to a mental asylum. He dug his way out and escaped through the square, but soldiers tracked him down using the trail left by his bleeding hands. He was caught and exiled to Wraeclast. There, he began exploring the mines below the ruins of the Eternal Empire using the Crawler, a machine he built out of an old Eternal torture device. Per Cavas, Niko is the only master able to see him in his ghostly form.

Alva Valai, Master Explorer: an Oriathan woman with some Vaal ancestry, who became a Reliquarian and treasure hunter. When she was young her father enlisted her in High Templar Dominus' navy. After some unknown events she returned to Theopolis where she joined the Reliquarians, a secret society of treasure hunters funded by the upper class of Oriath. She had a few run-ins with Helena while hawking forged heirlooms, as the latter has a knack for spotting fakes. On one of her temple and tomb raids she discovered a manual of Vaal blood thaumaturgy. Not wanting it to fall into the wrong hands, she hid it from the High Templar. As a result, she was no longer welcome among the upper class of Oriath and instead continued hunting treasure on her own. She learned to perform a fickle spell using ancient waystones and her own Vaal blood that opened a portal to the Temple of Atzoatl in the past and helped her locate it in the present.

Jun Ortoi, Veiled Master: a Maraketh woman who was orphaned and taken in by a secretive organization known as the Order of the Djinn. As part of the Order she was tasked with guarding the Forbidden Vault, within which resided artefacts deemed dangerous enough to put the world in jeopardy. Janus Perandus sold out the Order, resulting in the death of all its members save for himself and Jun and the theft of a number of powerful artefacts. Following this Jun began investigating the rise of the Immortal Syndicate and the disappearance of several prominent exiles. As part of the Order she was forbidden from having relationships with men or having children, but is interested in a relationship with Zana and adopting orphans with her.

Zana (Caeserius?), Master Cartographer: a woman who was exiled to Wraeclast. She was the daughter of Valdo Caeserius and an unnamed woman who died when she was young. Her father exiled himself to the Atlas of Worlds in an attempt to protect her and the rest of Oriath from the Elder. Orphaned, Zana lived in a series of well-off foster homes as an indentured servant. She studied the research left behind by father and managed to rebuild his map device. Her curiousity and tendency to question everything drew the ire of High Templar Dominus, and she moved to Wraeclast before her impending exile.

Weylam "Rot-Tooth" Roth: a Brinerot warband leader until he was betrayed and marooned by his younger sister, Lussi (see Warbands section). He was the captain of the Black Crest, a ship whose hull was said to have been reinforced by the bones of the Leviathan that he'd killed. In an attempt to regain his notoriety, he tried to kill the sea-witch Merveil. However, his ship ran aground and she ate him alive. He was later reanimated somehow, retaining his full mental faculties.

Meredith: the deceased wife of Weylam Roth.

Lilly Roth: a pirate captain, smuggler and the granddaughter of Weylam Roth. She was Tarkleigh's lover and partner for a time, smuggling booze with him to make money. However, she began to fear that he planned to settle down and have children with her. She betrayed him and left him on Penance Quay, where he was captured by Blackguards and exiled for his crimes. At one point she managed to acquire the Teardrop, a map to the sunken city of Tsoatha, but it was taken by Oriathan privateers and she was thrown in the slave pens. She escaped and broke into the Theopolis Reliquary in an attempt to retrieve it but failed, and her three accomplices (Kraityn, Alira and Oak) were captured and exiled.

OTHER

THE ELDER & THE ELDER GUARDIANS

The Elder: a creature born of the oblivion from before time began. Once only an abstract expression, it was given physical form and entered the human realm out of hunger. It fashioned a bauble of chaos and secret worlds (maps) to use as a hunting ground. The Elder would drag children off into the night and feast on their imagination and nightmares. In such a way it cultivated and spread the oblivion from outside time and space, also known as the Decay. To stop it, a group of parents known as the Watchers of Decay entered its realm and used the sword Starforge to trap its body in stone, though its spirit was left free to roam the worlds it had created. Eventually it was discovered by Valdo Caeserius, who led High Templar Venarius into its realm. Venarius freed its body, after which it began to prey upon the children of Oriath.

The Constrictor: a guardian who protects the Elder's realm.

The Enslaver: a guardian who protects the Elder's realm.

The Eradicator: a guardian who protects the Elder's realm.

The Purifier: a guardian who protects the Elder's realm.

LIGHTLESS

Ulaman, Sovereign of the Well: a creature from the abyss.

Amanamu, Liege of the Lightless: a creature from the abyss.

Kurgal, the Blackblooded: a creature from the abyss who can be found in the Lich's Tomb within the Abyssal City, which was buried deep underground.

BEYOND DEMONS

Na'em, Bending Stone: a demon from beyond associated with physical damage. He wields the sword Edge of Madness.

Haast, Unrelenting Frost: a demon from beyond associated with cold. He wields the axe The Harvest.

Tzteosh, Hungering Flame: a demon from beyond associated with fire. He dual-wields two The Dark Seer sceptres.

Bameth, Shifting Darkness (the Lord in Black): a demon from beyond who is an archer and summoner. He uses a bow and wears Death's Oath body armour.

Ephij, Crackling Sky: a demon from beyond associated with lightning. He wields the axe The Harvest.

Abaxoth, the End of All That Is: a demon from beyond who uses elemental and physical damage. He dual-wields two Edge of Madness swords.

BREACHLORDS

Xoph, Dark Embers: a male Breachlord associated with fire, who commands an army of loyal followers.

Esh, Forked Thought: a female Breachlord associated with lightning, who commands an army of loyal followers. She is sometimes referred to as "she of many mouths."

Tul, Creeping Avalanche: a female Breachlord associated with cold, who commands an army of loyal followers.

Uul-Netol, Unburdened Flesh: a female Breachlord associated with physical damage, who commands an army of loyal followers.

Chayula, Who Dreamt: a male Breachlord associated with chaos, who commands an army of loyal followers.

HARBINGERS

[illegible]: a Harbinger who can be found in the Beachhead at the gateway leading from the Harbinger realm. He bears a crown and therefore may be a king.

THE ORDER OF THE DJINN

Egrin of the Dark Between Stars, Forger of the Sealing Blade: an orphan who had visions that led the Azmeri down into the ruins of the Vaal civilzation (suggesting that Tarcus Veruso may not have been the one responsible for this). Cast out by the Azmeri, Egrin was taken in by the Order of the Djinn and later forged the sword Starforge that was used to trap the Elder.

Betucia, Bearer of the Sealing Blade: an orphan from the Eternal Empire who was welcomed into the Order of the Djinn and eventually tasked with investigating maps. Betucia assisted in using the sword Starforge against the Elder.

Qianga of the Stars, Deliverer of the Sealing Blade to the Watchers: an orphan disdained by the Mutewind for being different, but accepted by the Order of the Djinn. She delivered the sword Starforge to the Watchers of Decay so that they could imprison the Elder.

Narumoa: a Karui who died in war and implied to have been revived by the Order of the Djinn. This seems to have endowed Narumoa with the gift of second sight, and he/she used it to serve the Order for centuries before dying again.

Sumei, Master Lorekeeper: a Maraketh orphan left to die in desert by her akhara but rescued by the Order of the Djinn. She was later charged with investigating the duplication of unique items, and her final years were burdened by a terrible secret.

Agnar, Beastmaster: an Ezomyte orphaned by feuding clans and rescued by the Order of the Djinn. He received Visions from the First Ones about the beasts of the world, and so was tasked by the Order with investigating them. When he died, his Visions passed to another.

Omid, Master Researcher: an orphan rescued from the Redblade by the Order of the Djinn. He was tasked with investigating Xoph and artefacts related to Breaches. Upon his death, his final commandment was "the world must never know."

Tsarsk: a young orphan discovered and taken in by the Order of the Djinn in a flesh-pit in Trarthus. Tsarsk helped save other tormented spirits from eternal misery.

Icius Perandus: a Scholar to the Empire who was coerced by Malachai into helping him translate and study Vaal artefacts. The Order of the Djinn later rescued him from Malachai's grasp. Icius planned against the theft and plundering of artefacts by Cadiro and also aslo helped the Order enact a plan to prevent the Cataclysm, which had been foreseen, though ultimately failed.

Raethan the Betrayer: an orphan and the first Brinerot to join the Order of the Djinn. He researched Voltaxic Sulphite as a new form of energy. It is implied that he betrayed the Order by making his discoveries public, though later seems to have been forgiven.

Master Warrior Rindwik: an orphan, possibly from a Renegades warband, abandoned and accepted into the Order of the Djinn. Charged with leading the martial defense of the Order's expeditions, Rindwik fell only to old age.

Sarina Titucius: a member of the Order of the Djinn who managed to translate the Harbinger language and thus was directed to study them. Sarina made it through the Gate to the Harbinger and realm and returned.

Arin Kent: a member of the Order of the Djinn whom Jun considered to be family. Arin was killed after Janus Perandus sold out the order to Catarina.

Brin Barius: a member of the Order of the Djinn whom Jun considered to be family. Brin was killed after Janus Perandus sold out the order to Catarina.

Killam Creary: a member of the Order of the Djinn whom Jun considered to be family. Killam was killed after Janus Perandus sold out the order to Catarina.

Lynn Grey: a member of the Order of the Djinn whom Jun considered to be family. Lynn was killed after Janus Perandus sold out the order to Catarina.

Ngahari Atui: a member of the Order of the Djinn whom Jun considered to be family. Ngahari was killed after Janus Perandus sold out the order to Catarina.

Tej Alhambra: a member of the Order of the Djinn whom Jun considered to be family. Tej was killed after Janus Perandus sold out the order to Catarina.

Xian Song: a member of the Order of the Djinn whom Jun considered to be family. Xian was killed after Janus Perandus sold out the order to Catarina.

Jun Ortoi, Veiled Master: (see NPCs and Related Characters.)

Janus Perandus: (see the Immortal Syndicate.)

THE IMMORTAL SYNDICATE

Catarina, Master of Undeath: a witch and powerful necromancer from Oriath who was exiled to Wraeclast by High Templar Dominus. After Janus Perandus sold out the Order of the Djinn, likely at her behest, she was able to obtain the Horns of Kulemak from the Forbidden Vault. Using the Horns, she could fully revive others from the dead without them turning into mindless zombies. Thus she established the Immortal Syndicate, becoming known as the the Lifegiver or Eternal One. She believed the lifespan of humans was too short to direct the course

of the world, thus leaving it in the hands of Chaos. She intended to use immortality to build up the knowledge of humanity by preventing advances from being lost due to death, and to establish herself as the queen of a new utopian empire in Wraeclast that would never be destabilized due to the death of its ruler.

Janus Perandus: the great grandson of Chitus Perandus and an avowed gambler. He was orphaned, but as the Perandus line had lost its fortune no one would take him in save for the Order of the Djinn. However, likely in an attempt to bring some glory back to the Perandus name, he sold them out. His actions resulted in the deaths of the entire Order save for himself and Jun Ortoi, and the theft of the Horns of Kulemak, which enabled the formation of the Immortal Syndicate.

Cameria the Coldblooded: a murderer who, as a boy, used to get close to "the rich and proper" and then kill them. He would steal from his victims and make it look like a robbery to cover up the fact that he was killing for pleasure. Cameria has a reputation for being violent and "getting his jollies" with the dead bodies of his victims. He's been locked up in the past, and may also have been a soldier. Eventually he became a member of the Immortal Syndicate.

Korell Goya, Son of Stone: a member of the Redblade warband originating from a caldera, who joined the Immortal Syndicate. As with other Redblades he worships fire and a god named the Molten One, and is said to be unharmed by flames. He is recognisable by his spiky red armour.

Rin Yuushu: a member of the Mutewind warband originating from the mountains, who joined the Immortal Syndicate. She is an archer and like other Mutewinds believes strongly in the purity of her blood, referring to non-Mutewinds "muckbloods."

Guff "Tiny" Grenn: a member of the Brinerot warband who was a ship captain and merchant/pirate before joining the Immortal Syndicate.

Riker Maloney, Midnight Tinkerer: a trapper skilled with gadgets and machines who joined the Immortal Syndicate. He's an eloquent speaker with an affinity for alliteration and he wears a mask, leaving his true identity a mystery.

Thane Jorgin the Banished: an Ezomyte Thane from the green hills of Ogham, which was located on an island (possibly the Isles of Skothe). His brother was murdered and he was found guilty of the crime, which was likely the reason for his banishment. In Ogham there are wanted posters of him on display, and if he returned he'd be hung. Instead, he joined the Immortal Syndicate. Jorgin claims he is innocent and was framed, and that his brother was murdered by a member of the Brotherhood of Silence. However, none of the other Syndicate members appear to believe him. In particular he suspects it was Vorici, though the latter denies it was him. Jorgin wears a bear pelt and is able to call upon the power of the First Ones to gain ursine abilities. He believes in a philosophy of "might makes right" and that the strongest should absorb the might of the meek and make it his own.

It That Fled: a creature from the Breach realm. It was born on the Red Pyre like the others of its hive but felt flawed, not rejoicing in the prospect of serving and dying for the Breachlords like its siblings. Instead It fled and joined the Immortal Syndicate, though still draws upon the power of the Breachlords. It speaks of itself in the third person and per Cameria doesn't sleep.

Aisling Laffrey, The Slient Butcher: an assassin and sadist who joined the Immortal Syndicate. She disassembles and reassembles the corpses of her victims into "art."

Vorici, Silent Brother: an Oriathan assassin and member of the Brotherhood of Silence who was exiled to Wraeclast by High Templar Dominus. Jun Ortoi feels he was a good person and a capable fighter doing what he could to bring light to the darkness of Wraeclast. He later joined the Immortal Syndicate. Thane Jorgin suspects that Vorici killed Jorgin's brother, but Vorici denies this.

Haku, Warmaster: a Karui originally from Ngamakanui who somehow ended up in Oriath, and then was exiled by High Templar Dominus to Wraeclast. Jun Ortoi feels he was a good person and a capable fighter doing what he could to bring light to the darkness of Wraeclast. He later joined the Immortal Syndicate.

Elreon, Light's Judge: a Templar from Oriath. He was exiled by High Templar Dominus, who felt Elreon was too soft for Templar leadership and that his radical ideas might turn others against him. While Elreon claims to retain his faith in God and feels he is on a "crusade," he says he has left the Templars due to his distaste for bloodshed. Jun Ortoi feels he was a good person and a capable fighter doing what he could to bring light to the darkness of Wraeclast. He later joined the Immortal Syndicate.

Tora, the Culler: an exile from Oriath who is an archer and huntress. She's in tune with nature and doesn't care for material things. Jun Ortoi feels she was a good person and a capable fighter doing what she could to bring light to the darkness of Wraeclast. She later joined the Immortal Syndicate.

Leo Redmane, Wolf of the Pits: an arena gladiator from Oriath who was exiled to Wraeclast. In Theopolis he preferred being the Pitmaster to a fighter. Leo lost his left hand and has a hook in its place. He considers Vagan an old friend. Jun Ortoi feels Leo was a good person and a capable fighter doing what he could to bring light to the darkness of Wraeclast. He later joined the Immortal Syndicate.

Vagan, Victory's Herald: a duelist from Oriath who exiled to Wraeclast by High Templar Dominus. Jun Ortoi feels he was a good person and a capable fighter doing what he could to bring light to the darkness of Wraeclast. He later joined the Immortal Syndicate. He's attracted to Tora.

Hillock of Slaugh, the Blacksmith: a blacksmith who used to make swords until he was exiled to Wraeclast by High Templar Dominus for a long list of crimes, including murder, murder of a child, extortion, armed larceny, rape and rape resulting in death. After his exile he remained outside of Lioneye's Watch, attacking other exiles. He was slain but later revived as a member of the Immortal Syndicate.

General Gravicius Reborn: the right hand of High Templar Dominus and general of the Ebony Legion. He stationed himself outside of the Lunaris Temple while working to defeat the thaumaturgical creatures defending the Solaris Temple. After being slain by an exile from Oriath he was revived as a member of the Immortal Syndicate. He then claimed to serve a new God, who is implied to be Catarina, the Eternal One.

Arzaak: a Syndicate researcher.

CHARACTERS FROM SYNTHESIS MEMORIES

Anaris: a man who pursued the Elder after it stole a child, and dropped dead as a result.

Bryn: a male (Eternal/Templar) who died of a fever but then came back to life as a creature. His mother believed his soul was with Innocence, so she leapt to her death to meet him.

Micah: a sailor, possibly from Weylam Roth's crew.

Rami: a male Mutewind who helped murder aspirants (for leader of the clan) before being murdered himself.

Sapinti: a female who went fishing and washed ashore mummified/drained of blood. After she was buried the land soured and had to be abandoned.

APPENDIX C: CULTURES & LANGUAGES

PROTO-VAAL

Not much is known about the Proto-Vaal other than they were a primeval humanoid race living in Wraeclast prior to the Vaal, and as such are the earliest humanoid race known to have existed on the continent. Their ruins can be found buried beneath the remains of the Eternal Empire and lie deeper even than the cities of the Lightless.

Mosaics found in their ruins depict some events from their history, including the building of a pyramid and a volcanic eruption that filled the sky with ash. Three people are also depicted, including a woman called the Clayshaper (who wielded the Clayshaper mace and created golems from clay), a figure wearing Ahn's Contempt and wielding Ahn's Might and Ahn's Heritage, and a third with a lightning bolt on its forehead who may have been Aul (though Aul has only been seen wearing a helmet so far).

Mosaics:







VAAL

The Vaal, often referred to as the "red ones," are the oldest known culture in Wraeclast save for the Proto-Vaal. They existed in central Wraeclast and on the island of Oriath. Two of their cities were Azala Vaal and Lira Vaal, and they also had a temple in the jungle named Atzoatl. They worshipped multiple gods, and the followers of Ralakesh enslaved many primitive Azmerians long before the Vaal established peaceful contact with them. They also seem to have had contact with the

Templars, as the descry symbol used by the Templars can be found on some of their artefacts, such as Zeel's Amplifier and Vaal totems.

The Vaal were strong advocates of science and the use of Virtue Gems. Their technology was more advanced than that of any other known civilization, including those that came much later. Vaal ruins are populated in part by creatures referred to as "constructs," said by Alva Valai to have been created by combining metal and insects. The Vaal conducted research into such areas as explosives, "electrical lifebloods," bioengineering, and weather manipulation, and they studied other realms, including breaches and maps. They also experimented extensively with human sacrifice and torture--which may have stemmed from the myth that they were created from the flesh of the gods and that it was their duty to return this flesh to them--as well as the Beast's power of corruption.

All of what is known about the Vaal is contained in the corresponding section above. The Vaal were supposedly wiped out in the Fall except for a few thousand refugees. However, there are a couple of hints that indicate this may not be completely true.

LORE

"You covet the strength of your peers, mortal? Perhaps it can be yours, if you are willing to make an offering of their blood..."

- Vaal Myth of the Third Snake

-- Offering to the Serpent Legion Gloves

LANGUAGE

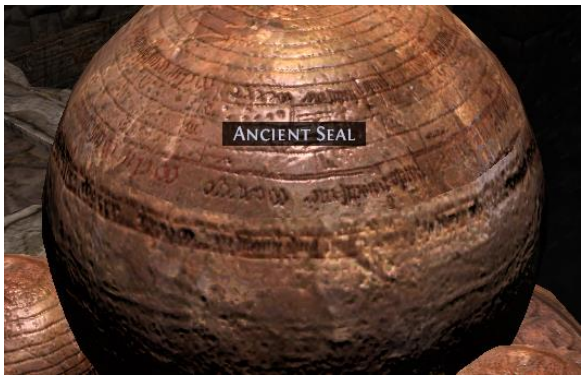
The Vaal have their own language, which according to Trinian is called Vaalish. Their written language may have been logographic, as seen in images in their ruins:



Some examples of Vaal glyphs:



However, examples of alphabetic writing also exist:





No Vaalish words or phrases are known.

KARUI

The Karui are a race apparently native to the Karui archipelago southwest of Wraeclast. The largest island is Ngamakanui. They worship their own gods and are referred to as dark-skinned by Victario.

There are references to the "Ngakuramakoi," which is possibly a name for a tribe of Karui, one of the Karui islands, or the Karui archipelago.

The Karui seem to be a tribal society with a culture that heavily emphasizes the honour of warriors and battle, and the "Karui Way."

LORE

The Karui were a peaceful culture of farmers and fishermen, before fate thrust the great Tukohama upon them. It was he who put the stone axes in their hands and the hunger for conquest in their bellies.

Farmers quenched their dry fields in blood. Fishermen emptied their holds of fish and filled them with land-greedy hordes.

Battle by battle, war by war, Tukohama carved the steps that would carry him up a mountain of severed heads, and into immortality. Tukohama's axe is called Anger, his spear is called Greed, and their victims are the minds and hearts of all Karui.

--Sin, "Tukohama"

The King's Feast is an ancient ritual born of less enlightened times. Long before the Karui followed the Way, one tribe would conquer another and a feast would be prepared for the triumphant King. The main dishes of this feast were selected carefully, for the sweetness of their nature and the tenderness of their flesh.

You see, when the conquered fills the belly of the conqueror, two tribes become one. ...

--Lani, "The King's Feast"

It is the Karui Way to observe nature in nature. The fish without the sea is no longer a fish. It is dinner. ...

--Siosa, "Archives"

... I've heard that the Karui have this philosophy... *makanui*, the Way of the Warrior. ...

--Clarissa, "Maramoa"

It is the Karui way to give leadership to the victor. ...

--Haku, on offering to betray

...In Ngamakanui, our treaties mandated that an offering of peace be witnessed by a third. ...

--Haku, on offering to bargain

A Karui woman's place was not the battlefield, but the hearth. Hyrri changed all of that.

--Hyrri's Demise Sharktooth Arrow Quiver

It is the Gull that delivers Man unto Ancestor. The consumer of our flesh. The seeder of our souls unto the earth. We give the Gull his life. The Gull gives us our Way.

- Lavianga, Advisor to Kaom

--The Gull Raven Mask

"If one is an annoyance then a hundred is a threat."

- Ancient Karui Proverb

--Rain of Splinters Crimson Jewel

"Shoot first, ask no questions."

- Karui wisdom

--Karui Ward Jade Amulet

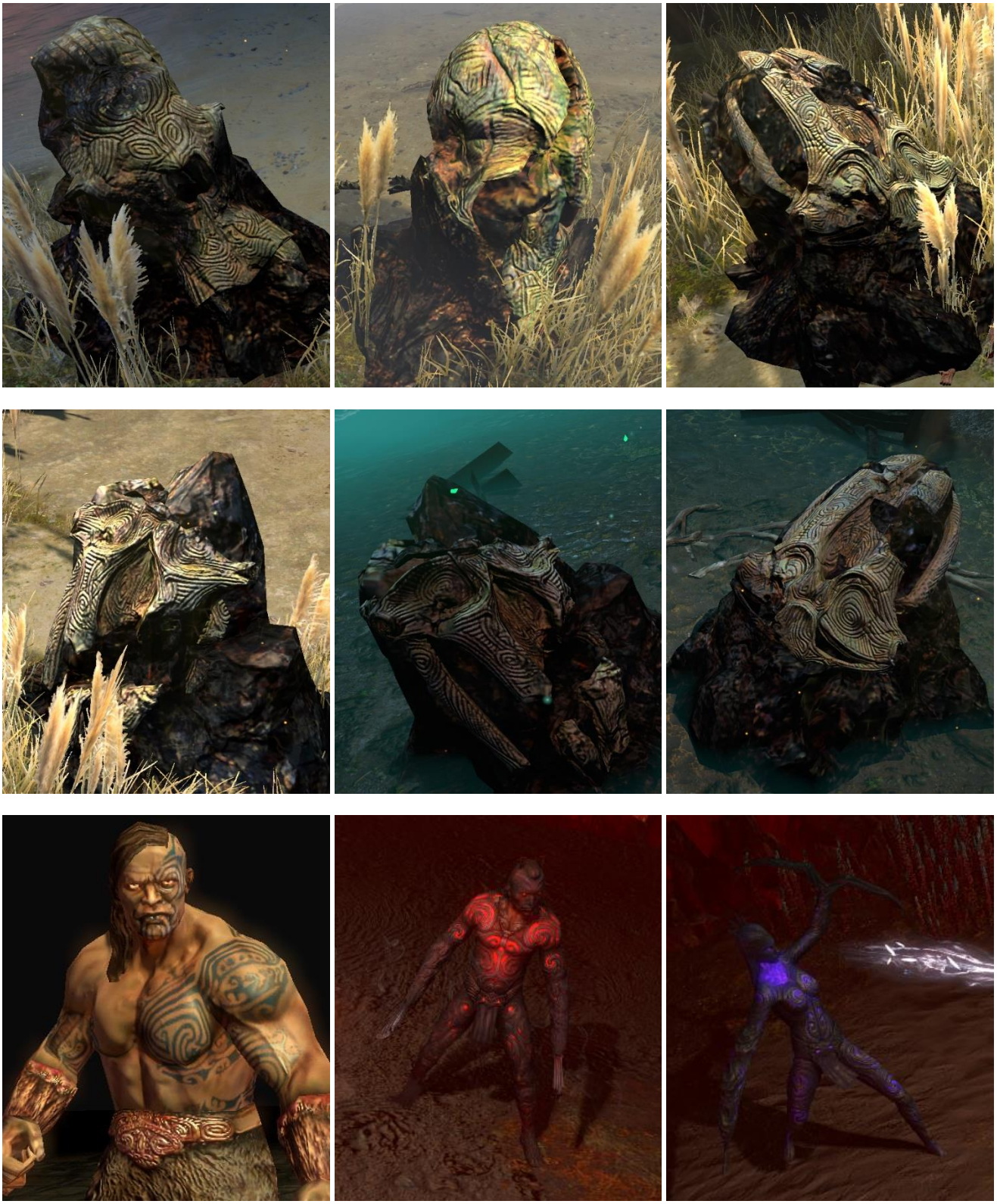
"All are welcome in Hinekora's eternal home."

- Karui Proverb

--Death's Hand Karui Sceptre

LANGUAGE

The Karui have their own language, which according to Voll is simply called Karui. Their writing and symbols seem to resemble long flowing or swirling lines:



Known Karui words and phrases:

Word/Phrase	Meaning	Source
tala moana	"I greet you as the waves greet the shore"	Erik Olofsson
*tala kura**	"goodbye"?	Maramoa & Utula (when you leave)
makoru	"shark"	Maramoa, "General Gravicius"
waikoama	"canoe"	Maramoa, "General Gravicius"
hatungo	"wise woman"	Navali, "Introduction"
motiata	possibly "holy man," or "song/ritual"?	Siosa, "The Painting"
tavukai	"sacred prohibition"	The Purity Chronicles Book 3
makanga	"honoured warrior"	Maramoa, "Dominus"
makanui	"the Way of the Warrior"	Clarissa, "Maramoa"
korangi	"he who wins wars with false promises"	Maramoa, "Hargan"
ti siwila arako talah wasalo ai garango	"the honeyed tongue speaks greedy words"	Path of Exile: Origins #3
vala Ngamahu	battle cry ("for Ngamahu"?)	Path of Exile: Origins #3

*The spelling is a guess since the phrase is heard but not seen in writing.

MARAKETH

The Maraketh are native to the Vastiri Plains in eastern Wraeclast, as far as is known. Their capital rests near a lake at the northern edge of the desert.

Their culture consists of a tribal matriarchy, and according to Vanja they have their own "unique cosmology of strange creatures, pagan gods and powerful treasures." They seem to be primarily desert-dwelling and practice pastoralism. The Maraketh often ride rhoas and may or may not ride rocs (Garukhan was said to have ridden one). They are referred to as dark-skinned by Victario.

LORE

... The Maraketh are a matriarchy! ...

--Petarus and Vanja, "Oyun"

No matter where you come from, or who you might be, we were all birthed by a mother. Our mothers protected us and gave us nourishment. It is our duty in life to honour that great task. Without a mother, none would tread this dirt today.

The most important commandment in our people's tradition is this: Honour the Mother, Honour the Life.

--Irasha, "Maraketh Tradition"

And how shall we know a sekhema worthy of rule? By the anointing of the Great Roc, under whose wings we grow and soar.

- Maraketh Coronation Ritual

--Sekhema Feather

One should not entice the storm; one cannot invite the storm, or give warrant to its tyrant-soul. We survive only by appeasing the storm, with gifts and offerings of adoration. We hope that, in its mercy, it shall pass us by.

- Tempestology of the Maraketh, Repudion IV

--Bottled Storm

The swallow flew fast and took many turns, spilling a seed where no plant had grown before. This seed grew and grew until the desert became fertile and abundant. Your mind is like this seed.

- Maraketh Proverb

--Fertile Mind Cobalt Jewel

The King looked upon images swirling atop the ancient stone dial. "You look peaceful" he told his bride-to-be, "So peaceful, asleep in our wedding bed." But in phantasm, she did not slumber, and what he saw was not a place for dreams, rather, a wooden box... about to be closed and lowered into earthy depths.

- Maraketh Legend

--Calendar of Fortune

When the hyena howls thrice death is sure to follow.

-Maraketh Wisdom

--Al Dhih Timeworn Claw

To the Maraketh, death is as intimate as love.

--Ornament of the East Gut Ripper

Kings fall, empires crumble, mortals perish. All turn to earth and sand.

- Maraketh proverb

--Primordial Eminence Viridian Jewel

We Maraketh have a saying, Scion. "Only the night can understand the darkness. Only the sun can bring about the dawn."

--Kira intro to Scion

Deshret has been avenged, as is the way of the Maraketh.

--Tasuni

When I was twelve, three men came out of the Vastiri plains and set their eyes upon me. They asked me for water, but took much more.

When the women of Highgate finally caught them, I was given an opportunity to enact the execution myself, an offer I gladly took. Even at twelve, I knew the price for betraying the *akhara*. ...

--Irasha, "Maraketh Justice"

Pride is a common flaw in men. We Maraketh beat such sickness out of our boys. Do you know why, Duelist? If left unchecked, pride becomes a plague.

There is a cure, of course. It's called 'devotion'.

--Kira, " Introduction" (Duelist version)

When I received my first flower of blood, I was given to the ritual of womanhood. All young Maraketh women have to dance with the scorpion, to prove themselves worthy of carrying the *dekhara's* spear.

It is no easy task, to catch a black Maraketh Scorpion. Their tails are swift, their stingers sharp, their poison lethal. I made my way through the trial unscathed, but my sister... We shared a womb, came into this world together. She left it, thrashing and a foaming [sic] at the mouth. ...

--Irasha, "Shakari"

The Maraketh fear very little, but they dare not whisper the name of the demon that flies on Winter's gales.

--White Wind Imperial Skean

The Maraketh are an ancient race, bound by ascetic tradition. They have been tasked by their deceased leader, the Sekhema Deshret, with the duty of guarding the entrance to the mines of Highgate. Deshret aided her people in their vigil, helping to craft a new breed of weaponry. ... They are known simply as the Maraketh Weapons.

--https://www.pathofexile.com/theawakening/items

LANGUAGE

The Maraketh have their own language, which according to Voll is called Marak. Their writing uses a flowing script:



Known Marak words and phrases:

Word/Phrase	**Meaning**	**Source**
akh'salla	greeting	Jun Ortoi (when you approach)

*selerim**	"goodbye"?	Jun Ortoi (when you leave)
akhara	"tribe"	Kira, "Oyun"
dekhara	"warrior(s)"	Kira, "Oyun"
sekhema	"commander"	Kira, "Oyun"
darakatha	battle cry	Path of Exile: Origins #3

*The spelling is a guess since the phrase is heard but not seen in writing.

EZOMYTES

Little is known about the Ezomytes other than they are apparently native to Ezomyr and the Isles of Skothe in westernmost Wraeclast. They worship a group of animalistic gods known as the First Ones, who teach them how to fight and survive and who bestow gifts in exchange for animal sacrifices. Per Einhar Frey, the First Ones will return at the end of the world to collect those who've proven themselves to be "survivors" and take them to a place called the Great Grove.

Garivaldi describes the Ezomytes as being "romantic," and some examples of Ezomyte poetry are known.

LORE

A stone is not a stone, it is but one part of a fortress.

- Ezomyte proverb

--Primordial Harmony Cobalt Jewel

Masters of wit, strength and cunning. To survive the harsh winters, you must be like the fox.

- Ezomyte Proverb

--The Fox

You've no reason for fear when you're a root in a fen

- Old Ezomyte saying.

--Fencoil Gnarled Branch

"Cut down the tallest tree, and another becomes the tallest."

- Old Ezomyte saying.

--Mirebough Gnarled Branch

The Ezomytes have a saying: Take everything and waste nothing.

--Coated Shrapnel Crimson Jewel

Passed from king to king for centuries, this Ezomyte symbol of state could split heads and sunder city gates with equal aplomb.

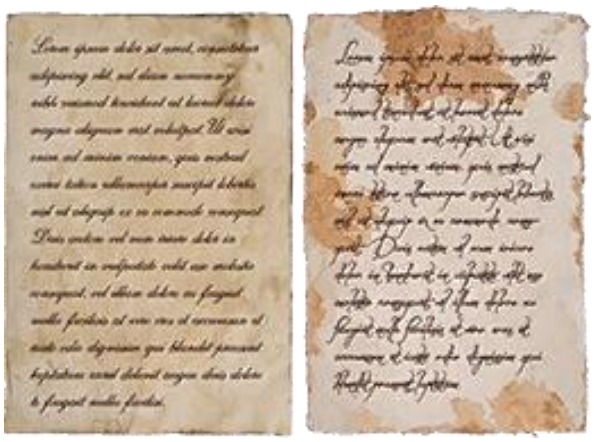
--Helepolis, Steam trading card description

Like lightning, the Ezomyte cavalry need never strike twice.

--Stormcharger Plated Greaves

LANGUAGE

The Ezomytes have their own language, which according to Voll is called Ezo. Weylin's poem is written in script and might be an example of Ezo, though it also may have been written in the language used by the Eternals. Rigwald's inscriptions, probably written about twenty-five years later, are written in runes. These may be examples of Ezo writing, or they may have been written in an ancient language due to his association with the First Ones.



Pages from Weylin's poem



Rigwald's inscriptions

No Ezo words or phrases are known other than for Einhar's name:

Word/Phrase	Meaning	Source
einhar	"lone fighter"	Einhar Frey, "Introduction"

AZMERI

The Azmeri resided in a chain of mountains in western Wraeclast known as the Azmerian Ranges. They had a primitive culture based on oral tradition. Their chieftains were selected by putting aspiring leaders through a labyrinth of beasts and traps to test their strength, wisdom, and spirit. The Azmeri worshipped their own gods, though many also worshipped the Vaal goddess Arakaali, and some (such as Tarcus Veruso) may have followed the Templar faith. Many of the Azmeri were enslaved by followers of the Vaal god Ralakesh long before the two civilizations established peaceful relations.

Around 900 BIC a Vaalish embassador made peaceful contact with the Azmeri, and for the next five hundred years the Vaal helped elevate their civilization into a cohesive culture of settlement, agriculture and literature. Following the Fall, the Azmeri took in the few Vaal survivors and integrated them into their civilization.

Four hundred years later, Tarcus Veruso led the Azmeri down from the mountains and into the ruins of the Vaal civilization, where he established the Eternal Empire. An inscription by the Order of the Djinn suggests that a young Azmerian named Egrin had visions that may also have been involved in leading the Azmeri down from the mountains.

LORE

"A raging Solaris seared and contorted the orb's surface. A despairing Lunaris filled the scars with her tears. Yet Viridi remained, trapped within, forever more."

- Azmerian Creation Myth

--Prismatic Eclipse Twilight Blade

"Sirrius flew on wings of light, faster than wind, faster than thought. But try as he might to outrun the darkness, it was there, at every turn, waiting for him."

- Azmerian legend

--Darkray Vectors Dragonscale Boots

"Do not cause the land to stir, it holds secrets better unknown."

- Azmerian proverb

--Primordial Might Crimson Jewel

The Azmeri ascetics learnt the power of going without the body's ordinary cravings.

--Energy From Within Cobalt Jewel

A boy becomes a man when he has faced the animal in his heart and wet the forest floor with its blood.

- Azmeri Proverb

--Greust's Necklace

I'm aware that you and Greust had something of a commercial relationship prior to his...accident. As is the Azmeri custom, Greust's few possessions have now passed to me. ...

--Helena, "Trading"

There's an Azmeri shrine, tucked away in the Northern Forest. Greust took me there, told me it was a memorial to those who had gone before him, a place where their spirits could rest. When he passed, he wanted his remains to be laid to rest with the bones of his people. ...

--Helena, "Greust's Necklace"

The Azmeri were the first culture known in history to use the trials of strength, wisdom, and spirit to select its chieftains.

The first Lord's Trial was a rough-hewn maze festooned with wild animals and brutal traps, crafted to test aspiring Azmerian leaders' body, mind, and soul. [sic]

In conquering the adversities of the maze, a champion proved they were capable of bearing the crushing burden of chieftainship.

The first trials were simple contraptions reflecting simple times. As the Azmerian civilisation grew in number and complexity, so did the trials, from treacherous mazes to bewildering labyrinths.

Alas, there are no surviving descriptions of the labyrinth that tested and proved the worth of Veruso, Prima Imperialus. I would imagine it was quite something to behold.

- Emperor Izaro Phrecius

--Bronze Inscription II

The Azmeri were consummate survivors. They had to be, having been sired in the most inhospitable range of mountains in all of Wraeclast.

Unfortunate, some might say. I do not. I believe it was the making of them. And of us, their descendants.

So it is no wonder that they developed the Lord's Trial. With survival being a moment-by-moment concern, that harried people grew to understand power quite intimately.

Strong leadership is able to bridge the chasm between existence and extinction. Poor leadership might see an entire tribe vanish into that same chasm.

When the Azmeri descended from their mountains to conquer the fecund lands of central Wraeclast, they thrived and multiplied with utmost alacrity in those more forgiving climes.

For is it not poverty that teaches us how we might excel in times of plenty?

- Emperor Izaro Phrecius

--Bronze Inscription III

... Prospero was a god of our ancestors, the Azmerians. As we Eternals descended from those mountains, our gods descended with us. ...

--Cadiro, "Prospero"

LANGUAGE

The Azmeri seem to have their own language, though what it is called is not known. As it apparently did not have a written form prior to their contact with the Vaal, any written form may be based on Vaalish.

No Azmerian words or phrases are known.

ETERNALS

The Eternal Empire was first established in central Wraeclast, and at its height seems to have covered much of the continent including the Vastiri Plains, the Mantle, Phrecia, and all the way to the southern coast. It also included the island of Oriath, and following the Cataclysm Oriath was the only part of the empire to survive.

The empire was founded by the Azmeri and therefore may have kept much of the Azmerian culture and traditions. In its first years it continued the Azmerian practice of succession by labyrinth.

The Eternals are said to have revered the Azmerian goddesses Solaris and Lunaris "as the two eyes of their God," and their capital (Sarn) contained temples to both. However, the Eternals are also shown to have been associated with the Templars and their faith, with the High Templar vowing "to care for this Empire with eyes open" upon the coronation of each emperor.

LANGUAGE

As the empire was founded by the Azmeri, the Eternals may have used the Azmerian language. Some examples of their writing:







No words or phrases from the language of the Eternals are known.

TEMPLARS

The Templars appear to have their own culture and beliefs centered on the worship of the god Innocence, and their primary symbol is the descry. They may simply be a religious group rather than a separate race. Their origin is unknown, though as a group they seem to be older than the Beast since Innocence interacted with the first High Templar directly.

Their geographical origin is also unknown. It is possible the Templars were composed of Azmeri who followed Tarcus Veruso down from the mountains when he founded the Eternal Empire. It's also possible they originated on Oriath, though since the Vaal lived there before the Fall this means the two groups would've coexisted on the island. It is clear that the Templars and the Vaal had some contact given that the Vaal also used the descry, as found on artefacts such as Zeel's Amplifier and Vaal totems.

The Templars were an integral part of the Eternal Empire from its inception, with the High Templar vowing "to care for this Empire with eyes open" upon the coronation of each emperor. Their seat of power may have been in Sarn (not Oriath), evidenced by the fact that High Templar Voll urged Kaom to invade and conquer Oriath during the Purity Rebellion. It isn't known whether any Templars existed outside of the empire.

Since the Cataclysm and the empire's collapse, the survivors on Oriath have had their own civilization, which appears to be a theocracy ruled by the Templars.

LANGUAGE

Per Maramoa, the Templars on Oriath have their own language, called Oriathan. This language is not natively understood by the Azmeri remaining in Wraeclast, such as those in the Forest Encampment, and therefore may be different than the language used by the Eternal Empire. However, their writing appears similar to that of the Eternals, and they may have used the same alphabet:



No Oriathan words or phrases are known, though the above images contain possible examples. Oriathan seems to be the language in which most of the characters in the present communicate.

HARBINGERS

Almost nothing is known about the Harbingers other than the fact they are associated with the God of Domination in some way. More will become available after the translations of their language are finalized.

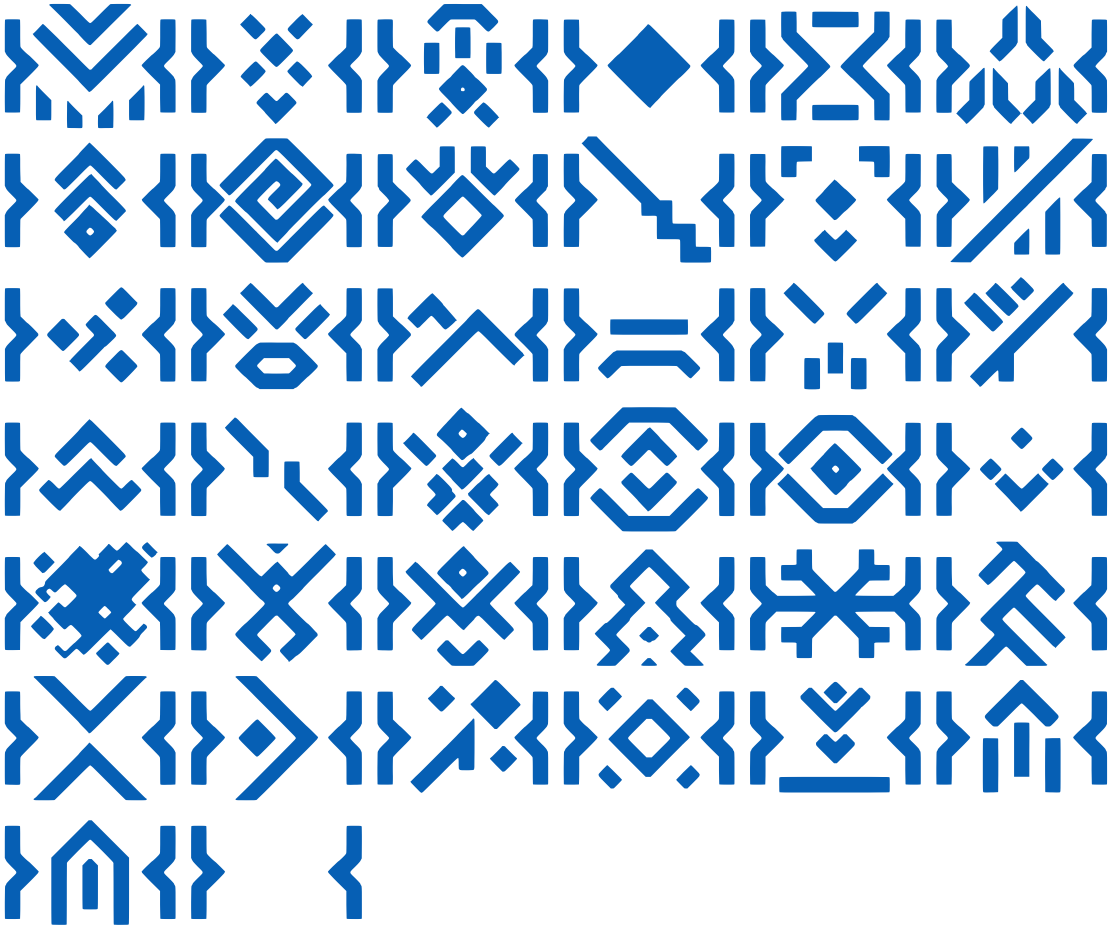
LANGUAGE

The Harbingers are notable due to the fact that more is known about their language than any other culture in Wraeclast or Oriath. However, only two glyphs so far have official translations. A full list of known glyphs follows.

Connection/interaction symbols:



Word glyphs:



APPENDIX D: DATES AND PLACES

DATES

The only known dating system used in Wraeclast and Oriath is that of the Eternal Empire, which based their years on the founding of the empire.

IC	=	Imperialus Conceptus, the founding of the Eternal Empire
[year] BIC	=	Number of years prior to the Imperialus Conceptus
[year] IC	=	Number of years following 1 BIC
lunari	=	(probably) one cycle of the moon (from Etchings on Wood IV)

List of all dates from in-game lore:

first Sacrato of Lurici
3rd Kaso of Vitali
1st Lunaro of Verusi
second Galvano of Azmeri
3rd Solaro of Divini
first Kaso of Verusi
1st Caso of Divini
2nd Sacrato of Phreci
third Galvano of Vitali
3rd Fiero of Dirivi
4th Fiero of Verusi
last day of Divini
2nd Sacrato of Verusi
first Fiero of Eterni
21st of Eterni [from The Union; the 21st of July is the supporter's wedding date]
Astrali

If the format is

[# of week in month] [day of week] of [month]

then that gives the following list of unique day and month names:

Days	**Months**
Solaro	Lurici
Lunaro	Vitali
Sacrato	Verusi
Kaso/Caso	Azmeri
Galvano	Divini
Fiero	Dirivi
	Phreci
	Eterni
	Astrali

PLACES

List of Wraeclast place names not found on the map:

Alliston (from Etchings on Wood I)
Glarryn
Glargarryn
Ogham (on an island, possibly the Isles of Skothe)
Thebrus
Umbra? (might not be a place)

List of places from the Letters of Exile not found on the map, possibly cities in Oriath:

Beecham
Cinderford
Dayton
Inkley
Kimbey
Mirfield
Nashe
Romsey
Slaugh
Wetherdale

Other:

Abram (from Rhys of Abram, might not be a place)
Gulton (from Benric of Gulton, might not be a place)
Penance Quay