

We assume that you will keep this report only for your eyes and those you trust, and use the information therein to safeguard the Empire as you see fit.

On the specifics of your request for our investigation, we would like to point out that you have far greater access to these individuals than we do. Fundamentally, you are in a better physical and political position than we to perform an investigation such as this, but we have nevertheless endeavoured to gather what information we can. There may also be further details forthcoming from field agents, but we cannot guarantee that their efforts will bear any fruit.

As a matter of principle, we assume that at least some of the League individuals subject to this investigation are involved in some way with the Vyig. Our agents have detected a recent upswing of Vyig activity after a period of quiet following their suppression; it may be worth close observation of the League individuals in order to assess whether they are embroiled in the matter at all.

#### **Ambition: Viviane de Couerdefer**

We were unable to gather any particularly compromising or concerning material on the Cardinal of Ambition. She does appear to have been opposed to Yael during the schism, which is notable due to the vociferous support of the arch-heretic among many Dawnish priests.

The Couerdefer family appear to have contacts among the Iron Confederacy noble houses competing for control of the province of Kalino. The details remain unclear, and it is not evident whether Viviane herself is involved, but as Cardinal of Ambition it seems extremely unlikely she is unaware of her fellows' communications.

Viviane was recently sent written material from a Highborn religious campaigner seeking to have Atuman restored to Paragon status, and who may possibly hold other destabilising religious beliefs. Having intercepted other communications containing what we believe to be similar material, it seems that this is not a specific effort to reach out to a sympathetic ear, as she was not alone in receiving it. It is not clear to us whether the Highborn has had any previous contact with her, or whether this is just an effort to rope the Cardinal of Ambition into some bizarre personal crusade.

#### **Courage: Jorma Steelhail**

Investigation has revealed a number of concerning aspects in relation to the Cardinal of Courage. He previously held the position of Senator of Skarsind, and it appears he was involved in negotiations with the various factions of the Barrens after their rebellion against the Druj several years ago – none of which are, themselves, disturbing.

However, our agents recovered a scroll from a magician who was illegally contacting the Whisper Gallery and who had been receiving questions from that Eternal collective. We are not certain as to whether these were questions aimed at gaining information that the Whisper Gallery did not possess,

or for pointing the magician at secrets that would aid him, but one of the questions on the scroll asked what secret ambition drives Jorma.

Closer examination of Jorma's career is not heartening. As Cardinal, he was the target of a – failed – revocation attempt called against him on claims of having assaulted someone called Aarne of Wintermark, apparently unprovoked, and of being a danger to those around him, not worthy of a position of authority. His support for Dogri Thulebane was also claimed as a question of his Loyalty to the Empire, and there was an assertion that, in essence, he had only even made Gatekeeper because the previous Cardinal wished to shut him up and keep him busy. This was raised by, we believe, a Varushkan – hardly an unbiased source – but the telling matter here is the apparent assault.

Further investigations into Jorma's history prior to his arrival at Anvil after the death of Empress Britta have dug up rumours of violent altercations – particularly, a feud of some sort with a Marcher. There have been efforts to keep his temper problem covered up, but it may be a future weak point.

Jorma seems to hold a strongly anti-Thule position, unsurprising for a Wintermarker but apparently putting him at odds with a number of his countrymen. He attempted to have a Kallavesa Senator revoked for supporting trade with the Thule, but was unsuccessful. He also attempted to have the Asavean temple in the Brass Coast destroyed, but again was unable to gain the backing needed to do so. One might consider that he has managed a lot of failures in his efforts, which calls into question whether – again – his temper and emotions are leading his actions rather than being the decisions of a fine political mind.

We remain unsure as to what 'secret ambition' may drive Jorma, but we are concerned about what such an apparently volatile man may attempt in his journey to realise whatever goals he has.

#### **Loyalty: Veikko**

Our initial delvings into the Cardinal of Loyalty did not bear a great deal of fruit; there is remarkably little information available through our sources. We know that he revoked the general of the Fist of the Mountains, indicating a willingness and capability to wield religious political power, but little more than that.

However, we did come across a more recent matter that indicates he is either delusional, stirring up conflict for ulterior motives, someone is puppeting him, or he simply does not have the ability to question his own sources critically. He was responsible for a Synod attempt to condemn the Thule for an act that, as far as we can tell, is purely imaginary – demanding the Thule pay reparations for 'slaughtered Imperial souls' that were 'discovered beneath Crow's Ridge'. He appears to have been propagating the belief that there were some sort of green iron mines under the Crow's Ridge region where dead Wintermarkers had been discovered, and blaming the Thule for this.

We have pointed a number of our own agents to investigate the matter and there is absolutely no evidence of any of this. As Crow's Ridge is under Imperial control, we can only assume that the Cardinal believes these supposed dead were slain when we were still at war with the Thule – in which case such demands for reparations seem futile – but *there are no dead*. There are *no* sources on any information regarding how the Cardinal got this idea into his head, or where the story came from in the first place. Whatever atrocities the Thule may have visited on Imperial captives during the war, there is simply no proof that this particular claim has any veracity to it. We can only assume that the Cardinal or someone around him has invented it to stir up conflict with the Thule, or that he has been under the influence of too many mind-altering substances, enchantments, or the influence of an Eternal.

### **Pride: Azekah of Zepheniah's Lament**

We have not been able to gather a great deal of information about Azekah themselves – which strikes us as a little odd when regarding someone supposedly overseeing the Virtue of Pride – but it is possible that they themselves are in fact without any great stain or flaw. It seems they want to reconcile with the Suumah Republic, an understandable aim given their position, but we otherwise have little to offer on the Cardinal themselves.

Their Chapter, on the other hand, is another matter. It is not yet clear how this reflects on the Cardinal themselves, but Zepheniah's Lament has a strange history and some very unfortunate recent associations.

The most well-known of these is that Ephrael of Zepheniah's Lament killed another Imperial citizen – believed to have been a Vengeance cultist, who had lured Ephrael into a profane aura of Vengeance. Ephrael got away with her murder with a steep fine; we cannot ascertain whether the killing was always her intent or merely the influence of Vengeance. She is in the same assembly as Azekah.

The other matter is less well-known but much stranger. In 376, when many of those of Zepheniah's Lament now attending Anvil would presumably still have been youths, one of their number in their Chapter simply vanished. Whatever happened within the Chapter seems to have been hushed up, but there appears to have been an internal tumult following the disappearance of the girl in question. What makes this more than just the sordid story of some murder, accidental or otherwise, is that we have encountered recent rumours that the girl has been seen once again in the past year. Whether she is a ghost, some sort of Winter-preserved husk, or something else entirely, is not evident, and we are not certain whether Zepheniah's Lament are themselves aware of this re-emergence.

Furthermore, possibly interconnected with this, you may have heard of Athaliah, a bizarre magical phenomenon that emerged from Reikos following the influence of Llofir entering that territory. What information we have put together about Athaliah indicates it may have been either an exceptionally

powerful ghost that was alive at the time of the Empire's founding, or a Highborn version of whatever supernatural confluences cause the creation of Sovereigns in Varushka. Athaliah was, apparently, permanently destroyed, but there were links between the being and Zepheniah's Lament, including a possible manifestation of the being during the Highborn Day of the Dead a year ago. We believe that Athaliah may, in life, have been a member of either the Chapter itself, or a group that the Chapter would later emerge from. Again, Azekah's knowledge of this is not known to us, but their Chapter seems to have a strong association with strange goings on.

#### **Prosperity: Ricardo Almieda Desmondo di Tassato**

We are sure we do not need to regale you with information regarding the Cardinal of Prosperity's membership of the Printer's Guild and the various matters that have embroiled the Pledge since Empress Britta's death. Rather than retread ground you are doubtless familiar with, we attempted to dig up information that might be less well known.

We were surprised that there was seemingly so little to find, given the man's associations. He was the holder of the Singing Caves seat upon the Bourse, and was Ambassador to Faraden for a period. There were some questions relating his understanding of Faraden culture and his handling of negotiations based thereon, but shortly before his tenure ended, the mercantile side of dealings with the Faraden were strongly improving, even if the spiritual side of the relationship between our nations was declining.

The only matter of interest we discovered was that, for at least some time in the past few years, Ricardo was attempting to search for the relic Oathheart, apparently unsuccessfully. Presumably it wasn't just lost amongst all the dust and detritus clogging up the Pledge's collection of artefacts and items.

#### **Vigilance: Irada von Temeschwar**

Another individual with associations with the Printer's Guild, we confess that we are extremely suspicious of the Cardinal of Vigilance but have not been able to find much to pin on her. She was originally a Varushkan midwife, but this does not seem to have any bearing on her political capabilities or ascent to power. Most of her secrets remain well-hidden, but they must be there.

There was a matter in recent years relating to the purge of the Vyig that she may be peripherally involved in. After the recognition of Ratibor for his historic actions in Temeschwar, a band of vigilantes emerged – basically just ruffians and thugs, but motivated by a desire for Vigilance and to get rid of the Vyig, albeit hampered by their own poor understanding of both the Virtue and the law. These vigilantes aggressively pursued what they saw as Vyig targets, including at least one incident where they accidentally beat up a militiaman guarding a mine that had recently been seized from the Vyig. There may have been other incidents that were not brought to light – and there are indications

that several figures in Anvil were involved in guiding these ruffians and giving them targets, essentially wielding the gang of leg-breakers for their own ends. Irada's name has come up during our investigations into this matter, but we cannot find hard evidence that she directly communicated with or gave instructions to the vigilantes, or whether they simply believed they had her approval for their actions.

#### **Wisdom: Abaddon de Rondell**

Our investigations into Abaddon were limited, as we have heard tell that he may not be returning to Anvil to hold his position in the future. There appears to be a rich trove of rumours surrounding the Cardinal of Wisdom, however. He has been heavily involved in Abraxian research efforts, and we believe was a key supporter of Yael based off the arch-heretic's own involvement in such matters. For further investigation, we would suggest working through either Edward Novarion in Dawn or the Auric Horizon in Urizen, both of whom were also involved in matters Abraxian.

#### **The Way: Atla**

The tight loyalties of the Imperial Orcs make gathering information on the Cardinal of the Way a difficult proposition, and we are largely empty-handed on the matter. The Cardinal has wielded her religious authority effectively through revocations, and presumably there is some divisiveness around her within the orc community, but not enough to garner us sources willing to spill compromising information.

She has been involved in attempts to further orc theology on several fronts, including inciting the use of infusions among the orcs to perceive their souls after using such alchemy to witness the soul of the Imperial Orc egregore. There is no sign of any destabilising or malign purpose behind these activities, however.

#### **The Throne: Lisabetta**

Firstly, a note of caution. We appreciate that no-one must be above investigation within the Empire if it is to be safeguarded against threats; however, investigating the Empress requires an additional level of discretion and care. Firstly, the Throne is better equipped than many other targets to receive note of such efforts, and this can risk driving paranoia or suspicion. Furthermore, the Throne remains popular among many Imperial nations at this time, even despite some controversies associated with her decisions, and thus many sources are extremely reticent to take actions that they believe may be disloyal or may undermine her.

Due to our own need to tread lightly here, the information we can provide is largely only to point out the threads that can, perhaps, be pulled at to reveal more. Firstly, there appear to be family matters that have wider ramifications than mere domestic dissatisfaction. We would suggest starting with Jonah Yakovitch and Kaspar Yakovich von Holberg, and investigating further about the Empress's father Gyorgy Yakovitch, of whom there were reports of a fuss in the Dawn camp during the Summer

Solstice. We do not know exactly what has become of the father, but he appears to be a creator of strange dolls and marionettes, and there are further – and stranger – rumours relating to the man; nothing solid, and they often contradict each other, but there is clearly something going on with Gyorgy.

There are rumours swirling of an active conspiracy against the Empress in the highest echelons of the land – not one hatched from the great mass of people, but from the dignitaries and magnates who attend Anvil. We have not been able to ascertain the reality of this conspiracy, but the Empress herself seems to believe that it is real and that she has reason to fear its efforts. We have no further leads on the nature of this conspiracy, who is involved, or what exactly they seek to achieve; it is another matter that you and your trusted supporters may be better placed to investigate than we are.