

Echoes of the Labyrinth

Volume 3a-3b: Winter Solstice 378 YE-
Spring Equinox 379 YE

A collection of notes on the experience of
Pure Liao Visionaries, collected by

Livia of the Celestial Cascade of Urizen

by the direction and authority of the Council of Nine.

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Winter Solstice 378 YE and Spring Equinox 379 YE accounts taken by Livia Cascade; writeups and commentary by Livia Cascade.

Information contained here is incomplete; future editions of this pamphlet may contain more information as the authors consult again with the visionaries and their guides, particularly for the information returned to visionaries by the Civil Service as a result of their inquiries.

These notes were taken from verbal testimonies of witnessed events, so spellings and exact pronunciations of names should not be considered definitive.

Winter Solstice, 378 YE

Introduction

Six visionaries experienced visions induced by Pure Liao at the Solstice. Of these, one was selected by the winners of the Virtuous Auction, and five by the Council of Gatekeepers.

Following their visions, the visionaries and their accompanying guides were questioned by the authors. Their stories are recorded in the following pages, in the order that the visions were received.

- * **Nicassia of Phoenix Reach** (Urizen), accompanied by Lycier of Phoenix Reach
- * **Twyll of the Eternal Family** (Navarr), accompanied by Raewyn of the Eternal Family
- * **Iulian of the Spire of Shattered Art Reforged** also known as Shatterspire (Urizen), accompanied by Allegra of Shatterspire
- * **Captain Vraalbuka Straskovich of the Vor'azi** (Varushka), accompanied by Father Drakov (Varushka)
- * **Henry Ward of Upwold** (the Marches), accompanied by Tess (the Marches)
- * **Mordecai of the Suns of Couros** (Highguard), accompanied by Damian of the Suns of Couros

Nicassia of Phoenix Reach (Urizen)
Accompanied by Lycier of Phoenix Reach

Nicassia was selected as a visionary by the Council of Gatekeepers.

The visionary gave her permission for these notes to be made public. The testimony was presented by the visionary with some assistance from her guide.

The visionary came to sitting in a chair in a room decorated in League style, with red table coverings and wine on the table. The visionary held a handkerchief in their hand that had blood on it. In front of them was a painting of an old, unlineaged person; it was not clear whether or not this was a portrait of the visionary's past life, but it did appear to have been painted by them. There was also a servant in the room who told the visionary not to move.

While the visionary was looking at the painting, there was a knock at the door, and two people entered. One introduced herself as the Cardinal of Courage - a woman with mid-brown skin and black hair, wearing a black cloak, of which she put the hood up. The other was the Cardinal's bodyguard.

The Cardinal mentioned that the visionary had been involved in designing the docks at Caricomare, and had also designed a library related to the Heliopicon. The Cardinal was visiting because there were rumours spread by many people that the visionary had been saying the Seven Virtues were one single path (the Unitarian Heresy), and the Cardinal suggested that the visionary being the influential person they were, surely they didn't want these rumours spreading. The visionary was also apparently close friends with Emperor Barabbas - thus why they were designing the Caricomare docks - and the Cardinal expressed concern that these rumours could affect the reputations of both the visionary and the Emperor, and asked if the visionary would stand up in public and say that the rumours weren't true.

The visionary evaded the question, saying that they wanted to know who was accusing them, and turning the question back on the Cardinal to ask if she was making it up. The visionary's servant also commented to the Cardinal that the rumours weren't true, but the Cardinal said "we don't need our servants to speak for us", and the servant said nothing to the Cardinal after that. The conversation went on a little longer, and in the end the visionary said that they did not need to speak to the Senate, but that its members could come and talk to the visionary themselves.

After they had talked, the Cardinal and her bodyguard left, and the servant spoke to the visionary, saying that that they were running out of time and that the visionary's

illness (the cause of the blood on the handkerchief) was getting worse. There were treatises that needed to be hidden and ciphered, and the servant asked the visionary to choose a cipher word, and drew a grid of five by five letters. The visionary chose "VIRTUE" as the cipher word.

The two of them then talked about planned renovations, possibly in Caricomare, and the servant showed the visionary a paving stone with a compass rose drawn on it, and orange and yellow colours in one corner. They discussed colours for flagstone designs. For the main colour of the stone, the servant suggested black but the visionary said that would be too dreary, and advised blue or green instead. For the compass rose, they considered yellow but then settled on gold. Once they had decided on colours for the flagstone design, the vision faded.

Nicassia had her soul examined by the rite of Insight before and after the vision. Before the vision, she appeared to be dedicated to Pride. After the vision, her dedication was no longer present, and her soul appeared to be shot through with shadowy patches, which were causing wracking coughs and great tiredness; this looked like it could have been an echo of her past life's final illness. An Exorcism with the strength of seven priests behind it was sufficient to remove the stain on her soul.

Lycier also had his soul examined before and after the vision. Both before and after, he was dedicated to Wisdom, but after the vision his soul had become stretched and thin, as if part of it was still in the Labyrinth, and it likewise required an Exorcism with the strength of seven priests to resettle it into its correct place.

Further investigation by the Civil Service into the events of Nicassia's vision reveal that her past life was most likely Marieta Simoneta di Trivento, a Sarvosi draughir who was the chief architect of the Caricomare docks and the Spider's Dream bridge. She died in 209 YE during Nicovar's siege of the School of Epistemology. At the time of the vision, she was old and ill, and a condemnation had been brought against her in the Synod for preaching the Unitarian heresy.

Twyll of the Eternal Family (Navarr)
Accompanied by Raewyn of the Eternal Family

Twyll was selected as a visionary by the Council of Gatekeepers.

The visionary gave his permission for these notes to be made public. The testimony was presented by the visionary with some assistance from his guide.

The visionary came to in discussion with three Urizeni ritualists who were members of the same coven as them, the Burning Star. The other ritualists were Lucius (a tall man wearing blue and white robes, apparently the military advisor), Eris (a slightly older woman wearing green and white robes) and a man whose name was unclear but sounded like Cato (a plump man wearing pale blue robes and a hat, apparently the arcane advisor). They referred to the visionary as the Archmage of Winter.

The three others had been sent to report on the state of the Barrens, which were being overrun by the Druj, and the Gayaak orc tribe there were in danger of annihilation by the Druj as a result. Lucius estimated that if they did nothing, the Druj would take the whole Empire within 10 years, possibly even less. The ritualists said that Empress Mariika had dissolved the army defending the Barrens and instructed the Burning Star to find a solution. The army had only barely held against the Druj; poison had been the only thing that slowed them down.

Each of them spoke about their advice. Lucius had no solution to offer, only his analysis of what would happen if they did nothing.

Cato had allied with Surut, and mentioned two heralds he had dealt with - one whose name started with Mel or Mal, who dealt with military matters, and one whose name sounded like Usef Yat who dealt with fertility. Cato's solution to the problem of the Barrens was to make a deal with Surut that included trading the firstborn children of everyone in the Burning Star coven to Surut, in exchange for Surut raining fire down on the Barrens, destroying the Druj there, along with every other living being in the Barrens. There was some discussion about this; human thralls apparently made up a twentieth of the population of the Barrens.

Eris spoke against Cato's plan, arguing that "you can't do that, it's horrible", but had no material objections and no alternative suggestion.

Since apparently none of the coven members had children at the time, the visionary suggested that they reduce the coven to only the necessary members, and that those members not have any children. The others agreed, calling the visionary "Archmage" and accepting their orders. The visionary also instructed the other three to spend half a season looking for any better plans, but if they could not find any then they should make the deal with Surut, cast the ritual, and then fall on their swords. The others bowed, said "yes, Archmage", and the vision faded.

Twyll's soul was examined with the rite of Insight before and after the vision. Before the vision, he had a testimony on his soul of "Prosperity's Protector", with the strength of

one priest behind it. After the vision, he had this testimony, along with another of "Equivocator", with the strength of seven priests behind it.

The Burning Star coven came to light over the course of 378 YE when a Navarri coven called the Walking Sleep, led by Thulun Silent Step, learned of Surut's anger at being cheated by the Burning Star in the way described, and attempted to gain Surut's favour by giving the Eternal a list of targets for the Eternal's wrath that they said were the reincarnations of the coven. Given that Twyll's name was not on the list, we can assume that the Walking Sleep were most likely lying in order to take advantage of the situation.

However, these events prompted Ioseph of Phoenix Reach, the then Minister for Historical Research, to commission an investigation into the Burning Star coven, and so we have a likely name for Twyll's past life, and a likely date for these events. The Coven of the Burning Star were a group of draughir and unlineaged humans from Apulus in Urizen, led by Sefhirus Brightspire, who was the Archmage of Winter from 237 to 238. Archmage Sefhirus requested ilium and other resources to complete a pact with Surut to destroy a Spring regio in the Barrens that was known as the Dark Heart of Spring. There was also information about the orcs who lived in the Barrens, saying that they were twisted creatures accompanied by someone called Yannah or Mer'yannah, who was possibly a herald.

From a further source - that of information about more past lives of Rosamund Holt - it is likely that "Mer'yannah" and the "Mar" or "Mer" in Twyll's vision was Mel'yannah, the daughter of Melianna, the past life that Rosamund Holt saw in her vision. Mel'yannah had bound herself to the Dark Heart of Spring regio, and a tribe of orcs had given her their children so that she could create the Briar lineage within them. The "Usef Yat" mentioned in Twyll's vision is most likely a mishearing or mispronunciation of Ylith Silthar, the herald of Yaw'nagrah who fathered Mel'yannah.

Iulian of the Spire of Shattered Art Reforged, also known as Shatterspire (Urizen)
Accompanied by Allegra of Shatterspire

Iulian was selected as a visionary by the Council of Gatekeepers.

The visionary gave his permission for these notes to be made public. The testimony was presented by the visionary and guide separately, although there were some confounding factors in the reliability of the initial testimony, as described after the vision account.

The visionary came to in a room with a small indoor garden in one corner, a bed with

white sheets and a cot at one end in another corner, and a table next to the visionary in a third corner. The table had lightstones and two sheets of paper on it, which were a letter, apparently from Merenael, a councillor of the city of Emrys, to the councillor of another city (the second councillor's name may have been Amrillin).

The letter spoke of visions that Merenael had had, with apologies that the visions were from the Night realm - they had taken place in the Dreamscape - and thus metaphorical, but nevertheless gave a clear pattern of events. The letter warned of terrible doom that would befall the City of the Red Gold Sun - Emrys - if the Great Work they were working on was completed, and that the same doom would happen to the other cities.

A man burst into the room. He was briar-lineaged, and greeted the visionary by name, calling them "Merri" and "my love". There were sounds from outside of the city collapsing - fire, falling masonry, and the screams of people and animals.

The man said that they had two doses of an elixir, and that he and Merenael could go into the Dreamscape (the visionary asked if he meant physically, and he said yes) and they could escape together, leaving their child. The visionary said they refused to leave the child, and that the man should take the elixir and give the other dose to the child so that the two of them could escape. The man said he couldn't face leaving the visionary to the doom that was befalling Emrys, and refused to do what they asked. The two of them argued briefly, and then the visionary said, "If you will not take it, then I will." The man looked at the visionary in disbelief, and the visionary clasped his hand and said to him, "Strength," then fed the elixir first to the child in the cradle and then to himself. When the visionary took the elixir, the vision ended. When Iulian emerged from the vision, he had a taste in his mouth like that of dried tea or ashes. Later at the summit, Iulian underwent a ritual based on Shift the Dreamscape's Sands, in which he learned more details of the fall of Emrys, and the name of the man in the vision, which was Fallahd.

Iulian's soul was examined with the rite of Insight before and after the vision. Before the vision, his soul bore a dedication to Vigilance, an anointing of the Demands of Vigilance, and a testimony of "Wisely Cautious", each with the strength of a single priest. (The blatant ungrammaticality of the testimony has interesting spiritual ramifications, but those will be discussed in a separate work.)

After the vision, as well as the dedication, anointing and testimony, Iulian's soul looked like it had had a piece taken out of it, leaving the rest of it thin and apparently undernourished. An anointing with the strength of seven priests would have served to nourish the soul and restore it to its former effect, but an exorcism with the strength of three priests behind it was enough to clear away the remaining effect to let the soul

recover on its own.

Allegra's soul was also examined with the rite of Insight before and after the vision. Before the vision, her soul bore a dedication to Pride with the strength of a single priest. After the vision, as well as this dedication, her soul was also covered with a gnawing shadow, whose effect was to compel her to avoid having Insight cast on her and avoid talking about what she had seen in the vision by any means, and at least initially to stop Iulian from doing the same. When he started speaking about the vision out loud after they returned from the Gateway, she apparently attacked him, and would have succeeded in killing him had it not been for the intervention of Adam of the Synod Civil Service. This effect also made it quite difficult to get a true account of the vision from her, and it was several hours before she could be persuaded to be Insighted and then have the shadow exorcised from her (as usual, it took the strength of seven priests).

In this case, a possible cause of the wound to Allegra's soul may be the following events during the vision. When Fallahd entered the room, another figure also entered behind him. He did not act as if he could see the figure, but it whispered to him to "give in to your despair" and "leave the child" during the conversation shortly before Fallahd suggested that the two of them take the elixir and leave their child in Emrys. At this point, Allegra was rereading the letter from Merenael, and the figure then turned to look at Allegra and spoke to her, telling her "leave this place - this place is mine, these souls are mine, their despair is mine" and threatening to gut her like a fish. It divided its attention between Fallahd and Allegra, and then tried a second time to gain Allegra's attention. When she asked "What are you?", it said it was the Eater of Hope. It appeared to have a rune on its right cheek - either Aesh or Rhyv.

A very similar figure appeared later at the summit during a casting of Whispers Through the Black Gate to call back Ynez di Caricomare's spirit; it appeared after Ynez did. It had runes on its face - Aesh on the forehead, Ophis on the right cheek and Sular on the left cheek - and called on the ritualists to "give me your fear, give me your anguish", and cast waves of force that knocked the ritualists back.

Weapons and exorcism did not affect the figure itself, but a casting of Pakaan's Iron Shutters to close the portal opened by Whispers made the figure disappear. The ritualists who had been involved were spiritually wounded such that they felt trapped in the Labyrinth; an exorcism with the strength of seven priests behind it, as in many cases, dealt with these wounds.

Given that this figure appeared as part of a casting of Whispers Through the Black Gate, it seems likely it is some sort of malign spiritual presence. What False Virtue it is a manifestation of is not certain, although Despair or something along those lines

would make sense. In any case, it is a useful reminder for ritualists performing Whispers to have someone on hand to close the ritual quickly if need be, and for both ritualists and those interacting with visionaries to be alert for when exorcists are needed.

Further investigation into the figure identifying itself as the Eater of Hope also gave a name for the child in the vision, which is Jarith of Emrys. For further information about this investigation, please talk to Levitia of Endsmeet Spire in Urizen.

Captain Vraalbuka Straskovich of the Vor'azi (Varushka)

Accompanied by Father Drakov (Varushka)

Captain Vraal was selected as a visionary by the Council of Gatekeepers.

The visionary gave his permission for these notes to be made public. The testimony was presented by the visionary with some assistance from his guide.

The visionary came to huddled round a fire with three others; two men and a woman, one of them a volhov, one a Wise One and one a warrior. They referred to the visionary as their boyar, and the four of them said the Vor'azi oath. They had a decision to make about where to settle their vale, and whether they should ask for help from others - such as asking for help from Highguard, or have their cabalists ask for favours from Night eternal - or whether they should look for a place to settle on their own. It was unclear why they had been displaced from where they lived before.

After some discussion, the visionary suggested that they go to Straskovia, which is where the Vor'azi's current fortress of Grimhold is and has been for about 400 years. The others agreed, and the vision faded.

Captain Vraal's soul was examined with the rite of Insight before and after the vision. Before the vision, his soul had a dedication to Vigilance with the strength of a single priest behind it. After the vision, he was still dedicated, but his soul had become twisted up and tangled, and when he spoke of his vision he found it difficult to remember who he was in the present compared to his past life, which seemed to be more real to him. An Exorcism with the strength of seven priests behind it was enough to straighten out his soul and ground him in the present day.

Henry Ward of Upwold (the Marches)
Accompanied by Tess (the Marches)

Henry was selected as a visionary by the Council of Gatekeepers.

The visionary came to in a discussion with two heralds of Prospero over a contract. The date on the contract was 107 YE, and the contract was between one of the heralds, who was called Balthazar, and the visionary, who was called Saeed i Tazael i Riqueza (though the tribe name is not certain). Balthazar's demeanour was serious, and the other herald, whose name was not mentioned, seemed flighty and was mainly joking at Balthazar. The contract was for potions to be brewed to render orcs unthreatening, and passage to the nearest Brass Coast territory, in exchange for handing over two items, a dagger and a wand called Pugnam Aestavus and Lignum Aestavus. The dagger and wand were also on the table. They were about six to eight inches long, both plain in design, and the wand made of wood and slightly crooked at the end.

In the terms of the contract, it also mentioned that if either party broke the deal, the Lictors would be summoned. As part of the deal, Saeed's descendants would also be allowed to ask for a boon every seventy years under certain conditions: that they go to a place heavily influenced by the Autumn realm (possibly a regio), cast a spell to open a portal, and demand of Prospero that the bargain be upheld. They would be able to gain supernatural knowledge of an individual or of an item that they had in their possession at the time.

The two heralds and the visionary discussed the contract. Balthazar said that he'd been arguing with the visionary for many days, and the contract he was presenting here was a revision to a previous one. Having read through the contract, the visionary signed it, and once they had both signed the contract the vision ended.

Henry's soul was examined with the rite of Insight before and after the vision. Before the vision, there were no marks on his soul of any sort. After the vision, there was a distinct echo of his past life present and overlaid on his soul - its effects were to make him believe that he was his past life. The echo was pronounced but fading, and should have passed by the end of the summit; an Exorcism with the strength of seven priests behind it would likely have cleared it sooner, but Henry at the time opted not to have it exorcised.

At the time, Henry chose to not make the contents of his vision public. However, once he had had a chance to find Saeed's descendants and see what use they had made of the boon, and remind them of it if necessary, he was willing to share his account.

Mordecai of the Suns of Couros (Highguard)
Accompanied by Damian of the Suns of Couros

Mordecai was selected as a visionary by the winner of the Virtuous Auction.

The visionary gave his permission for these notes to be made public. The testimony was presented by the visionary with some assistance from his guide.

The visionary came to in the hold of a ship. The hold was full of weapons and armour, and stocked as if these would be used for an attack, rather than as if they were cargo. A man entered the hold, looking distressed, and then three other men came in, accusing the first man of leading the Empire to ruin. The visionary put himself between them and they spoke; it emerged that it was the 200th anniversary of the founding of the Empire, that the first man was the Emperor (almost certainly Emperor Barabbas), and that the ship was part of a fleet going to crush the Grendel but they were caught in a storm.

The three other men were presumably part of the crew, as they addressed the visionary as "Captain", and the visionary asked them at one point to address them by name to try to find it out; their past life's name was Erbus or Erebus. The visionary rounded on Barabbas and asked if what the men said was true. Barabbas said that he'd done all the scrying for their attack, and they would win. The other men cried that the flagship had been sunk and the armada was in tatters. They said that they had liao, and that they could excommunicate the Emperor. Barabbas swore again by the Virtues that the fleet would be triumphant.

The visionary accused Barabbas of lacking in Wisdom and Virtue, took a sword from one of the crew, took Barabbas by the shoulder, and ran him through. The vision faded.

Mordecai's soul was examined with the rite of Insight before and after the vision. Before the vision, his soul had a testimony of "Stalwart Captain" and a dedication to Pride, each with the strength of one priest behind it. After the vision, the testimony still present, but instead of the Pride dedication there was a dedication to Vengeance, with the strength of a single priest behind it. At Mordecai's request the Vengeance dedication was exorcised.

The interesting points to note here are that visionaries can return with dedications to False Virtues as well as to true Virtues, but also that this dedication was only at the strength of a single priest; with dedications to the true Virtues that have appeared as the result of pure liao visions, they have all had the strength of some multiple of seven

priests behind them.

This suggests a method by which we can experimentally verify whether something is an actual Virtue or a False Virtue, and thus validate the Doctrine of Seven.

However, further investigation would be needed to see whether this was instead a result of the ceremony used by the Pure Liao branch of the Civil Service to prepare visionaries (in which case the different effects for true Virtues could occur as a result of the Virtue being invoked in the ceremony - much like the time that Pete Keeper's guide Harald ended up dedicated to Loyalty with an effective strength of seven priests, by affirming during the ceremony that he walked the path of Loyalty).

Spring Equinox, 378 YE

Introduction

Five visionaries experienced visions induced by Pure Liao at the Solstice. Of these, all five were selected by the Council of Gatekeepers.

Following their visions, the visionaries and their accompanying guides were questioned by the authors. Their stories are recorded in the following pages, in the order that the visions were received.

- * **Clarice Novarion** (Dawn), accompanied by Serrusto of the Gilded Horn Carta, Tassato (League)
- * **Sveta Stoneheart** (Varushka), accompanied by Rurik (Varushka)
- * **Mari Linkforge** (Navarr), accompanied by Rodric Worldscribe (Navarr)
- * **Baba Ana** (Varushka), accompanied by Rooslan Stanovich Prochnost (Varushka)
- * **Leonora van Holberg** (League), accompanied by Lunetta Sanguinea (League)

Clarice Novarion (Dawn)

Accompanied by Serrusto of the Gilded Horn Carta, Tassato (League)

Clarice was selected as a visionary by the Council of Gatekeepers.

The visionary gave her permission for these notes to be made public. The testimony was presented by the visionary with some assistance from her guide.

The visionary came to in darkness, with something soft beneath them, wood at their feet and flowers under their hands; they were unable to move or speak. From what the guide could see, the visionary was in a large wooden sarcophagus, draped with a white cloth. The room had simple architecture, with lots of candles, an altar with a skull on it, and an ornate marble bowl.

There was a woman present (who the visionary described as sounding like Isolde Novarion, her late sister). The woman called the visionary Merab, and was grieving for the visionary's being condemned as a traitor; she said that their two sons were going to pieces, and one of them - David - had broken his arm and wouldn't let a magister near it.

Another person came in - a merrow woman, with another person who was armed, both of them wearing dark robes and white hoods that were up. The merrow woman argued that the first woman (she was apparently the visionary's wife) had to leave, and the wife said that this wouldn't stand, and she had to confess to the crimes that the visionary had allegedly committed; she asked how it could have taken a full hour to kill the visionary.

There was quiet discussion that the visionary could not hear, but the guide heard that the visionary's wife was being arrested for the crimes that she was confessing to. The lid of the sarcophagus was lifted and slid down, and the merrow woman leaned over and tried to wake the visionary. It took a while before the visionary sat up. The merrow woman then asked if the visionary remembered where they were, and the visionary replied that it was hazy. The merrow woman reminded the visionary of some business involving Grendel and Freeborn fleets where it was implied that the Freeborn corsairs were being paid protection money. Both the woman and the visionary were Shattered Lantern agents, and the visionary's condemnation and death had been faked (presumably by the Shattered Lantern) so that the visionary could go undercover in a new identity and investigate the Freeborn.

The merrow woman said she regretted having to do this to her friend. The visionary was crying, and the woman said "for goodness' sake, use your lineage". She thanked the visionary for their service, and when the visionary replied "and my wife? Children?", the merrow woman said they'd be looked after.

She gave the visionary two letters. One was from the visionary's Freeborn contact, addressed to "Sister Daras". The contact was in on the undercover scheme and had agreed to undergo the Traitor's Fate ritual as surety; their name was Captain Iago i Compostolia, although the visionary did not remember their tribe name. The second was a letter from the Shuttered Lantern, addressed to "Agent Merab", and telling them where to meet their contact, to put weltsilver in a package that had been supplied, and that their name would be publically cleared after this was completed. Both letters told the visionary to meet their contact at somewhere called the Crown Quay. (Most likely the town of Crown's Quay in the territory of Longbeach in Necropolis.)

The woman said she hoped the visionary would make the chapter proud, and called the visionary sister. She helped the visionary out of the coffin - the visionary had apparently been there for three days, under a guise of death due to night magic, not eating or drinking. The woman took the visionary's hands, wished her well, and the vision faded. Clarice had her soul examined by the rite of Insight before and after the vision. Both before and after the vision, she was dedicated to Courage.

Serrusto also had his soul examined before and after the vision. Both before and after the vision, he was dedicated to Ambition. However, at one point during the vision the veil that he was wearing as part of the ceremonial garments slipped off. He recovered it and put it on once more, but it is likely this caused the following results.

After the vision, there was a testimony on Serrusto's soul of "Blinded Seeker", with the strength of a single priest behind it. There was also some sort of shadow, initially just out of sight with the rite of Insight, but which over the next few hours caused stabbing pains and bleeding from his eyes, and made his skin and eyes start to sublimate. The physick who examined him (Beatrix) could find no physical cause for these. The priest who then examined him, Ophelia of the Gilded Horn Carta, noted that it seemed that his brief unprotected glimpse of the Labyrinth was causing his Ambition to burn itself out of him. His condition was cured by being given an anointing of Ambition with the strength of seven priests behind it, in an area consecrated to Ambition, and asserting his greatest ambition while donning a mask related to that ambition.

The wound to his soul was grave, but given the circumstances neither the wound nor the complexity of its cure are surprising. What is more surprising is the testimony on

his soul - Serrusto was the guide, rather than the visionary, and thus any testimony on his soul seems unlikely to have been from the guide's past life. The testimony also seems to relate more closely to the event that occurred to him (his veil falling off, and the subsequent pain and bleeding of the eyes), rather than the events the visionary undertook.

It is not clear where the testimony came from, but there is a possibility that it might be a result of a combination of the Pure Liao and the ceremony itself, similar to the spontaneous dedication to Loyalty that occurred to Harald Johnson of Upwold, guide priest to Pete Keeper in Summer 378 YE. Further observations will be needed.

Sveta Stoneheart (Varushka)
Accompanied by Rurik (Varushka)

Sveta was selected as a visionary by the Council of Gatekeepers.

The visionary gave her permission for these notes to be made public. The testimony was presented by the visionary with some assistance from her guide.

The visionary came to in a room, following a man, who was ejected from the room forcefully and referred to as "the Archmage". There were three others in the room, who looked to be heralds. One looked like a cambion, and was possibly a herald of the Autumn eternal Estavus (the visionary heard the name "Estevan", but this may have been a mishearing of "Estavus"). One looked like a naga, and was possibly a Night herald. The one in the middle seemed to have a long dark pointed face, like a dog or a horse, with glowing green eyes; this was possibly one of the Hounds of the Winter eternal Sorin. The visionary asked the three of them what the Archmage had asked them to do, and they said they had been asked to make repairs to a castle in Holberg, to make it into a whole and impregnable fortress.

They discussed what deals the heralds could offer. The one that looked like a naga offered to work exclusively on the project for 80 green iron. The one that looked like a Cambion suggested a 10 year exclusive contract at a price they would set, with protection. Finally, the one in the middle wanted the Amity of the Empire, and for their face to be reproduced in the form of gargoyles on buildings. The visionary asked for a clarification of what Amity meant, and it was explained; the visionary also asked if the gargoyles would give any power to that herald, to which it said they would not. After some more negotiation, the heralds agreed to all work on the project, for a lower price for each of them. The one that looked like a naga agreed to work for 55 green iron; the one that looked like a cambion agreed to a 5 year contract; and the middle

one kept the same request as before, of Amity and gargoyles. They agreed to work together on the project, and the vision faded.

Sveta had her soul examined by the rite of Insight before and after the vision. Before the vision, there were no marks on her soul. After the vision, there was a corrosive miasma clinging to her soul, with the effect of making her tense and worried. An Exorcism with the strength of 7 priests was enough to clean the miasma off her soul. Rurik also had his soul examined before and after the vision. Both before and after the vision, he was dedicated to Vigilance. After the vision, his soul also appeared to be coiled and ready to strike out, with the effect of making him similarly tense and worried to Sveta. As usual, an Exorcism with the strength of 7 priests was enough to shock his soul back into its usual place.

Mari Linkforge (Navarr)

Accompanied by Rodric Worldscribe (Navarr)

Mari was selected as a visionary by the Council of Gatekeepers.

The visionary gave her permission for these notes to be made public. The testimony was presented by the visionary with some assistance from her guide.

The visionary came to lying in a bed on their left side, facing a wall, with furs over them. They had apparently been woken by the voices of a messenger who had just arrived, and a draughir woman, sitting at a bench at a long table, who the messenger was talking to. The woman said "twins, she has had twins", and the visionary rolled over and tried to sit up on their arms, at which point the woman saw that the visionary had woken. The visionary asked "What time is it? How long have I slept?", and the woman replied that it was about noon. The visionary then asked "Twins?", and the woman came over and put the letter in their hands. The letter was rolled, rather than folded, but when the visionary unrolled it it was blurry and they could not read it, and nor could their guide. The woman asked if the visionary would like her to read it to them, the visionary said yes, and the wife summarised its contents. The writer of the letter had had twins, but winter had been hard and the pass very difficult, so they could not come to visit, but they wanted to know what the visionary wanted to name the twins. The woman asked the visionary how they felt, and if they felt strong enough to take the walk; the visionary said they felt as well as ever, and replied "let us walk". (From later context, it is likely that the walk in question was a walk into the Heart of Ice, the great ice-storm Sydanjaa to the north of Sermersuaq.)

The woman helped the visionary out of bed and over to the bench, which was about three feet away. At this point the visionary tried to read the letter again, but could not, and the woman said to the messenger "he forgets his eyes are gone".

She brought out a set of hand-drawn full-body portraits of people in Wintermark clothing, with their names and birth years at the top, and also death years for all but two of them. There were five women and one man; two of the women were twins, and were depicted in the same portrait. The man's portrait was one of those without a year of death, and he was named Otso, was a changeling, and was born in 290. One of the twins also did not have a year of death shown, and her name was something similar to "Kala". She was depicted with her twin Kiku, who had died. One of the other women's portraits had a date of death of either 313 or 330.

The woman gave the visionary the pictures one by one, as they were choosing which pictures to take with them on the walk, and the visionary looked through them. They also talked about Otso's wife, and the woman joked that if Otso and his wife did not come to see her and the visionary then she would mount his antlers on the wall.

Otso and his wife entered the room; there was snow on their shoulders when they came in. Otso was a changeling of about thirty to forty years, with antlers and blue markings. He was not tall, but was broad and was boisterous in the way he moved. His wife was not lineaged and was quieter than Otso, was a little shorter than the visionary (at around five and a half feet), and wore green clothing. Otso asked if the visionary was feeling strong, to which the visionary replied "well enough", and Otso told them to not let the fire go out. He bent down to where the visionary was sitting, and they hugged. There was a mention that Otso had been on campaign, and had been injured. He said it was just a scratch; the woman said that Otso should not make his father worried (it became clear from context that the woman and the visionary were wife and husband), and the visionary said that they were not worried, but they knew when they were being lied to, to which Otso admitted that he had suffered severed tendons but they had been healed. He and his wife were offered food - Otso took an apple - and they sat down at the table, along with the messenger who was addressed as Pave at this point.

They showed Otso the pictures, and talked of his sisters who'd taught him how to fight; the visionary joked that they'd tried teaching him how to read but it hadn't stuck. There was also discussion of how his sisters had died. One of them, Itsu, had gone out onto the floes but nobody had returned that year. Another Otso talked of saying "my wife said she was always so sharp, but she was sickly" to which the reply was "no, she was unlucky, anyone can die of pneumonia". The conversation turned to the visionary, and Otso asked whether there was no way that with the grimnir's oath there could be ways to "accidentally not accidentally" end up on the front lines, with the possibility of

a good death in battle. The woman told Otso not to ask his father that sort of question, and the visionary added that no, he could ask, but they knew when they were being asked in circles so he should ask it straight. At this point, the woman asked the messenger to leave because this was family business. She gave some cake to him as he left, and he asked the visionary again about names for the new twins. The visionary could not answer, but told the messenger to walk safely, and the messenger told the visionary to walk well. When offered payment, he refused because apparently "to see Woundsbane on such a day was enough".

With the messenger gone, they sat down again. The visionary told Otso to ask his question straight, and Otso asked "Do you regret it? All the chances to die well?" Otso apparently could not understand why the visionary had chosen not to take those chances; he spoke of how there were many great lives in their ancestry, and wondered how he could live up to them, and up to his father. The visionary said "if I have kept my oath, I have done as I ought and do not regret it," and took Otso's hand, saying that he had to live up to himself, and walk his own path as the visionary had walked theirs. Otso said that his path was not like the visionary's and that he would not die in bed, and he stood and wept, facing the wall away from the visionary, while Otso's wife stood and comforted him.

The woman asked if the visionary had chosen which pictures to take, and the visionary replied, "not the living". The woman said "That means we can't take Kiku", to which the visionary replied "I know", and turned to straddle the bench to get up. The woman said "Then, if you don't regret it, we should walk." The visionary was in the process of saying "Help me stand", and the vision faded.

Mari had her soul examined by the rite of Insight before and after the vision. Before the vision, she appeared to be dedicated to Loyalty. After the vision, her dedication was still present, and there was also a testimony of "Faithful Grimmir", with the strength of seven priests behind it. Her soul also appeared to be restless in its place as if it were straining against its usual confines, causing her to have difficulty concentrating. An Exorcism with the strength of seven priests was sufficient to shock her soul and resettle it into place.

The blurred letter in the vision provides some support for these visions being relivings of the soul's memories, rather than actually re-experiencing the same point in time. If these were the actual events being experienced again, then while the visionary might have found the letter to be blurred as they were seeing it through the eyes of a past life whose vision was failing, this should not have been the case for the guide. Further investigation by the Civil Service indicates that Grimmir Kalesa Tilling, known

as Woundsbane, and his wife Ranka Tilling both died in 340 YE. Their deaths are recorded as "Combat, Sydanjaa", as is traditional for those who make the long walk. Kalesa and Ranka Tilling both served with the First of the Mountains army from their youth in 280 YE to the 330s. When not on campaign, their names appear in the records of the Stonefield Ice Mines in Sermersuaq, where ilium is mined. Individuals with the family names "Tilling" or "Tillingshall" are also recorded as having attended Anvil summits until 376 YE.

Baba Ana (Varushka)

Accompanied by Rooslan Stanovich Prochnost (Varushka)

Baba Ana was selected as a visionary by the Council of Gatekeepers.

The visionary gave her permission for these notes to be made public. The testimony was presented by the visionary with some assistance from her guide.

The visionary came to walking into a great hall, in the company of a boyar who was introduced as Yetslin or Itslin, and was wearing fine red robes. There was a table with a map on it, of somewhere called the Vale of Capscaun. (This is not a modern major landmark, but might possibly be a mishearing of Opascari in Volodmartz.) They were greeted by a man who was introduced as King Alderei the Fair, and it emerged that the visionary was Boyar Schleta, one of his trusted advisors. The three of them were discussing plans for potential battles, and were joined by two others. One was introduced as the Lady of Grace, a strongly-lineaged cambion woman who led a very powerful cabal. The other was a draughir who led a huge army of husks, and whose name may have been Asla.

The foes that they were planning to fight against were from Urizen and the Marches. They apparently knew little of their opponents and were fearful of the lightning and earthquakes that the Urizeni mages could call down, and so were planning ways to put obstacles into their opponents path; they had a choice between waking and enraging a sovereign, or flooding a river. The boyar in red robes wanted to attack immediately, with only the little information they had, and the visionary suggested they learn more about their foe before they attack. From context, it was clear that Alderei and his advisors did not follow the Way as they mentioned it in passing as their opponents having "strange virtues". The visionary at one point mentioned courage, got odd looks from the others, and changed their comment to be about confidence instead. There was mention of cavalry - the king had cavalry troops, and they assumed that Urizen had both mages and cavalry. There was also discussion of units of peasants on

the side of Urizen and the Marches, either referring to Marcher infantry or to local citizens as well, and possibly referring instead to Vard peasants. The boyar in red was apparently in conflict with other families in his area, according to the draughir.

They decided that the Lady of Grace would do more scrying, and that they would start troop movements and wait for final deployment once they had gathered more information. Then a herald of Skathe, of the Thrice-Cursed Court, entered; it had blood coming from its eyes, and red hair. The herald asked King Alderei, "Life or beauty?" It offered to prevent death at the cost of each blow dealt upon Alderei's armies falling upon Alderei himself, and twisting and maiming him. It was not clear from what the herald said whether this would be preventing death to Alderei himself - which was the visionary's understanding - or whether it would prevent deaths within the armies - which appeared to be what Alderei understood the offer to be.

The visionary counselled caution, and to think about it for a while, to which Alderei replied asking the herald for more time to think. The herald left for a short time, around five minutes, and there was discussion. Alderei was worried that nobody would support him if he weren't fair, as he relied on his charisma as a leader. Their discussion turned back to battle plans, and then the herald returned and asked "Life or beauty?" once again. In the end, the king chose "life", and when he had chosen, the vision faded.

Leonora van Holberg (League)

Accompanied by Lunetta Sanguinea (League)

Leonora was selected as a visionary by the Council of Gatekeepers.

The visionary gave her permission for these notes to be made public. The testimony was presented by the visionary with some assistance from her guide.

The visionary came to in what looked like a coffee-house decorated in Freeborn style. There was a table with glass chalices and metal cups, and silk drapes. One of the tables had playing cards on - the ace, two, three, Jack, Queen and King of hearts. The visionary's name was Galinda, and they were with a woman who spoke Commonweal who was apparently their guild-sister. The woman seemed to understand Imperial, but only spoke it haltingly - her father was Freeborn but her mother was from the Commonwealth - so the visionary was to be translating for her in a series of trade meetings. The deal to be struck was for ambergelt, orichalcum and a small amount of tempest jade. The year was around 320 YE.

The first meeting was with a man named Marco, of the Guild of the Five Great Fish, who was a big cambion in red and gold, and wore a chain of office set with rubies. He appeared to be Leaguish, and was possibly Temeschwari though it was not clear; he wore silks, rather than velvets, and was not dressed for the cold.

Marco apparently controlled many offices, and was close to placing Giselle on the Throne. (This would appear to place the date closer to 330 YE, as Giselle came to the throne in 331.) When the visionary asked "what do you think about her love of Sarvos?", Marco replied that they could like it or lump it, as his prices were the lowest; the Commonwealth woman had to ask for a translation of "lump it". He offered two Thrones and a few Crowns for the ambergelt, orichalcum and tempest jade that they were after. Marco seemed in a hurry to leave, and did not appear to want to be drawn into negotiations, instead relying on his assurance that he was the cheapest around. There was an orc playing a recorder in the corner of the room, and Marco yelled at her to play less quietly, to which the visionary responded, "This is a house of culture; let her play."

The second meeting was with a woman named Gaia from an Urizen spire called the Prosperous Hive, which she referred to as "my Hive". She was wearing a white and aquamarine robe, and was possibly a naga. The visionary offered her coffee and food, although Marco had apparently eaten all the apples.

Gaia was a noted letter-writer whose letters were published around the Empire, and available for scholars to read. One of her most popular letters was on the ideals of trade, the importance of family relations in trade, and not getting the two confused. She was interested in a future with long-term trade relations, and the idea and the arete of trade, and was not concerned with the politics of the race to the Throne. Her prices were reasonable, though not as low as Marco's, and she was interested in what the materials would be used for.

At one point, the visionary looked over at the orc musician, and the person she was talking to said "What are you looking at?" to which the visionary replied, "I'm just checking if my orc is playing softly enough, we've had complaints."

When Gaia had left and they were still waiting for the third meeting, the visionary asked the orc musician how long she'd been with the family, and how much they were paying her, but there was only a short pause before the third person entered.

The third meeting was with a woman named Abina, who was with the Butchers' Guild of Temeschwar. She was about thirty and finely dressed in red with some hints of black,

with a tall headdress. She wished to trade in favours and resources, and was keen to be chosen as a business partner for the deal because it would make it more likely that she would be chosen as the Master of the Mint; it emerged in conversation that she was a dedicate of Ambition. She carefully did not express her opinions of Giselle as a candidate for Empress, nor her planned actions should she become Master of the Mint. As Abina left after their discussion, she looked for her purse with which to pay the orc musician, and looked embarrassed when she could not produce it.

The visionary and the Commonwealth woman discussed who to make a deal with. The Commonwealth woman put much emphasis on plans for the future ("Zukunft", or "future" in Commonweal, was mentioned several times), but said that it was up to the visionary, and she'd take advice from the visionary on the matter.

The visionary chose to make a trade deal with Gaia, the Urizeni woman, because she seemed to be interested in trade as an ideal and harmonious business relations, and of great works being done as a result. She was also interested in Prosperity, and wanted to open a long-term trade route that would outlast any Empress. When the visionary made their choice of who to make the deal with, the vision faded.

Nora had her soul examined by the rite of Insight before and after the vision. Both before and after the vision, she was dedicated to Loyalty, and had a Testimony of "Holberg's Painter". After the vision, there was also a corrosive miasma clinging to her soul, with the effect of making her worried that her possessions might go missing or be stolen. An Exorcism with the strength of 4 priests was enough to clean the miasma off her soul.