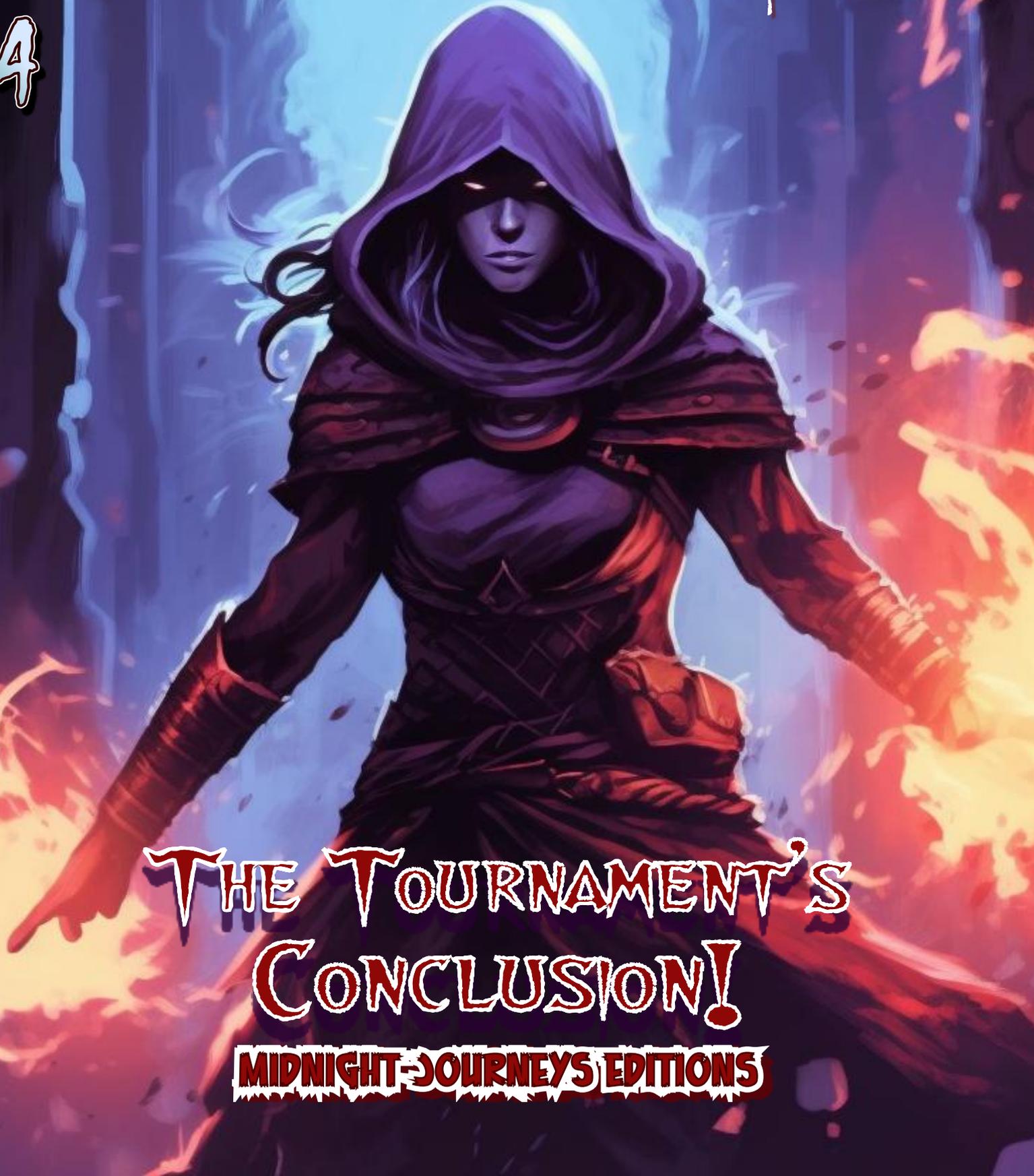


D. A. Da Rosa

The Archeomancer

Echoes of the Shattered Empire

4



THE TOURNAMENT'S
CONCLUSION!

MIDNIGHT-JOURNEYS EDITIONS

PROLOGUE



HEY,
SHARLOS!



I'M TALKING TO YOU. WERE YOU EVEN LISTENING?



UH, YEAH. IT'S JUST... A WORK THING.



ARE YOU ALRIGHT? WANNA TALK ABOUT IT?



NO.

HMM... YOU'RE STILL USING THE TALISMAN I GAVE YOU, AREN'T YOU?



...THIS MEANS THAT THE ENVOY NOW HAS FULL CONTROL OF ALL ENCHANTMENTS AT THE ARENA.

WITH THE ARRIVAL OF THESE TWO MAGES, OUR MOVEMENT CAN NOW...

HEY, SHARLOS! ARE YOU ALRIGHT, MAN?



SORRY, MY BAD.



CAPTAIN ALQDUS TOLD ME YOU WOULD BE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE SIGNAL TO THE ENVOY. CAN YOU DO IT?



HE DIDN'T WANT TO.

HE LOVED HIS LIFE AS IT WAS.

AND YET---



YEAH, SURE. I'LL TALK TO HIM.



HE LOVED HIS LIFE AS IT WAS.



BUT HE COULDN'T PROTECT IT FROM HIS DESIRE TO LEAVE A LEGACY.

ANYTHING TO PROVE THAT HIS LIFE MATTERED.

WITH MY SPELL, HIS WISH CAN BE SOMEWHAT FULFILLED.





The Archeomancer

Echoes of the Shattered Empire



ART BY MIDJOURNEY

WRITING AND PROMPTING BY D-A. DA ROSA

ENGLISH REVIEW BY CHATGPT

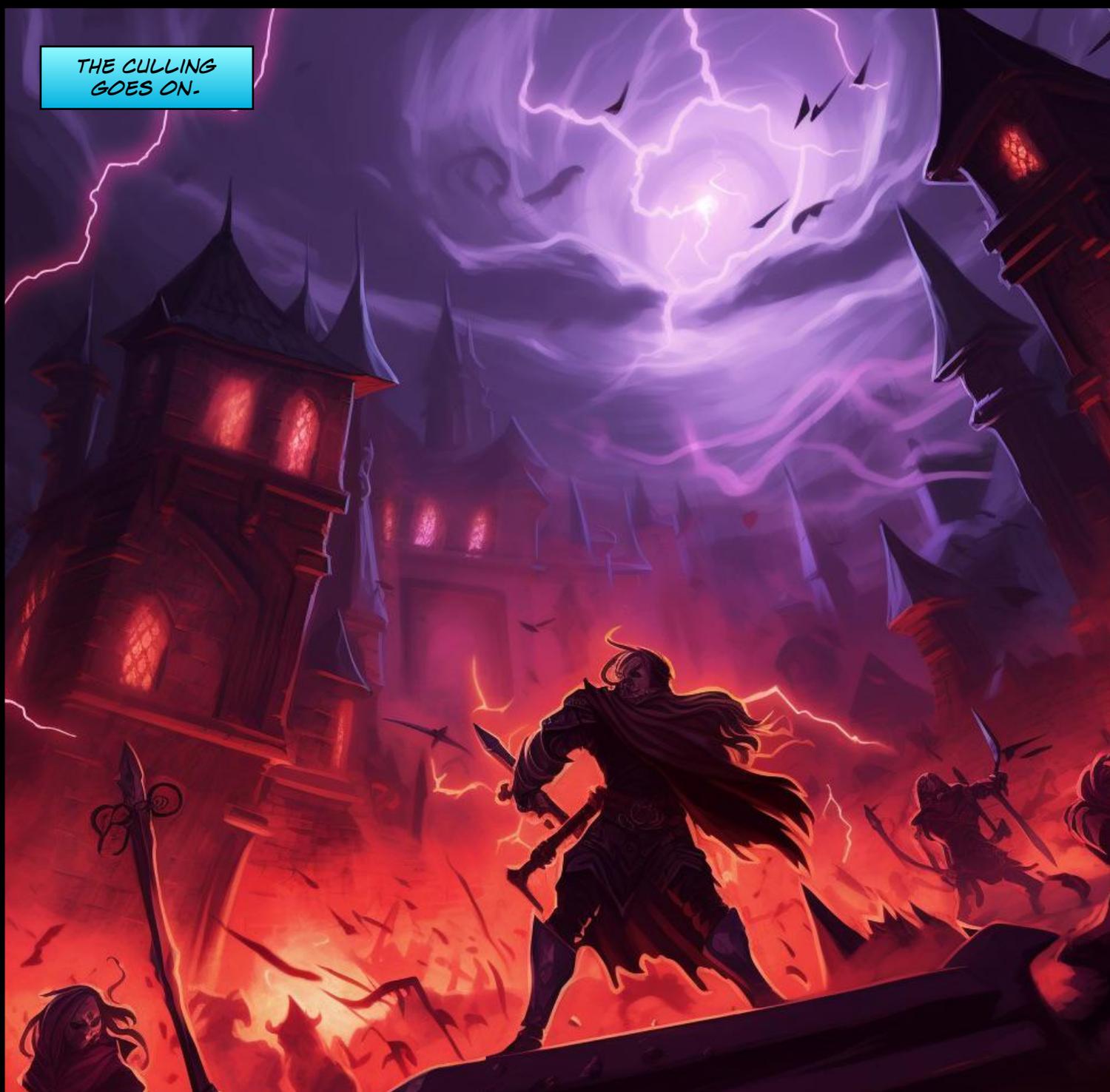
SHOUT OUT TO BEATRIZ BARRETO, LEANDRO EUGÊNIO C.

SANTOS, PAULO GALLINA, DANILO VIEIRA, SHAM BANGHAL AND
DARKSTAR

MIDNIGHT JOURNEYS EDITIONS

4. IMPERIAL HUNGER

THE CULLING
GOES ON.

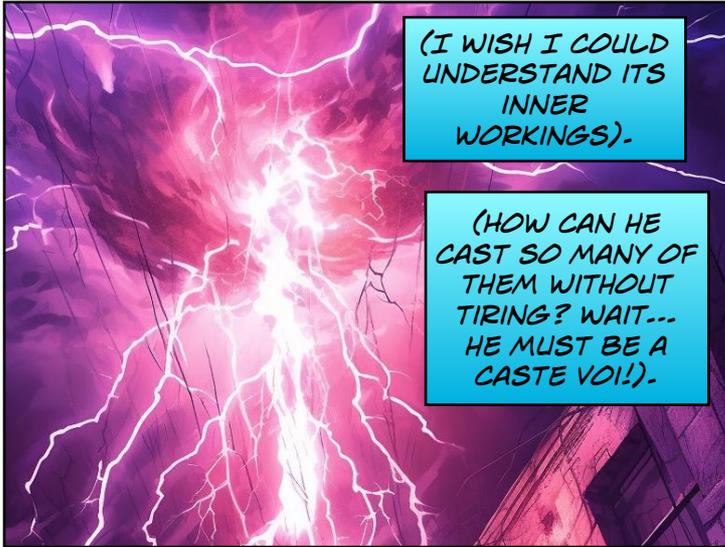




CAPTAIN ALQDUS' COUP D'ETAT IS NOTHING SHORT OF A GENOCIDE.



THE ENVOY'S ASTONISHING LIGHTNING BOLTS STRIKE THE COMPETITORS AND THE AUDIENCE ALIKE.



(I WISH I COULD UNDERSTAND ITS INNER WORKINGS).

(HOW CAN HE CAST SO MANY OF THEM WITHOUT TIRING? WAIT... HE MUST BE A CASTE VOI!).



SURROUNDED BY AN ENCHANTED BLAZE, WE FIGHT FOR OUR LIVES.

IGNORE THE LIGHTNING! WE MUST DISENCHANT THE FLAMES!



LOTS OF PEOPLE, INCLUDING SEVERAL OF THE BEST TOURNAMENT FIGHTERS, NOW LIE DEAD ON THE GROUND.



ON THE BRIGHT SIDE, THIS GIVES US OPPORTUNITY TO GET AMULETS FROM DEAD HUNSMEN.



THANKS TO SHARLOS,
WE KNOW THEY
PROTECT THEIR
WEARERS FROM THE
ENVOY'S SPELLS.



BUT IT SEEMS LIKE
PETARIAN IS HAVING
SECOND THOUGHTS.

FORGET THE
ENVOY!
LET'S ASSIST THOSE
TRYING TO DISENCHANT
THE FIRE!

HERE
COMES
ANOTHER!



SHHHHRAAAAK!!!

AAAARGH!

THIS WON'T
PROTECT PEOPLE
FROM THESE
SPELLS!



THE ENVOY
CONTROLS ALL
THE ENCHANTMENTS
HERE AND HE'S
BEHIND THE
SPELLS!

HE'S OUR
WAY OUT!
NO, HE'S
EVERYONE'S
WAY OUT!



AND WHAT'S
THE PLAN? ARE
YOU GOING TO
JUST ASK HIM TO
STOP KILLING
EVERYONE?



NO, PETARIAN.
YOU WILL.



YOU KNOW
HE'S OF YOUR
KIN. YOU'LL
REVEAL YOUR
MARKINGS TO
HIM.



YOU HAVE NO IDEA WHAT YOU'RE PLUNGING INTO.



I DON'T. BUT I KNOW YOU DON'T WANT ALL THESE PEOPLE TO DIE.

AND THE LONGER WE TAKE FROM GETTING TO HIM, MORE OF THEM WILL.



SO?



YOU MANIPULATIVE PIECE OF SHIT.



HEY, SAVE THESE FOR THE ENVOY!

HE'S THE ONE YOU ARE SUPPOSED TO CHARM WITH YOUR SILVER-TONGUE.

AS WE ADVANCE TOWARDS THE ENVOY, HOWEVER...

WE ARE FACED WITH SOME UNDESIRABLE ELEMENTS.

PETARIAN, BLOCK IT!

KA-POW!

UFF... THAT WAS CLOSE...

SHE'S OFF BALANCE! KEEP PRESSING!

THIS IS OUR CHANCE TO GET PROMOTED!

-FSHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH

ARE YOU OK?

MY SHIELD SPELL TOOK MOST OF IT.

LET ME SHOW THEM HOW THIS IS DONE.

SHE'S ONLY ONE, DO NOT FALTER!

HER MOVEMENTS ARE GRACEFUL, PRECISE, CALCULATED.



HER MASTERY OVER THE KAYNN, ASTONISHING.



AND SHE EVEN HAS THE SPIRIT TO BE CHEEKY.



SNAP.



KAAAPOW!



UFF...
UFF...



YOU... YOU
USED THE SAME
SPELL AS THE
ENVOY!

AND YOU
TOLD ME YOU
WERE AFRAID
EARLIER?! OF
WHAT?



I HAD THOSE
CHAINS ON. I
TOLD YOU, I'M
NOT A FIGHTER.

NOW, THIS?
A BATTLEFIELD,
WITH THIS MUCH
KAYNN FLOWING
AROUND?

I'M A VOI.
THIS IS
PERFECT FOR
ME.



YOU ARE
NOT A
HEALER.



NO, I AM
NOT.



NOW LET'S
MAKE OUR WAY
TO THE ENVOY
BEFORE OTHER
HUNTSMEN
START GETTING
IDEAS.



SHE'S RIGHT. THE
TOURNAMENT ENDED
FOR US, BUT NOT FOR
THEM, APPARENTLY.



FOCUS ON
THE ENVOY! I THINK HE'S
THE ONE CASTING THE
LIGHTNING SPELLS!



HEH. YOU
FINALLY
NOTICED.



BAAAKOOOOOM!!!!



WHEN WE GET CLOSE TO THE ENVOY, IT DAWNS ON ME THAT STOPPING HIM MIGHT BE MUCH HARDER THAN I THOUGHT.

HEY, ENVOY!

HUH?

WHY DON'T YOU PICK ON SOMEONE AS BLESSED AS YOU ARE?



BY THE CREED OF THE BLESSED, "THOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ANY VIOLENCE AGAINST OTHER CASTE MEMBERS".



OR...?



OR THE CASTE COUNCIL WILL SEND A **SORCERER** TO DEAL WITH YOU, LIKE USUAL.

JUST LIKE I WAS SENT FOR YOUR CRIMES. IT WAS HARD TO GET TO YOU.



SO... IT'S YOU.



WAIT. YOU WERE SENT HERE TO KILL HIM?!

THAT'S FOR THE **BEST**. TRUST ME.



HE'S TOO DANGEROUS TO BE LEFT ALIVE.

YOU'LL HAVE TO EXPLAIN ALL OF THIS TO ME WHEN WE ARE DONE.



THERE IS NOTHING TO EXPLAIN, REALLY.



BUT I WANT TO HEAR IT FROM HER.



THAT MANIPULATIVE PIECE OF SHIT.



HUH. NICE COMBINATION.



THAT WAS
EASY.



NOW, PETARIAN,
I BELIEVE YOU OWE
ME AN
EXPLANATION.

KA-POW!



DON'T GET
COCKY.
THIS IS FAR
FROM OVER.



UFF...
UFF... YOU
TWO... ARE
SKILLED. THAT
WAS... QUITE
IMPRESSIVE...

NOW
ALLOW
ME... TO
RECIPROCATÉ
THE FAVOR.



BUT
FIRST, LET ME
TAKE OFF THIS
MASK.



NOW YOU CAN PROPERLY SEE WHO ENDED YOU.



HE'S BARELY WOUNDED!

PETARIAN, WHO THE FUCK IS THAT GUY?!



A FILTHY SLAYER CAUGHT RED-HANDED.

STAY FOCUSED. PREPARE A COUNTERSPELL.



A COUNTERSPELL, YOU SAY?

ONE THING IS TO COUNTER SOMETHING I CAST JUST TO CULL THE WEAK.



ANOTHER IS TO COUNTER SOMETHING I AM TAILORING ESPECIALLY FOR YOU.



YOU SHOULD KNOW BETTER, HUMAN...



THAN TO MEDDLE WITH THINGS THAT CONCERN ONLY THE CHOSEN OF THE GODS.



I ERECT A SHIELD, AS I WON'T BE ABLE TO COUNTER IT.



BUT I AM TOO SLOW.

SHRAMMM!



DOLARAC!



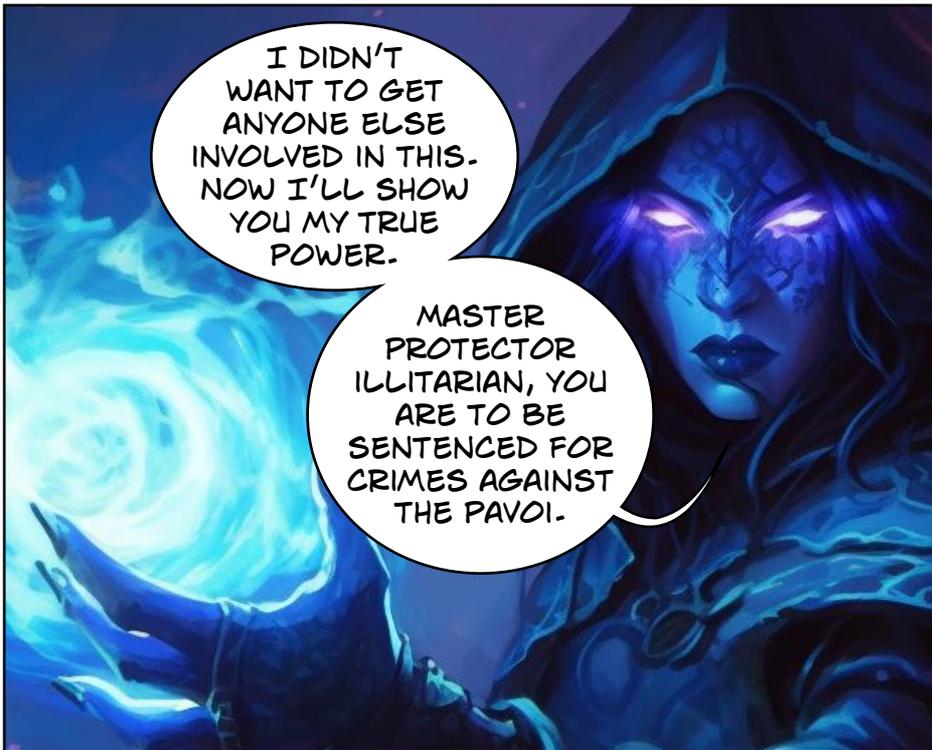
UGH...



HOW TOUCHING.
IS HE YOUR PET?



I'LL
MAKE SURE
YOU'LL BE
SERVED WITH
HIM AFTER
YOUR
DEFEAT.



I DIDN'T
WANT TO GET
ANYONE ELSE
INVOLVED IN THIS.
NOW I'LL SHOW
YOU MY TRUE
POWER.

MASTER
PROTECTOR
ILLITARIAN, YOU
ARE TO BE
SENTENCED FOR
CRIMES AGAINST
THE PAVOI.



WHAT'S THE
CRIME IN
MAKING THE
LESSER WORK
FOR THEIR
BETTERS?

EVEN THESE
CANNIBALS
GET IT.



SHAAAAH!

OH, PLEASE.
YOU CAN DO
BETTER.



FSHHH...



WHAMMM!



OK, THAT WAS
BETTER.

PFZZZZ...

BUT THE ONLY
CHANCE YOU HAD TO
DEFEAT ME WAS BY
GETTING ME
UNAWARE.



NOW IT'S MY
TURN.



INSTEAD OF USING
A TECHNIQUE, AN
ISHTURIAN CAN
FORCE RAW KAYNN
TO BECOME AN
OFFENSIVE SPELL.



THIS IS A MUCH
FASTER WAY TO
ATTACK THAN
CASTING A SPELL.



NO ONE WOULD
TRY TO COUNTER A
TRICK LIKE THIS.



AND FEW
ISHTURIANS ARE
GOOD AT
COUNTERSPELLS.



COUNTERSPELL.



BUT SORCERER
CASTE VOI ARE NOT
ONLY ISHTURIANS.

THEY ARE TRAINED TO
HUNT SPELLCASTERS.

FHHHSSSS...



REMARKABLE.
BUT I'LL GO
FASTER NEXT TIME.
YOU WON'T BE
ABLE TO DO IT
AGAIN.



I WON'T
HAVE TO.



SHLANNNN



UH?!

CLANG!



AN
AMBUSH?
HAH!

YOU
FOOLS!
THESE IRONS ARE
TOO CHARGED TO
STOP MY
SPELLS!



THAT'S NOT
WHAT THEY
ARE THERE
FOR.

TAKE IT FROM
HERE,
DOLARAC.





ONCE I WAS STRUCK BY HIM, I UNDERSTOOD HOW HE WAS CASTING ALL THOSE LIGHTNING SPELLS.

YOU UNBLESSED BAS-



HE WASN'T USING HIS OWN KAYNN.

HE WAS USING EVERYONE ELSE'S.



CHANNELING THEM FROM THE CHAINS ON THE FLOOR.

SWASHHHHHHHHH!!!



AND CHANNELING SPELLS ARE JUST MY THING.

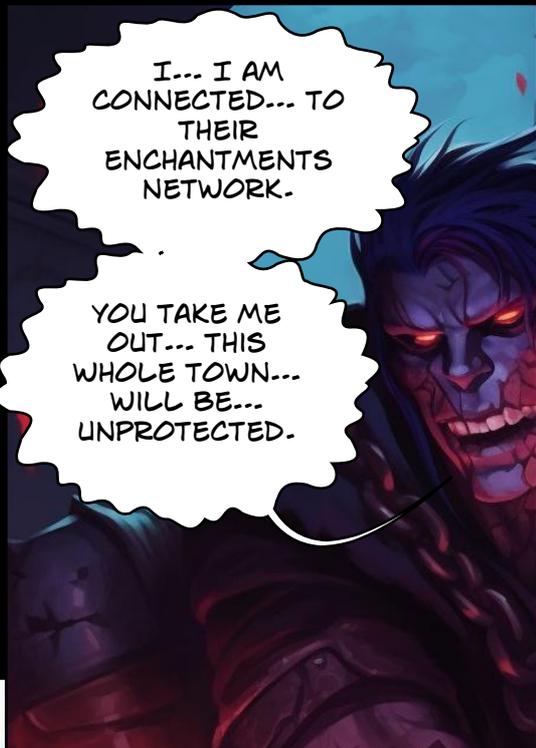


UGH... YOU CAN'T... CAN'T... KILL ME.



YOU ARE A SLAYER WORM AND I WAS SANCTIONED BY THE HOLY PAVOI TO DO JUST THAT.

WHY WOULDN'T I?



I... I AM CONNECTED... TO THEIR ENCHANTMENTS NETWORK.

YOU TAKE ME OUT... THIS WHOLE TOWN... WILL BE... UNPROTECTED.



IS THAT SO?

FWOOOOOOOOONNNNNNN



WITH THE ENVOY'S DEATH, THE MAGIC FLAMES START TO DIE EVERYWHERE.



WITHOUT THE FEAR OF BEING BURNT OR STRUCK BY LIGHTNING, THE SURVIVING CONTESTANTS ADVANCE TOWARDS THE HUNTSMEN.



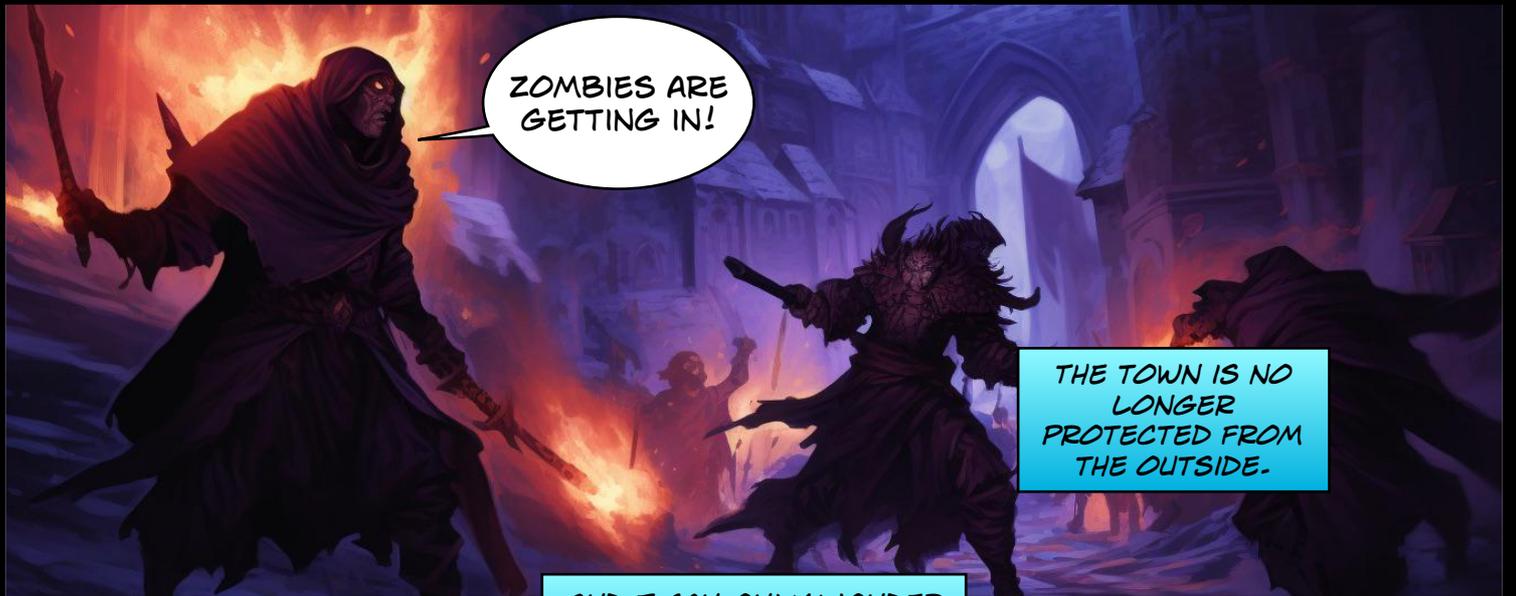
AND THESE ARE NOT THE ONLY SIDE EFFECTS...



THE ENCHANTMENTS ARE BROKEN! WE ARE FREE!

THE MEAT IS BREAKING FREE! I NEED HELP!

THE OPPRESSED TURN AGAINST THEIR OPPRESSORS.



ZOMBIES ARE GETTING IN!

THE TOWN IS NO LONGER PROTECTED FROM THE OUTSIDE.

AND I CAN ONLY WONDER WHAT HAPPENED BETWEEN CAPTAIN ALQDUS, YOUNG AMEIJJ AND THE BUTCHER.



NOT SO TOUGH WITHOUT YOUR LACKEY'S ENCHANTMENTS, HUH?



HOW COULD YOU DO THIS TO ME?



BABY... PLEASE...



BORZAK TAKES US TO AN ENTRANCE TO AN OLD PASSAGE. FROM THERE, WE CAN GET OUT SAFELY.

NOT THAT I DON'T LIKE YOU, BUT WITH YOU TWO GONE, I'M GONNA BE DEVOURING TOWN'S SOLE REMAINING HERO.



ARE YOU STAYING?!

THIS TOWN'S GONNA RECOVER ONE WAY OR THE OTHER. I JUST WANNA BE HERE TO PICK THE WINNING SIDE.



WE BID FAREWELL TO BORZAK. IF IT WEREN'T FOR HIM, I WOULD HAVE BEEN DEAD.

HEY, DOLARAC! HANG IN THERE, DEAD-HAIR...



HE SALVAGED A HEALING POTION FROM A HUNTSMAN WHO DIED BEFORE USING IT.

AND HE EVEN AGREED TO HELP US WITH THE PLAN I CAME UP WITH WHILE PETARIAN AND THE ENVOY TRADED BLOWS.

OH, SO THAT'S HOW YOU LOOK UNDER THAT MASK?

MAKES SENSE...

UHHHGH...

FOR A WHILE NOW I HAVE BEEN ONLY EXPECTING THE WORST FROM EVERYONE. BUT RECENTLY I LEARN'T THAT PEOPLE CAN BE DECENT TOO.



SO... WHAT NOW?



I BELIEVE YOU REQUIRED SOME EXPLANATION...



NAH. FORGET ABOUT IT. HE WAS A SLAVER AND YOU CAME HUNTING FOR HIM.

HMM... TO THINK OF IT, DID YOU KNOW ABOUT THIS CANNIBAL CITY AND THAT HE WAS HERE?



NOPE. JUST LUCKY, I GUESS.

OR, AS THE BELIEVERS SAY, "GODS PROVIDED FOR I AM ONE OF THE CHOSEN".

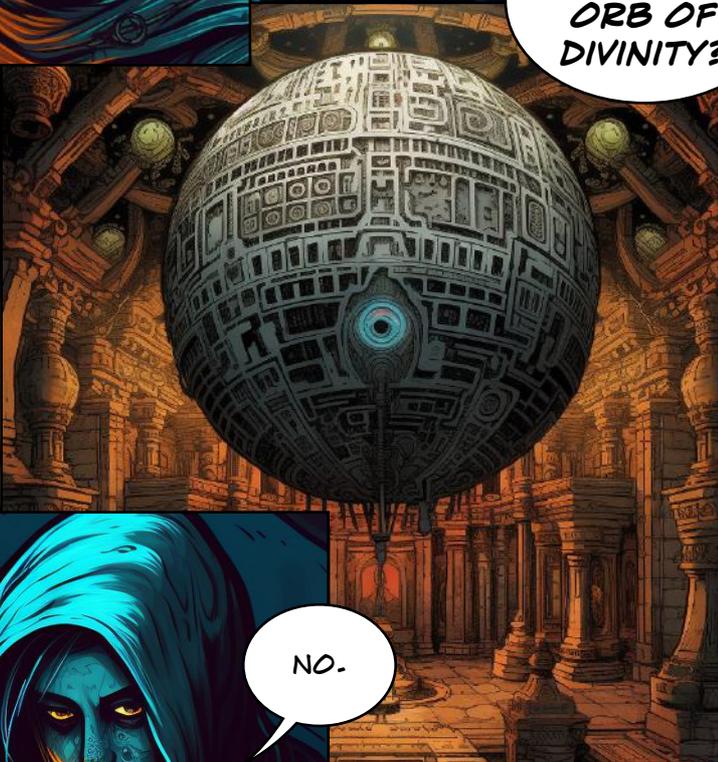


WELL, I HELPED YOU WITH YOUR THING. CARE TO HELP ME WITH MINE?



SURE.
WHAT ARE YOU
HERE AT THE
CAPITAL FOR?

EVER HEARD
ABOUT THE
ORB OF
DIVINITY?

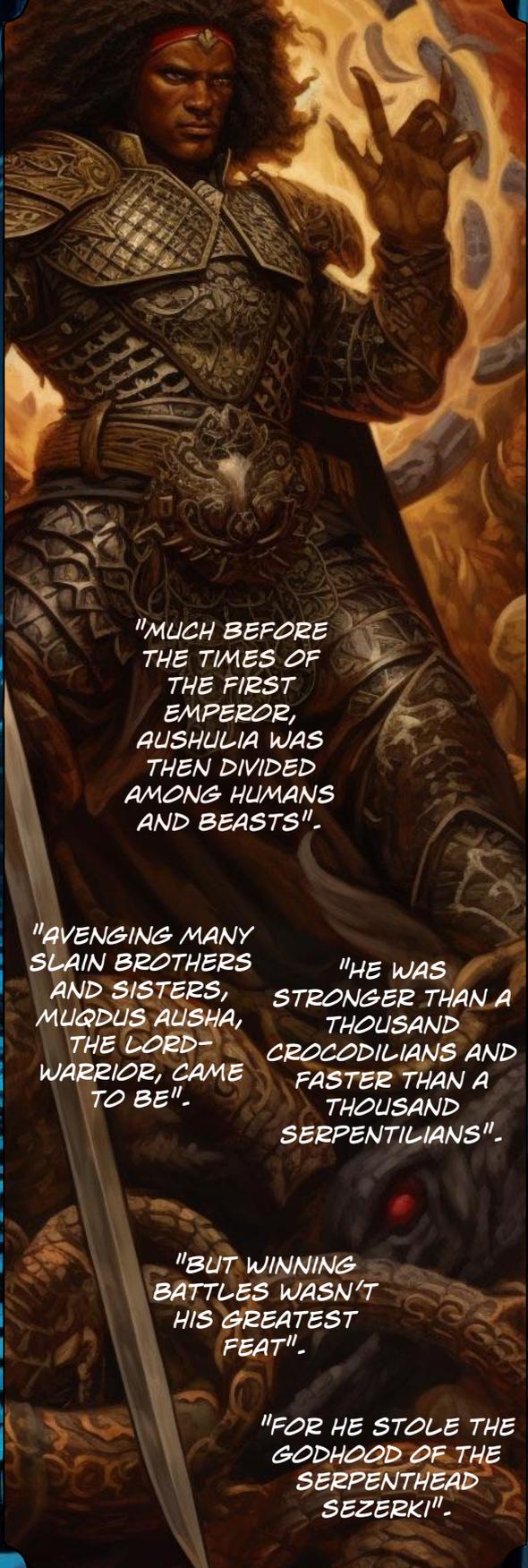


NO.



GUESS YOU
'BLESSED-FOLK' ARE
NOT BIG FANS OF
HISTORY, HUH?

IN SUMMARY, IT'S AN
ORB WITH A GOD'S
ESSENCE IN IT.



"MUCH BEFORE
THE TIMES OF
THE FIRST
EMPEROR,
AUSHULIA WAS
THEN DIVIDED
AMONG HUMANS
AND BEASTS".

"AVENGING MANY
SLAIN BROTHERS
AND SISTERS,
MUQDUS AUSA,
THE LORD-
WARRIOR, CAME
TO BE".

"HE WAS
STRONGER THAN A
THOUSAND
CROCODILIANS AND
FASTER THAN A
THOUSAND
SERPENTILIANS".

"BUT WINNING
BATTLES WASN'T
HIS GREATEST
FEAT".

"FOR HE STOLE THE
GODHOOD OF THE
SERPENTHEAD
SEZERKI".



OH, OK. AND WHAT DO YOU WANT WITH IT?



I'M GOING TO SAVE EVERYONE.



SAVE EVERYONE? FROM WHAT? HOW?



I'M GOING TO CHANGE THE PAST. I'M GOING TO SAVE THE EMPIRE.



SAVE THE EMPIRE?



THE FALL OF THE QUESDUN LINE DOOMED THE WHOLE CONTINENT TO THIS SAVAGERY AND DEGENERACY.



IF I CAN PREVENT IT, I CAN SAVE THE NINE PROVINCES FROM CHAOS!

...

A digital illustration of two hooded figures in a ruined city. The scene is bathed in a blue, ethereal light. The figures are seen from behind, walking away from the viewer down a narrow, debris-strewn path. The buildings on either side are crumbling and overgrown with vines. In the distance, a bright light emanates from an opening in the city, with several birds flying towards it. The overall mood is one of mystery and hope.

SO, WILL YOU
HELP ME?

UH... OK.
SURE.

FOR A LONG TIME, I
HAVE BEEN DOING
EVERYTHING ON MY
OWN.

BUT I DON'T HAVE TO
BE ALONE ANYMORE.

I HAVE A FRIEND NOW. AND,
TOGETHER, WE ARE GOING TO
SAVE THE WORLD.

TO BE CONTINUED...

THE ARCHEOMANCER'S TOOLS



SECOND-CIRCLE
TECHNIQUE/RITUAL:
CHANNEL THE PAST

THE ABILITY TO SCRY PAST EVENTS BY TOUCHING AN OBJECT OR PERSON IS THE MOST ESSENTIAL ABILITY OF AN ARCHEOMANCER. THROUGH A MATERIAL ANCHOR, THE CASTER CAN OBSERVE THE ECHOES AND CONNECT WITH THE EMOTIONS OF THOSE WHO CAME BEFORE HIM.

DESPITE ITS EVIDENT USEFULNESS, THERE ARE FEW ARCHEOMANCERS ON THE CONTINENT, AND THEY ARE OFTEN SEEN WITH DISTRUST AND RESENTMENT.

GLIMPSES OF THE PAST ARE OFTEN DIFFICULT TO COMPREHEND AND, SOMETIMES, CAN BE MORE CONFUSING THAN ENLIGHTENING. THE FURTHER BACK IN TIME, THE MORE CHALLENGING THE SPELL IS TO CAST, OFTEN REQUIRING AN EXHAUSTIVE RITUAL TO CATCH A MERE ONE-SECOND GLIMPSE OF WHAT HAPPENED TO SOMETHING A YEAR AGO.

EVEN THOUGH THIS SKILL IS TAUGHT EARLY IN ARCANES ACADEMIES, MOST STUDENTS HAVE ALREADY FORGOTTEN IT BY THE END OF THE THIRD YEAR OF THE BASIC CYCLE, PREFERRING TO HONE MORE 'PRACTICAL' SPELLS.

WHAT THEY OVERLOOK IS THAT, THROUGH CHANNELING THE PAST, AN ARCHEOMANCER CAN REPLICATE SPELLS, FUEL THEIR OWN SPELLS WITH OTHER PEOPLE'S MEMORIES AND EMOTIONS AND EVEN WEAVE ENCHANTMENTS WITH EASE.

DARING TO KNOW

EXCERPTS FROM SACROSANCT LINIÉLLIDAS'E, AT *TRUE FAITH: ON WHY THE VOI ARE THE CHOSEN PEOPLE*. PUBLISHED AT CAMTYCI, FOHRVOI, EIGHTY YEARS BEFORE THE FALL.



SHORO AND ISHTURA

"ALL THAT EXISTS WAS CREATED BY THE THIRTEEN TRUE GODS FROM WHOM WE, THE CHOSEN, DERIVED OUR CASTES. THEY CREATED ALL WE KNOW AND ALL WE CANNOT KNOW. WHAT CREATED THE FIRST EXISTENCE IS UNKNOWN AND THAT IS THE FIRST MYSTERY.

(...)

IN ALL THINGS THERE ARE PORTIONS OF SHORO, THE BONES OF CREATION, THAT WHICH CANNOT BE CHANGED BY ACTION, AND ISHTURA, THE FLESH, THAT WHICH CAN".

ISHTURIA

"AFTER CREATING ALL THAT EXISTS, INCLUDING LYING GODS TO CHALLENGE THE FAITHFUL AND LESSER PEOPLE FOR US TO LEAD, THE THIRTEEN TRUE GODS LEFT THEIR TOOLS OF CREATION TO THEIR PEOPLE - THE KAYNN, THE MAGICAL ENERGIES OF CREATION.

THE ABILITY TO CHANGE THE FLESH OF EXISTENCE THROUGH THOUGHT AND MANIPULATION OF THE KAYNN IS CALLED ISHTURIA - AND ITS PRACTITIONERS ARE CALLED ISHTURIAN.

TO BE ABLE TO DIFFERENTIATE BETWEEN WHAT IS SHORO AND WHAT IS ISHTURA IN ALL THINGS IS WHY WE STUDY AND HONE OUR CRAFT FOR OUR WHOLE LIVES".



ON THE MIMICKING OF THE TRUE LEARNINGS

"THERE ARE PLENTY OF OTHERS WHO ARE NOT OF THE BLESSED, NOT OF THE FAITHFUL AND NOT OF THE CASTES WHO ARE ABLE TO MIMIC OUR MAGIC THROUGH PRAYERS, RITUALS AND TECHNIQUES. THESE ARE NOT TRUE ISHTURIANS.

THE ABILITY TO SPEAK DOES NOT MAKE A PARROT A VOI; THE ABILITY TO USE TOOLS DOES NOT MAKE A PRIMATE A VOI; AND THE ABILITY TO CAST SPELLS DOES NOT MAKE A GIFTED UNBLESSED AN ISHTURIAN.

AS OUR SPELLS ARE FLUID, GRACIOUS AND POWERFUL, THEIRS ARE RIGID, CLUMSY AND DIMINISHED. THEIR ATTEMPTS AT MAGIC ARE BUT MERE SHADOWS OF OUR SUBLIME ART."





THE HISTORIAN'S REFUGE.



LAST ISSUE I TOLD YOU I WOULD SHOW HOW MIDJOURNEY COULD TAKE MY ART FURTHER.

AS YOU CAN SEE, MIDJOURNEY NOT ONLY ALLOWS ME TO IMPROVE IT, BUT TO NUDGE IT INTO THE ARTISTIC DIRECTION AND STYLE THAT I WANT IT TO.

THAT BRINGS THE QUESTION: THEN WHY DIDN'T I CHOOSE ONLY REALISM? WHY WOULDN'T I CHOOSE TO REPRESENT AÁNDIA IN A MORE REALISTIC FASHION?

AND THE ANSWER IS: REALISM IS A LIE.

WE CANNOT REACH THE TRUTH. IT EXISTS, IT'S OUT THERE, BUT WE CAN ONLY SEE AND UNDERSTAND IT WITH SUBJECTIVE SENSES.

SO, WHILE WE MUST KEEP SEEKING THE TRUTH, WE MUST ALWAYS KNOW THAT WE WILL NEVER REACH IT.

AND THAT, AT TIMES, WE NEED A BREAK FROM THE CHASE.

D.-A. DA ROSA, JUNE '23.





A DEAD MAN'S BLADE
CONNECTS THE
ARCHEOMANCER TO THE
ANSWERS HE SEEKS.

BUT
ANSWERS
ARE NOTHING
WITHOUT
ACTION.

CAN THE PAST
OVERCOME
THE
PRESENT?

The Archeomancer

Echoes of the Shattered Empire

MIDNIGHT JOURNEYS EDITIONS