

If you are going to attempt to have us dragged to Inquisition, you could at least do us the service of understanding how the laws of the Synod that you claim to serve actually work. That it falls to us to educate the priests who would intend to hold judgement over us shows that the Empire yet has a great many flaws that must be excised from its flesh. You cannot simply declare an Inquisition upon the 'Freeborn of the Maw' - you must name each specific individual you wish to Inquisit. Is this the state to which the Freeborn Assembly has fallen?

Your attempt at an Inquisition bears no legal weight, and you don't even know who we are. How did you expect this to unfold? What did you expect us to do? Did you think we would caper into Anvil and bend our necks?

Since you are so clearly in need of education on religious matters, let us give you the spiritual instruction you require.

We are not a cult of worshippers of Siakha. We recognise that Siakha holds a holy place within the world, because what it fundamentally represents is holy – destruction and chaos. So many view these aspects of reality as unvirtuous or malign, but the truth is that they are utterly fundamental to our capacity for Virtue.

The world is a crucible in which we are tested. Ultimately, everything breaks down, torn apart by the destructive forces of the world – the seas consume the land, living creatures perish, and, yes, even the Empire will one day fall. This is not something to be afraid of. It is something to celebrate. The Empire will be tested, every passing day, every passing year, as a bulwark against which chaos and destruction thunder. In doing so, the weaknesses and flaws of the Empire are exposed, and they are either removed – strengthening the Empire – or they are not, and the cracks spread, and lead the Empire closer to destruction. In all these things, we find Virtue. Humanity is ever tested by the forces of destruction, and it is in our reaction to this testing that we act with Virtue. The Empire serves as a spot of greater intensity within the crucible, focusing humanity's struggle and thus exposing more of us to a greater level of testing. When it eventually crumbles, the process of its collapse will cause such hardship, strife, and challenge, that the Virtuous shall shine through all the clearer. And what will come next? Each iteration of civilisation is stronger for being built on the ruins of the past, learning from its

lessons and creating anew, before in turn being swept away. This will go on forever, until Virtue has called all humanity from this world to the state beyond the Labyrinth.

What would this world be, without chaos, without destruction, without challenge? It would be static, soulless, and without Virtue. What is Courage without danger? What is Vigilance without threats? What is Ambition, in a world where there is nothing that challenges? Destruction and chaos give the world meaning. Without them, we would dwell in a pointless world that never tested our Virtue.

Do not grieve for the Empire's inevitable collapse, but celebrate every day of its life, and applaud the chaos and strife that will forge us so much stronger through experiencing and surviving their rigours. Do not mourn those who fall and die, too weak or unfortunate, for the Labyrinth will return them to us, refined, hardened, and mightier for their next passage through this world. The grinding teeth of the world render us down only to rebuild us ever greater.

Solana understood this. She sought Rhianos and Siakha because she understood they held great insights into the testing nature of this world. She sought the kraken because she received revelation of the role of the holy warriors of the deep as harbingers of destruction. In her memory, we celebrate the Empire's struggles and strife, and we defy the Grendel because they, too, are part of the challenge this world sets us. We are infinite and limitless souls, but we must yet be tempered in the forge that is this world so that we can become what we are meant to be.

Try not to embarrass yourself again.