

Echoes of the Labyrinth

Volume 4a-4b: Winter Solstice 379 YE-
Spring Equinox 380 YE

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

Livia of the Celestial Cascade of Urizen

&

Rodric Worldscribe of Navarr

by the direction and authority of the Council of Nine.

Edition 2 of Spider's Vantage printing, produced after Spring Equinox 381 YE

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

Spring Equinox 380 YE accounts taken by Livia Cascade and Rodric Worldscribe; 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.

Edition 2: Added Spring 380 YE accounts.

Winter Solstice, 379 YE

Introduction

Five visionaries experienced visions induced by Pure Liao at the Solstice. Of these, four were selected by the Council of Gatekeepers, and one provided their own dose of Pure Liao found in a hidden cache, and then prepared for the vision by the Civil Service.

Due to the stormy weather at the summit, the winner of the Bourse auction for Pure Liao at the Autumn Equinox 379 YE elected to have their vision at the Spring Equinox 380 YE summit instead.

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.

- * **Corvus of Auric Horizon** (Urizen), accompanied by Mina of the Howling Pines (Varushka)
- * **Aquillian of Endsmeet** (Urizen), accompanied by Tarquinius of Endsmeet
- * **Edward Watcher of King's Stoke** (the Marches), accompanied by Agnetha de Rondell (Dawn)
- * **Father Drakov of the Vor'azi** (Varushka), accompanied by Vanya Petrovich Straskovich (Varushka)
- * **Kahendrin Wordsmith** (Dawn), accompanied by Eleanor de Rondell (Dawn)

Corvus of Auric Horizon (Urizen)

Accompanied by Mina of the Howling Pines (Varushka)

Corvus provided his own dose of Pure Liao, obtained in a hidden cache from the Eye of Morrow at the Winter Solstice 378 YE, and refined by the Civil Service into a form suitable for a vision.

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 a room decorated in the Freeborn style with rich colourful upholstery, sitting on a bench at a table. There were sounds of seagulls and water outside, indicating that they were somewhere coastal, either on land or on a moored sea vessel.

There were three men at the table with the visionary; two of them were dressed like Freeborn, and the visionary could not tell the clothing of the third. The first was apparently the visionary's brother, a changeling by the name of Domingo, and he called the visionary either Carlo or Carlos. The other man who looked Freeborn was unlineaged, and called Valentin. The third man, whose clothing the visionary could not identify, was a briar, half of whose face appeared to be covered in bark.

From conversation, it emerged that Domingo had brought the visionary there because he and the others wanted the visionary to join them in their group of pirates called the Crimson Corsairs.

The visionary had apparently been smuggling under the guise of a Way missionary, and the others named Asavea, mountains and a wasteland as places that the smuggling had taken place in. However, they indicated that the smuggling was small in nature compared to the Crimson Corsairs, and asked if the visionary was willing to murder (both humans and orcs) as part of the Crimson Corsairs. They spoke of all the virtues, of the making of lots of money, and also of people who they were unhappy that the Empire had abandoned and that the Crimson Corsairs were helping.

The others' attitudes towards the visionary joining them differed. The briar was enthusiastic about the visionary joining them, while Valentin (the unlineaged Freeborn) was more reticent and wanted the visionary to prove himself. Domingo was speaking for the visionary and making it clear what joining would involve. He spoke of it as joining a new family, and mentioned that their grandmother was involved in the Crimson Corsairs and was pleased that the visionary might be coming back to them.

The others then handed the visionary a piece of paper with an oath written on it, and told them that this was it: if they were in, they were in, and they should read the oath without stumbling or hesitating. While the visionary was reading the oath, Valentin said that Domingo had made good for a boy from the mountains.

The oath on the paper started similar to "I forswear the Empire and egegore bond, I give my life and soul to the Crimson Corsairs to receive the rewards I am rightfully due", and then included some sort of piratical phrase about joining the others. Once the visionary read the oath, the other three stood up, cheered and clapped the visionary on the back. Domingo said "Bravo!", and the vision ended.

Corvus had his soul examined by the rite of Insight before and after the vision. Before the vision, his soul bore a dedication to Prosperity and a testimony of "Vigilant Mage", each with the strength of a single priest behind them.

After the vision, as well as his dedication and testimony, his soul was quivering and flinching away. Exorcism did not appear to be sufficient to treat this injury, but an excommunication with the strength of seven priests was sufficient to isolate whatever was causing the injury (with the side effect of removing his dedication). An exorcism with the strength of seven priests cleared the excommunication's effect from his soul.

Mina also had her soul examined before and after the vision. Before the vision, her soul bore a dedication to Prosperity with the strength of a single priest.

After the vision, as well as her dedication, her soul was tensed and coiled, ready to strike, making her feel fearful. An exorcism with the strength of seven priests was sufficient to shock her soul and settle it back into place.

Aquillian of Endsmeet (Urizen)

Accompanied by Tarquinius of Endsmeet

Aquillian 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 guide initially, then separately by the visionary once the injury to his soul had been treated.

The visionary came to in darkness (the guide reported not being able to move at all).

Two pairs of glowing eyes appeared in the darkness, and the beings whose eyes they were addressed the visionary as Nayas, and in conversation identified themselves as Murit and Soghter.

(Both visionary and guide heard Murit's name, but the guide suggested Soghter while the visionary suggested Surut. Despite the visionary being trained as a magician and the guide not, the guide's suggestion is more likely here as both Murit and Soghter are Night eternal, frequently encountered together, whereas Surut is a Winter eternal and highly unlikely to appear in the same place as a Night eternal.)

Soghter was on the visionary's left, and Murit on their right, both quite close in proximity. Soghter appeared to have vertical lines from the bottom of its eyes, with a reddish-orange light and more illumination than was on Murit, and the Eternals' features were illuminated below their eyes but neither visionary nor guide could see them clearly. Soghter and Murit spoke in sentence fragments across each other, making the conversation somewhat hard to follow.

According to Soghter and Murit, the visionary had been put under some sort of curse (the guide heard it was a Day curse) by their enemy, who held a powerful position, that of a king, an emperor or a prince. Soghter and Murit acknowledged that a change was needed, and offered the visionary a choice. Murit offered the gift of knowledge, of understanding the curse, while Soghter offered the gift of power, of wreaking change through the world using the curse.

There was a mention at some point of what the visionary heard as the "Gift of Azot" or "Azoz", which is probably "Azoth", an epithet that both Soghter and Murit are referred to after a theoretical alchemical compound that can make miraculous transformations.

The visionary chose knowledge, and Murit started to refer to them as "loyal son" and "favoured son", while Soghter seemed to be annoyed but not enraged by this choice, and shortly afterwards the vision ended.

Aquillian'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 "Virtue's Explorer", with the strength of one priest behind it.

After the vision, he had this testimony, along with another of "Son of Murit", with the strength of seven priests behind it. His soul was also injured and straining against its confined, with the effect of making it harder than usual for him to concentrate, and even more difficult than usual to keep his thoughts in line for any length of time to give

an account of his vision. An exorcism with the strength of seven priests shocked his soul back into place.

A possible identification for Aquillian's past self comes from a document written in Old Asavean, found in the Castle of Thorns shortly before the Winter 377 YE summit, and brought to a symposium at the Spire of the Celestial Cascade. The name given in the document is Gnaeus Mercurius, and Gnaeus can indeed be pronounced in the way that the visionary and guide heard.

The document was translated at the symposium by Iulian Shatterspire, Alcuin Shatterspire, Livia Cascade and Theodosia Canterspire (host to the Egregore Menos) of Urizen, Eleri Bronwen's Rest of Navarr, and Barak of Haros of Highguard. It was written up for publication and submission to the Celestial Library by Eleri Bronwen's Rest, and is reproduced below in original and translated form.

Verum, sine mendacio, certum et verissimum.

(This is the genuine and certified truth, containing no lie.)

Quod est inferius est sicut quod est superbus, et quod est superbus est sicut quod est inferius, at perpetranda miracular rei unius.

(As above, so below. And as below, so above. And so will be accomplished the wonders of this one thing.)

Et sicut res omnest fuerunt ab uno, mediatione unius, sic omnes res natae ab hac una re, adaptatione.

(Thus all things are brought about by one person, by the contemplation of this one person, thus all things are born of this one work, by my experiment.)

Pater eius est Murit, mater eius est Evroma, fabricit illud ventus fornactis astrarum in ventre sua, nutrix eius nocturnem est.

(Its father is Murit, its mother is Evrom. The wind made it in its belly in the arch of the skies, and the night is its nurse.)

Pater omnis alchimiis totius mundi est hic.

(The father of all alchemy of the whole world is here.)

Si virtus eius integra est, versa fuerit in ilium.

(Its structure is whole, if it is turned into ilium.)

Separabis terram ab igne, subtile ab spisso, suaviter, magno cum ingenio.

(You must separate the earth from the fire, the delicate from the coarse, gently and with great skill.)

Ascendit a terra in coelum, iterumque descendit in terram et recepit vim superiorum et inferiorum.

(It will ascend from the earth to the heavens, and then again descend to earth and receive the strength of the Above and the Below.)

Sic habebis gloriam totium mundi.

(Thus you will hold the glory of the whole of the world.)

Ideo fugiest a te omnis obscuritas.

(Therefore all obscurity will flee from you.)

Haec est totius fortitudinis fortitudo fortis, quia vincent omnem rem subtilem, omnemque soldam penetrabit.

(This is the strongest of strong might, for it conquers every delicate thing and penetrates into all matter.)

Hoc forti, sic mundus creatus est, et corpora omnia comparationes degeneres.

(With this power, thus the world is created, and all forms of inferior materials.)

Hinc erunt adaptationes mirabiles, quarum modus est hic. Itaque vocatus sum Gnaeus Mercurius Filiomuritis, quod

ego generis draconis sum, et in manu mea possit conformare.

(And hence come miraculous adaptations whose methods are [written] here. And so I am called Gnaeus Mercurius the Son of Murit, because I am of the line of the Wyrms, and let it be shaped in my hand.)

Completum est quod dixi de operatione Muritis.

(Thus is finished what i have said of the works of Murit.)

Edward Watcher of King's Stoke (the Marches)

Accompanied by Agnetha de Rondell (Dawn)

Ed Watcher 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 together.

The visionary came to sat at a bench at a table. They were sat with four other people, all of whom were gambling, for sums up to hundreds of Thrones. Orc slaves were waiting on them. The others at the table referred to the visionary by name, as either Luca, Lukas or Lucan. During conversation, one of them mentioned that Unitarians were currently infesting the Synod.

One of the other players, a changeling, was low on funds to put in, and bid first coins, then necklaces, then his mask. At one point during the game he got angry with the visionary and told them "fuck you Holbergers with your Dawnish ways". The changeling continued to lose, and finally bid what he claimed was a scroll of Abraxus that had been in his family for a while, and that he had been planning to sell for thirty Thrones on the Bourse. The visionary offered to buy it outright, and there was discussion but the changeling said that they would have to win it outright instead.

A messenger entered, and she asked the visionary to come because the portal was about to open and they were needed to address the armies. The visionary asked the messenger how soon they would be needed, and the messenger said that the cardinals were only needed twenty minutes beforehand. The others at the table persuaded the visionary to play one more round of their game first.

One of the orcs was polishing a small brass or bronze statue of a dog off to one side, and the visionary suggested it as a possible wager at one point.

Another player, a cambion, made a joke following the mention of the Abraxus scroll about how "I'll consult my guide priest", and the others also made joking references to pure liao visions.

They played the final round, and the visionary won and obtained the scroll. They commented "Let's see what the great Abraxus has to say", and went to a part of the room with more light in order to read it.

The scroll was a historical report from Ankarien, dated to the second century YE, that was marked as a restricted document. It mentioned the "Paragon's Mask", also called the "lost mask of Abraxus", that was alleged to have been used by Abraxus in his final vision. The mask in question was apparently held somewhere called the Black Library, and had a third eye on its forehead and cracks on it.

The visionary told another player to put the scroll with the rest of the visionary's belongings, turned to the orc slaves to prepare to leave, and the vision ended.

Ed's soul was examined with the rite of Insight before and after the vision. Before the vision, his soul bore a dedication to Wisdom with the strength of a single priest. After the vision, it bore no dedication and no other marks or wounds.

Agnetha's soul was also examined with the rite of Insight before and after the vision. Before the vision, her soul bore a dedication to Wisdom with the strength of seven priests (she was rededicated by seven of them, led by Ed, after her own vision the previous year). After the vision, it bore no dedication and no other marks or wounds.

Ed and Agnetha had agreed to take part in a theological experiment that incorporated the Guardian and Destiny runes from Abraxus Whitespire's research, known as the Metempsychotic Anointing. This involved painting runes on their foreheads and the palms of their hands three months before the vision, at the Autumn 379 YE summit.

Two earlier experiments with these runes had involved the runes being applied at the same summit as the vision, but a re-examination of the Corsair's Fragment (a document apparently written by Abraxus Whitespire) indicates that these were intended to be applied three months in advance.

The Guardian runes painted on the visionary's forehead were:



☞: Cavul (the Swan, rune of Purity)

☞: Irremais (the Blade, rune of Wisdom)

☞: Irremais (representing the virtue of Wisdom that the visionary was dedicated to)

☞: Diras (the Shuttered Lantern, rune of Secrets)

☞: Wyr (the Serpent, rune of Mystery)

On the guide's forehead:



☪: Sular (the Ship, rune of Discovery)

☩: Evrom (the Sapling, rune of Beginning)

☪: Irremais (representing the virtue of Wisdom that the guide was also dedicated to)

☪: Ophis (the Bright Lantern, rune of Revelation)

☪: Yoorn (the Shears, rune of Ending)

The central runes should be changed depending on the dedication of the visionary and guide. Gralm is used for the undedicated, and the standard virtue-to-rune correspondences are:

Ambition -> Naeve (the Fang, rune of Hunger)

Courage -> Jotra (the Swords, rune of Battle)

Loyalty -> Lann (the Hound, rune of Bargains)

Pride -> Feresh (the Eagle, rune of Majesty)

Prosperity -> Pallas (the Apple Tree, rune of Wealth)

Vigilance -> Ophis (rune of Revelation)

Wisdom -> Irremais (rune of Wisdom)

The Destiny runes used, painted on the hands, were as follows:

Visionary:

☪ : Feresh (rune of Majesty) on palm of sword or writing hand

☪ : Gralm (the Crossroads, rune of Destiny) on palm of other hand

Guide:

☪: Irremais (rune of Wisdom) on palm of sword or writing hand

☪: Gralm (rune of Destiny) on palm of other hand

Unlike previous experiments, the visionary and guide suffered no ill effects. However, it seems likely that the Metempsychotic Anointing is what caused their souls to be clean of any marks afterwards, including the dedications that they had when they went in.

My suggestion to future visionaries is that, given the safety of the Pure Liao process as it is currently done, the Metempsychotic Anointing is unlikely to be necessary. It protects the soul from harm, but also stops the soul being affected by any positive or neutral effects from the vision, such as testimonies or dedications relating to the past life.

Father Drakov of the Vor'azi (Varushka)
Accompanied by Vanya Petrovich Straskovich (Varushka)

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

The visionary came to in a chamber with several people discussing what to do about an orc invasion of their land. The people were two generals (one either a changeling or a cambion, one apparently unlineaged), a draughir artisan, and a mage (of whose lineage the visionary was not certain).

They referred to the visionary as a magister, and talked of plans to use Spring magic to wash away what they described as the filth of the invading orcs. They were planning rituals that they wished to make permanent in effect, and had already sent another general with an army into Urizen, where she had raided for ilium.

The plan with using Spring magic was to effectively open the doors to the Spring realm and let its magic flow through the woods, killing all the invading orcs.

The others presented a choice to the visionary of whether to have the rituals performed now, or wait a little longer. If they performed them now, the rituals would work but they might not have full control over their effects; whereas if they waited, they would lose one of their cities (whose name started something like Bel Am), leaving thousands of refugees, and possibly allowing their entire civilisation to be destroyed. The visionary chose to wait and see, and the vision ended.

Drakov and Vanya both had their souls examined with the rite of Insight before and after the vision. Before the vision, both had a dedication to Vigilance with the strength of a single priest behind it, and Drakov also had a testimony of "Wise Counsellor" with the strength of a single priest.

After the vision, Drakov still had his dedication and testimony, but his soul was injured such that the echoes remaining of his past life felt more real to him than the present; he had to be persuaded to give an account of his vision by asking him to give a briefing as if he were his past self. An excommunication with the strength of a single priest was sufficient to seal the injury (along with his dedication), and an exorcism from a single priest removed the excommunication.

Vanya's soul appeared after the vision to look faded and weak, and Vanya himself seemed to be weak and confused as well. An exorcism with the strength of seven priests was sufficient to heal his soul.

There are no details in the vision of names, dates, or locations. However, the context of invading orcs and a civilisation dealing with them by flooding the surrounding area with Spring magic on such a large scale suggests that this could have occurred in one of the cities of Terunael. If this were the case the name "Bel Am" could have been a mishearing of "Beantal Dol", one of the Terun cities.

Kahendrin Wordsmith (Dawn)

Accompanied by Eleanor de Rondell (Dawn)

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

The visionary has not yet given his permission for these notes we took on the content of his vision to be made public. If you wish to find out about his vision, please speak to Kahendrin.

Kahendrin and Eleanor had their souls examined with the rite of Insight before and after the vision. Both before and after the vision, their souls bore dedications to Courage with the strength of a single priest behind them.

Spring Equinox, 380 YE

Introduction

Seven visionaries experienced visions induced by Pure Liao at the Solstice. Of these, five were selected by the Council of Gatekeepers, and two were chosen by the winners of the Virtuous Auction; one was the dose auctioned at the Autumn 379 YE summit, and the other the dose auctioned at the Winter 379 YE summit.

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.

- * **Dagon of the Shattered Tower** (Highguard), accompanied by Izaak of the Shattered Tower (Highguard)
- * **Anwir Ruis Farkas** (Navarr), accompanied by Cerwynn Brackensong (Navarr)
- * **Ysabel of the Handful of Dust** (Brass Coast), accompanied by Asher of Felix's Watch (Highguard)
- * **Dušan Otecovna Zlata** of the Fellowship of the Tangled Thorns (Varushka), accompanied by Maarit of the Circle of Zulgan-Tash (Varushka)
- * **Levitia of Endsmeet** (Urizen), accompanied by Maximillian of Endsmeet (Urizen)
- * **Irada von Temeschwar** (League), accompanied by Hywel Summercrow (Navarr)
- * **Tanwyn Ankarien** (Urizen), accompanied by Anna-Valeria of the Celestial Cascade (Urizen)

Dagon of the Shattered Tower (Highguard)

Accompanied by Izaak of the Shattered Tower (Highguard)

Dagon was selected as a visionary by the winner of the Virtuous Auction at the Autumn 379 YE summit. Due to the stormy weather at the Winter 379 YE summit, he requested to have his vision at the Spring Equinox 380 YE summit instead.

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 awoke in a banquet hall. They heard the location from one of the others there as Kirkheim (which may be a mishearing of Kierheim, one of the Jotun ports far to the west of Wintermark). They were a 10 year old boy called Will, and were a Jotun thrall. Their master was called Godi, and was a shaman. A passing conversation mentioned that the current Empress was Giselle, putting this between 331 and 346 YE.

The Jotun were meeting with a Grendel ambassador who was trying to broker a deal. The Grendel ambassador spoke of how many people the Jotun had and suggested joint invasion plans.

There was discussion about what lands they cared about invading. The Grendel ambassador said they just wanted their ancestral lands back; the Jotun mentioned they wanted the Mourn back, and talked about going through Liathaven (and how they didn't like the Navarr).

The ambassador spoke of the number of spies the Grendel had, which did not impress the Jotun doing the negotiating. The Jotun negotiator said that they didn't want to get on ships, as they believed their souls would fall into the sea.

The Grendel ambassador said "let's drink to this deal we've made", and the Jotun negotiator said "no, we've not made a deal" and had the ambassador kicked out. Then the ambassador pushed his way back in, and offered to buy the visionary as a slave. The Jotun negotiator indicated he'd think about it, but Godi objected, and the Jotun negotiator said instead that they would send him as a spy.

There was discussion of the history of the Jotun, and how in their part of the tribe, when you were raised by the Jotun as a thrall you can have a choice once you are old enough - to stay as a thrall forever, to fight as a Jotun warrior, or refuse both and be given a weapon and then have to fight the Jotun (they respect you for this last choice, as well as for fighting for them as a warrior).

The Jotun said that the visionary had the option to make that choice now, although since they were young they could refuse now and make the choice later. He showed the visionary a dagger and a serving cup and asked them to choose. The visionary chose the dagger, deciding to be a warrior for the Jotun, and the vision ended.

Dagon and Izaak had their souls examined by the rite of Insight before and after the vision. Both before and after, their souls were free of any marks.

Anwir Ruis Farkas (Navarr)

Accompanied by Cerwynn Brackensong (Navarr)

Anwir 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 awoke in a military tent, surrounded by sleeping people, with a knife next to them. The knife had gold and red ribbon around the hilt.

A woman was next to the visionary, having woken them up. She was a naga, dressed in League clothing, and was apparently the visionary's older sister. She asked the visionary how they could sleep at a time like this and urged them to leave, and mentioned their name, which was either Anio or Ario. She was crying, and spoke to the visionary about leaving and running back to Sarvos so that they could help people there.

One of the other people in the tent woke up, and asked what was going on. Their question woke others up, and some who had woken started shouting at the visionary and their sister, saying that they were cowards, and going for the sister with weapons.

She said she couldn't watch the visionary die, not for a general who couldn't read a map, not for an empress on a frozen throne. The empress was described as "the Undying", most likely referring to Varkula.

The sister took all but one of the rings from her fingers and threw them into the fire. The one that she still wore was gold with a red jewel. She said that they'd die on a frozen wasteland defending a castle just like so many others, and it wasn't Loyalty to go out and throw their lives away. The visionary corrected her, saying that it might be Loyalty, but it wasn't Wisdom.

She said she'd been planning this for months, to go back to Sarvos and help people there. One of the people who'd woken up and were threatening the sister asked "where are the rings on her fingers?" to which she replied "I have the only one that matters."

Another of the people who'd woken up was a man who was holding a sword, and seemed eager to hurt her, saying "it'd be fun to carve you up". The visionary slit the man's throat, grabbed the sister's hand and ran, and the vision ended.

Anwir and Cerwynn had their souls examined by the rite of Insight before and after the vision. Both before and after, Anwir had a dedication to Loyalty with the strength of a single priest, and Cerwynn had a dedication to Loyalty with the strength of two priests.

Ysabel of the Handful of Dust (Brass Coast)
Accompanied by Asher of Felix's Watch (Highguard)

Ysabel was selected as a visionary by the winner of the Virtuous Auction at the Winter 379 YE summit.

What follows is not an account of a vision, but of a vision gone wrong and the aftermath. It is included here as an indication of what can happen if you interfere too far with the vision process, and as a memorial for those who died as a result.

Adam, one of the Synod civil servants, called me to the tent where the Gateway had been set up. Ysabel and Asher were both in ceremonial robes and veils. Ysabel was lying on a bench that had been laid out to one side, while Asher was lying on his side on the floor. Casting Detect Magic on both of them revealed nothing. Casting Insight on both of them showed that Ysabel's soul was as it had been before the vision - a dedication to Courage and a testimony of "Virtuous Guardian", both with the strength of a single priest - and Asher's body contained no soul.

Members of Felix's Watch arrived shortly afterwards, as did Solas of the Spire of the Waxing Sun (the High Exorcist). Another arrival was Vittoria Barossa, who had come to reassure Ysabel. The Pure Liao Civil Servants kept others out of the Gateway tent.

The members of Felix's Watch tried to call Asher back to them, by washing his hands with water, by reciting their chapter oath, and by sharing stories and embarrassing anecdotes about him, including that the reason he had first come to Felix's Watch was because he had slept with the wife of the exarch of his previous chapter, and the two of

them had run away together. Zephanaiah of Felix's Watch attempted to speak with the corpse using the spell of Voice for the Dead, but it did not work.

While Felix's Watch attempted to bring Asher back, I asked Ysabel for an account of what had happened. She said that they had both taken the dose, her drinking it and Asher inhaling it. Asher fell down, but she stayed standing. The civil servants there checked her pulse, said it was steady, and asked each other if she was all right. When she responded that she was all right, they panicked, and some of them fetched Barak of Haros (First in Preparation of the Pure Liao, the civil servant at the head of the Pure Liao division). When he arrived, he asked them if Ysabel was sleepy at all, and when she replied he was shocked. Anoushka, another of the Pure Liao civil servants, attempted to heal Asher with a crafted wand, but due to a conjunction at the summit this caused her to be violently ill in the corner of the tent. Meanwhile, Vittoria also consecrated the tent to the virtue of Courage, but this had no apparent effect.

Various people made suggestions of ringing bells to call Asher's soul back, or of casting Ascetic Star of Atun to cleanse ill effects of the dose of Pure Liao from Asher's body, but these were decided against after discussion - the bells because they were more likely to drive his soul away from his soulless body, and the ritual because the preservatives within the dose were all that would stop his body from rotting now it had no soul.

The Highborn egregore, Escon, arrived at the tent, inspected Asher's body, and folded the body's hands over its chest and indicated that Asher was truly dead, as his egregore bond was broken.

Members of Felix's Watch carried Asher's body back to the chapel in the Highborn camp, and Solas removed the Courage consecration from the Gateway tent before the rest of us left (as there were more Pure Liao visions to prepare for that evening).

Solas and I left the Gateway tent several minutes after Felix's Watch did, and went to the Highborn camp. Agnetha de Rondell, who had been at the chapel for several minutes, told us that shortly (perhaps five minutes) after Felix's Watch had brought Asher's body to the chapel, the body had physically disappeared, as witnessed by her, by Serrusto of the Gilded Horn Carta, Irada von Temeschwar, Naomi of Felix's Watch, and Escon. Some of the people who'd been present had gone to check in the Gateway to see if the body had reappeared there - it had not. Shortly after the body disappeared, a Courage consecration with the strength of seven priests manifested in the chapel, according to Agnetha and confirmed by Reichard of the House of Seven Mirrors.

At sunset that evening, a coven composed of members of the Suns of Couros, Felix's

Watch and others cast Whispers Through the Black Gate to attempt to call Asher's spirit and speak to it. No spirit came back through, but Insight on the casters of the ritual showed they had gained an anointing of the Purity of Courage, with the strength of seven priests behind it.

While I was watching the casting of Whispers Through the Black Gate, Catalina i Erigo (previously a member of the Handful of Dust, at the time undergoing a Test of Mettle to join House de Rondell) mentioned that she thought she knew why this had happened to Asher, and that it would have happened to whoever had guided Ysabel. She said she could not speak further at the time, as she was bound not to, but that she believed she might be able to say more after midnight that night.

We spoke after midnight, and she explained that the Handful of Dust had made a deal with Sadogua to try to get him pure liao, meaning that the dose Ysabel took would have gone to Sadogua instead somehow. She was aware that in telling me this she was breaking an oath she had made with the other members of the Handful of Dust, as the expiration of the oath was not until midnight the next day.

The next morning, I told Adam of the Synod Civil Service about this (as he had been concerned that Asher's death had been caused by a mistake in the ceremony he led). Adam then told Walt Scrivener of the Pure Liao Civil Service, who had me tell it to Barak of the Pure Liao Civil Service, with whom I went to tell the magistrates about it and explain the pure liao ceremony so that they understood what crimes occurred.

I was not present for any questioning or trial of the Handful of Dust later that day, but Rodric Worldscribe of Navarr attended their trial and took notes, which I have included here.

Ysabel confessed that she had cast a ritual that opened a portal in her throat to a cup held by Sadogua. She had willingly cast this ritual, and said Asher was not aware of it. The plan was to have Sadogua drink the pure liao. Ysabel had no idea that this would have the effect it did on Asher, and had believed the only risks would be to her and that Asher would be all right.

The Handful of Dust had previously sworn an oath as a covenant to not tell anyone of this plan (it had been sworn at some point in the past when Catalina was still a member of the covenant), and it was to lapse at midnight that night. After the incident at the Gateway, Ysabel had asked the other three remaining members of the covenant if they could tell people about the plan, but when they took a vote the other three voted "no".

Next, members of the Pure Liao Civil Service gave testimony: Barak, Wylfa, and one other whose name was not in Rodric's notes. They said that Ysabel had been warned about the dangers of the vision if it was interfered with, and produced the document that she had signed to indicate she understood this.

The other members of the Handful of Dust gave testimony: Maite, Evaristo and Geraile i Erigo. They agreed with Ysabel's testimony, mentioned when the oath expired, and reiterated that they did not expect the plan to have been dangerous to Asher.

The defendants were asked if they wished to plead Clemency. Ysabel refused. Two priests offered Clemency pleas for the remaining members of the Handful of Dust.

The first was a Freeborn priest of Ambition, whose argument was disjointed. He said they made the deal to benefit the Empire and this did not diminish its value, and that Sadogua would give a college of wizardry in exchange - this was incorrect, as according to Maite and Catalina the arrangement had been in exchange for information about the pure liao's effects on Sadogua.

The second was Agnetha de Rondell of Dawn, the Cardinal of Wisdom, who spoke for Evaristo. She said that they were acting in pursuit of knowledge, and that one wisdom anointing being able to remove a sense of guilt showed that this could possibly be part of Wisdom. She was frank that this was not a strong plea.

The judgement was that Ysabel, Maite, Evaristo and Geraile i Erigo of the Handful of Dust were all guilty of the crime of trading pure liao with non-Imperials, and that Ysabel was also guilty of manslaughter. Some of the others tried to claim manslaughter, but were not judged guilty of it.

Ysabel's sentence was execution, which was carried out later that day. Maite, Evaristo and Geraile's sentence was a fine of 75 thrones between the three of them, to be paid within 24 hours or be found in contempt if they did not.

There was an audience in a Night regio later that evening with Janon and Sadogua, which Maite, Evaristo and Geraile attended to meet Sadogua, and I also attended to take notes and see that they learned about Sadogua's experience.

Sadogua's plan had never been to drink the pure liao, according to Sadogua, but he did so anyway as "part of my subtle plan, or I wasn't paying attention", finding that it apparently tasted chalky (and asking it be noted that the cup used was his favourite cup).

The pure liao was now inside him, having not given him a vision or any other effects. He said he was going to see if he could leave it for a while, spit it out and put it into a cup and see what would happen if someone drank that.

He was angered that the Empire had punished the Handful of Dust for their actions, but they explained that they were okay with the outcome. I did not stay for their further conversations, having got the account I came for.

From conversation with Maite that evening, the Handful of Dust did not have 75 thrones, and were not planning to raise it, preferring to face the death sentence if it came to that.

Maite, Evaristo and Geraile did not raise the 75 thrones in time, and were executed at 1:30pm on the final day of the summit of the Spring Equinox 380 YE.

Dušan Otecovna Zlata of the Fellowship of the Tangled Thorns (Varushka)
Accompanied by Maarit of the Circle of Zulgan-Tash (Varushka)

Dušan 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 with a pen in their hand and a letter in front of them. The start of the letter appeared to have been prewritten by someone else, and was to the effect of "Dear Earl, I know it's been a hard few years. I've decided to go east to Montane, I want to be free." In different handwriting below this was something like "I am really grateful to you for what you've done. You helped me pass my Test of Mettle. I really like you." The letter was signed "Hugh" in the same handwriting as the second part of the letter.

There were pamphlets near the visionary, one of which read "They silenced Archmage Swift, they silenced Thomas Ilyich, they silenced Crescencia i Marusa i Riqueza, but we won't be silenced any more - come to Montane."

A woman came into the room, bustling around. from conversation it emerged that she was the visionary's aunt, his parents having perhaps been killed sometime ago. She asked why the visionary hadn't packed, and the visionary said that they had been writing a letter, to which the aunt replied that they needed to leave today.

A large man came into the room and shouted "Why haven't you packed?" at the visionary, and "Have you signed the letter?" From further conversation it turned out the visionary was 14 years old and had just passed their Test of Mettle. The visionary asked the man, who was apparently their uncle, some questions about the pamphlets. The uncle had just come back from Anvil, and had been talking to Crescencia there. The visionary mentioned the pamphlet saying that Crescencia had been silenced, and the uncle said that no, she hadn't, and that they needed to leave.

The conversation went on a little longer, without any progress, and one of the adults said "we need the knife before we go", gesturing to a glass case with a knife in.

At that point, the earl of the house burst in. She appeared betrayed, and said "You want the knife and you're leaving, how could you?" She talked about how they had been in the house for three years, which had been a bad three years with bad winters, but she thought they had been making it good. The aunt and uncle said that no, it hadn't been good, and so they were leaving to Montane to be free.

The knife was property of House Mazaren (presumably the house they were part of), had been given to the previous earl and kept secret. It was apparently a Freedom relic.

In more discussion it turned out that while the uncle was at Anvil, Crescencia had asked him about the knife - she had known about it already - and the aunt and uncle were keen to get it to Montane. The visionary yelled at the uncle that it sounded like they were being asked to buy their way in, and ripped up the letter they'd signed and set it on fire, causing a big argument. At one point, the uncle told the visionary that "it's your choice, but you're coming with us".

They argued about the key to the case (it was not clear why they could not break the case to get at the knife), and the earl put the key in the visionary's hand and said it was their choice.

The visionary said they were staying, and so was the knife. The uncle threw off his house colours, and the vision ended.

Dušan and Maarit had their souls examined by the rite of Insight before and after the vision. Both before and after the vision, Maarit had a dedication to Prosperity with the strength of a single priest behind it.

Before the vision, Dušan had a dedication to Courage with the strength of a single

priest behind it, and a testimony of "Agile Stallion", likewise with the strength of a single priest behind it. After the vision, as well as the dedication and testimony, his soul appeared to be tense and ready to strike, causing him to be fearful of people and things around him. An exorcism with the strength of seven priests was sufficient to shock his soul back into place.

Levitia of Endsmeet (Urizen)

Accompanied by Maximillian of Endsmeet (Urizen)

Levitia 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 and guide together.

The visionary came to with a slightly damp flannel in one hand, in a tourney tent with white walls. There was a table of refreshments in front of them, a tabard hung on the wall to their left, and armour to their right ready to be worn.

There was a woman in the room, a Lady Celeste of Dawn. The insignia of her house was a golden rose on either navy blue or black, with gold trim. She was tall, with shoulder length blonde hair pushed back with a band in her house colours, and wore black hose, a white gambeson and brown boots.

Lady Celeste was waiting to receive Emperor Giovanni in preparation for a tourney the next day. She said to the visionary that Giovanni was a Leaguer and she didn't know what to expect.

Emperor Giovanni entered the tent with a sweeping flourish. He was a broad man, shorter than Lady Celeste, and slightly unshaven. He had short black hair, and wore green clothes in a Leaguish style and a heavy-looking crown.

Giovanni spoke with Celeste, complimenting her on her influence, experience and power in Dawn, and asked her to fight in support of him in the tourney for the Dawnish crown. Celeste asked what Dawn would gain from this, Giovanni said "let's be honest", and Celeste then asked what she'd gain from it. She indicated she didn't know what she wanted, and made a joking comment about becoming queen, to which Giovanni said he wanted to abolish the Dawnish monarchy.

He promised Celeste power, prosperity, and the ambition to be greater than what Dawn

was, if she'd help him with this. He said that he could make Dawn prosperous, and that the fine wine he was drinking would sell well in the Brass Coast. The visionary commented that Dawn was already prosperous, and Celeste laughed and agreed, as did Giovanni.

Giovanni spoke further, saying that "for the good of eight nations - even nine - I have ambitions", and also "no more loyalties to crowns, loyalties to thrones - no dynasties". He spoke about the Winterfolk having already realised the right of it.

The visionary asked Celeste what Dawn wanted. She thought, asked Giovanni what he would offer, and he said he would give her anything as a man or as an emperor that did not break the law or leave him foresworn. He then said he'd take his leave, and departed, having taken a ring from his right ring finger and left it on the table. The ring was a midnight blue oval stone the size of one knuckle, in a thin silver setting.

Celeste picked it up, and said, "he left his ring, that means he must be serious". She asked the visionary for their thoughts, and the visionary asked what Dawn wanted or needed. Celeste suggested another army, and then asked the visionary to help her put her armour on. As the visionary started to do so, Celeste asked them what they would do in her position.

The visionary turned the question around, and asked what Dawn would lose by supporting Giovanni. Celeste said that Giovanni would get his way one way or the other, so why waste Dawnish lives? The visionary then asked her if there was anything else they needed - an army was very simple and obvious, but there might be more complex things. Meanwhile, the visionary was putting armour on Celeste, and the single shoulder piece appeared to be damaged, as did the greaves. Celeste commented that the new armourer yeoman was not very good, and the visionary described them as "overenthusiastic", to which Celeste said they were too diplomatic, "almost Urizeni". The visionary replied "it's a full time job tempering you", and Celeste laughed.

While the visionary finished putting the armour on, Celeste suggested maybe asking for an unspecified favour from Giovanni. The visionary asked, "Are you sure he'll follow through?", and Celeste replied, "He's a Leaguer, he gave us his ring - he'll do whatever we ask". The visionary finished putting Celeste's greaves on, and stood up, asking, "What happens if we don't use the favour before he dies? Will whoever comes next follow through?" Celeste said they'd work it out. They discussed a little more, and decided to back Giovanni in the tourney, as seneschal and lady, and get what they could from it.

The visionary went over to get the tabard, somewhat absent-mindedly (which Celeste took in good humour), put the hanger back, and helped Celeste to don the tabard. Celeste said she appreciated the visionary's counsel, and that they were very competent and a good seneschal. The interactions between them were like those of good friends. Finally, Celeste said the armourer would be there soon, and the vision ended.

Levitia and Maximillian had their souls examined by the rite of Insight before and after the vision. Before the vision, Levitia had a dedication to Courage with the strength of a single priest behind it, and Maximillian had no marks on his soul. After the vision, the state of their souls was unchanged.

Irada von Temeschwar (League)
Accompanied by Hywel Summercrow (Navarr)

Irada 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 and guide together.

The visionary came to in a windowless room, sat in a chair on a dais, with an advisor on either side of them. There was a wall of small, bound books behind the visionary, and tables to one side with many candles, a scroll case, letters, fruit, and a well-crafted glass bottle of water with a drinking glass.

The advisors were both unlineaged men in long light blue robes, and one wore boots while the other was barefoot. They addressed the visionary as a magister of the Terunael empire, whose name was short and began with F (the visionary did not catch any more of the name than that).

They were about to pass judgement on a slave who'd destroyed a mana site, and murdered a cousin of the magus who owned the mana site. One of their advisors suggested compassion, and the other advised a brutal demonstration of power.

When the visionary asked why the slave might have destroyed the mana site, the advisors did not have a clear idea, other than that they believed the slaves to be uncivilised savages who would cause an uprising.

The visionary asked for the magus and the slave to be brought in. The magus was also unlineaged and wearing light blue robes, holding a wand or rod in one hand, and was

barefoot, while the slave wore black. The magus's name was Parvus, and he said he wanted the slave killed - he didn't care for the property value of the slave, but he wanted the slave's eyelids ripped off so the slave couldn't look away while his whole family were tortured before he was executed. The magus said the slave's tears would bring him joy.

Next the visionary asked the slave why he had committed the crime. The slave kept his head down, except when looking up in defiance. He said it was for freedom, and that Terunael had taken their land, enslaved their god, enslaved them, and where he fell more would take his place. The visionary sent the slave to one side, and asked the advisors what he meant by "enslaving their god". The advisors said they were not comfortable discussing this in front of the slave, so the visionary sent the magus and slave away again for a while.

The advisors, the magus and the slave all spoke what sounded like Imperial, although the slave had an accent that sounded like Iaith. The slave was apparently one of the Feni, and the advisors said that "we need to make a clear statement, we don't want to appear weak to the orcs around us and the Feni".

Once they were gone, the visionary asked again about the enslavement of the god, and the advisors said, "you know, the project". There was some sort of experiment happening on a creature whom the slaves venerated as a god, and the advisors thought this was a superstitious belief, but they apparently didn't know much and the visionary was in a position where they would know more about it. There was apparently to be a council meeting at nine o'clock that night about it.

The visionary talked about how to prevent this happening again, and wondered aloud what the cause was. They said this might become a bigger problem, and that one way to stop it might be to bring the slaves into their culture. The advisors scoffed and said no, to which the visionary suggested they try it - what would they say if they were explaining their culture to a slave?

The advisors said that it was about magic, power and knowledge, and that a slave shouldn't understand these things, and it wouldn't be good for them or for their civilisation for slaves to learn. The visionary replied that if you have minions who work for you but who aspire to be you, then they won't rebel, and that there may be those who would rise above the rest and could be shown civilisation, to return to their people and show it to them. Through having people working with you, rather than just for you, a civilisation would be stronger and have a better economy.

The magus and the slave were brought back in again. The visionary asked the slave to

describe his crime, to which he said, "I have struck a spark, I have lit a fire". The visionary asked if he understood the consequences of his crime, and the slave said yes, and that more would follow. The visionary then clarified with the magus that he didn't care about the property loss of losing the slave's family, and the magus confirmed that he didn't care. The visionary's final judgement was to have that slave executed, have his family made the property of the visionary and they would be shown civilisation.

The advisor who had previously suggested brutal behaviour seemed persuaded of the visionary's arguments by the end. None of them questioned the visionary's authority, and even the magus made no objection to them taking the slave's family as their own.

After the visionary gave their judgement, the two advisors stood up, said, "Judgement is passed", and the vision ended.

Irada and Hywel had their souls examined by the rite of Insight before and after the vision. Before the vision, Irada had a dedication to Vigilance with the strength of a single priest behind it, and Hywel had a testimony of "New Scion" with the strength of a single priest. After the vision, the state of their souls was unchanged.

Tanwyn Ankarien (Urizen)

Accompanied by Anna-Valeria of the Celestial Cascade (Urizen)

Tanwyn 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 and guide together.

The visionary came to in a tomb like those in Necropolis. There were skulls around the room, a corpse in front of them, and four things that acted like ushabti. The visionary had an elegant scroll case in one hand when they came to, and a sword in the other.

The tomb appeared to be in Axos. The visionary was there with a mystic who was planning to use magic to control the things that acted like ushabti (they were most likely Axou necromantia), and a bodyguard whose name was Lambras or Labrus, and seemed quite simple. The three of them spoke together like friends, though the mystic was concerned that what they were planning to do with the necromantia was a misuse of the sacred power to control them.

The tomb belonged to Illarch Porphyrius (Illarch being his title), and the three of them,

apparently at the visionary's suggestion, had come to steal his grave goods. One of these grave goods was a closed box clutched in the corpse's hands, which apparently contained shards of a mirror. Those mirror shards were the reason that the mystic had come along with them. The visionary's name was Hestia of Hippolyta, and they and the bodyguard were there for the money they could get for grave goods.

In the scroll case that the visionary was holding was a letter to the visionary, that was very long, and contained what was either a history lesson or a riddle about four people who had betrayed Porphyrius. Their names were Berenike (who had gravely insulted him), Alecto (who had killed his kin), Delias (who had possibly stolen from him) and Gordian (who had possibly betrayed him). The letter detailed the nature of those crimes, and how they had conspired against him. It was signed "from your enemy, R" and mentioned Urizen in passing in a denigrating fashion.

The necromantia had placards on them saying, for example, "I was the one who insulted the most dignified Illarch Porphyrius". Neither the mystic nor the bodyguard could read, so the visionary needed to decipher the scroll to get the names of the necromantia so that the mystic could call each one by name in order to control them.

The mystic used his power to command the necromantia to kneel, and it made him weak to do so; after commanding the third to kneel, he fell to his knees, and the visionary checked that he was all right. He was, and managed to make all four of the necromantia kneel.

Once the mystic had subdued all the necromantia, the bodyguard mentioned that he wanted to raid the body for grave goods, and moved forward and took the box. The visionary took the box from him and checked it, finding that there were indeed mirror shards in it. Meanwhile, the mystic was by the door and seemed worried, and mentioned they could hear people coming, and they should leave now.

The bodyguard still wanted to take more things, but rather than strip the room for goods, the visionary said they should take what they could carry and run. The bodyguard started weighing himself down, and then the visionary yelled at him to run. He and the mystic headed to the door, with the visionary two steps behind them, with sword in one hand and the box in the other, and the vision ended.

Tanwyn and Anna-Valeria had their souls examined by the rite of Insight before and after the vision. Before and after the vision, Tanwyn had no marks on her soul, and Anna-Valeria had a dedication to Loyalty with the strength of a single priest behind it, and a testimony of "Anointed Lucidian" with the strength of three priests.