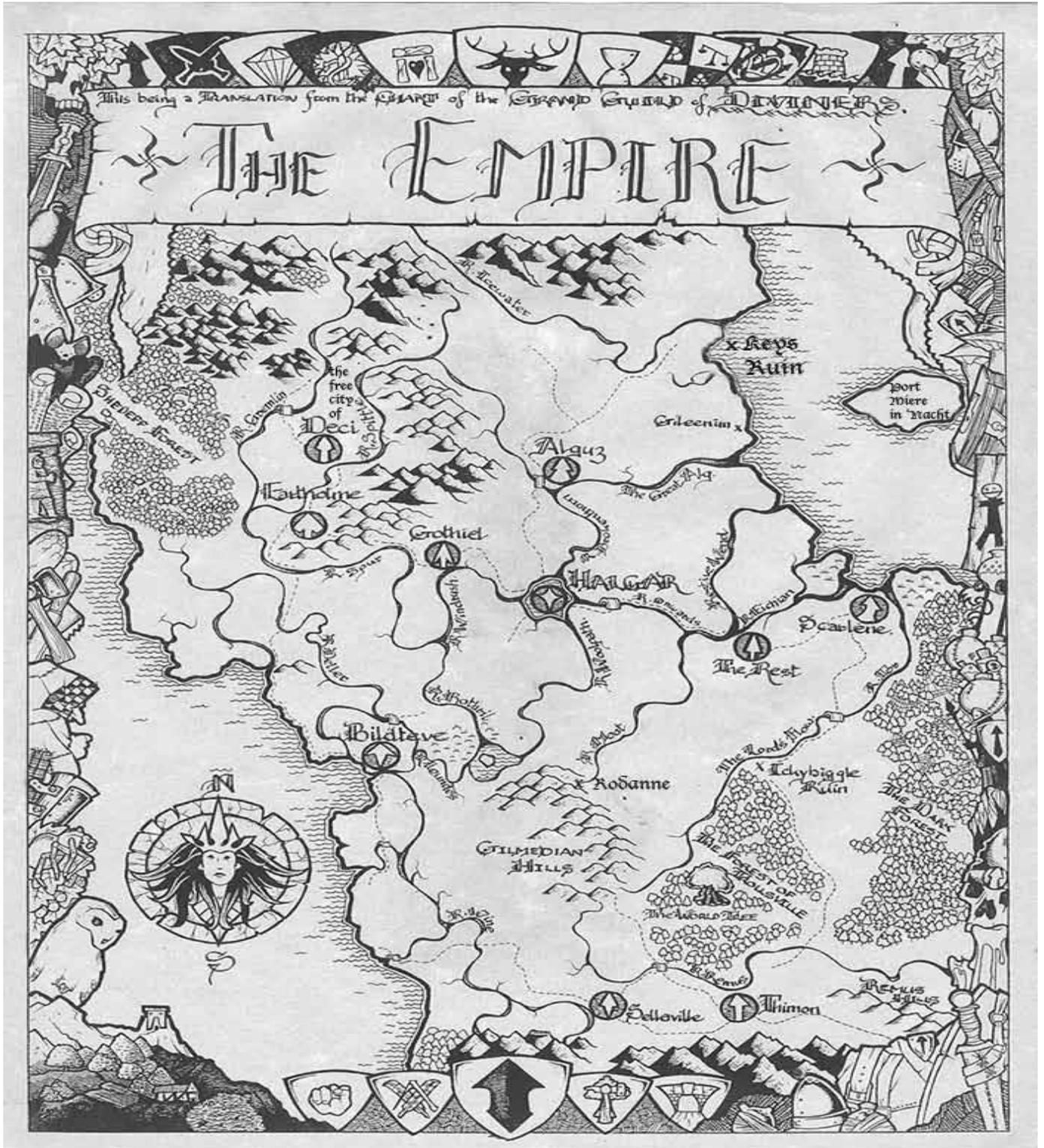


Primal Times

ISSUE 1 VOL.IV JANUAR IM 1017
NOW EVEN BIGGER (& LATER)

STILL ONLY 10 GRULLS

THE CHANGING FACE OF EMPIRE?



FINAL DAWN REPORT

Water poured into the city of smugglers as Salas's tidal wave began to rise high into the sky, looming above the small city and casting shadows through its streets. Mist began to spill from the ground, from the cobbles themselves and from the ritual poles that surrounded the city's perimeter.

Throughout the rest of the Empire, cities found themselves assaulted - some worse than others. Scarlene barely batted an eyelid at the presence of the Shadow of the First Evil's forces clearing a path for four Reavers to take the Entropy Spindle there; Halgar had little warning, and mobilised just in time to see entropy seeping into the city; Mordred's Rest remembered all too well what it was to be assaulted from within. Alguz alone found itself saved by a group of mercenaries who carved a path through the Reavers and their weakening ritual, but Bildteve was attacked within the hour, some distant power restoring the Reavers to life.

Inquisitorial Agent Aloth observed the proceedings from his post within the Grey Tug. He could count on one hand the number of people in the world who had the capacity to control it, and he was one of them, responsible for its maintenance and care. It did not take a great mind to know that if the Spindles were being attacked, his post was probably next. But the siege prevented him from doing more than send short messages to headquarters, and though they were doing their best to send reinforcements it seemed no help was coming.

He would have to make his stand with nothing but the few women and men stationed to defend him. They were good people - he was a good man - and they would not let the Tug fall, no matter what was done to them. But the Reavers appeared soon after, with a screaming bundle in the arms of their smirking warrior. Aloth knew those screams. They were his son's. And there was no help coming.

Aloth activated the Grey Tug, drawing the entropy released from the Spindles to Salas's realm, and moments later watched as an ethereal man destroyed his son's soul. The only comfort that came to Inquisitor Aloth was the sword that burst from his chest at the same time.

But all was not lost; in a run-down building in the Broken Lands, Asa Volki and a horde of his Reavers engaged a group of mercenaries. At first they defended themselves, paying little mind to the Reaver Lord's insistence that he could give them far more of a fight if he only had his spear. At last his words reached ears that understood, the Primal Deity finding an unlikely ally in a criminal and a slightly more likely one in a green wizard - and with his message conveyed and his distraction successful, the Trickster made his exit with his forces.

Night fell, and Salas of the Deep observed from his ship as the stolen entropy found its place amidst his oceans. He was joined by the Shadow of the First Evil and Asa Volki, who watched with unified pleasure as the ritual completed at midnight. With their dominion over him still intact, neither Salas nor Certizal had any notion that the Trickster had defied their commands and planted the seed of rebellion within the mercenaries' minds.

With dawn approaching a spray formed at the head of Salas's tidal wave, made of pure and unfettered entropy. It crashed into Port Miere hours later, sundering rituals of the Empire and its enemies alike. Threat maps lit up through the Empire as Salas's true target became clear - not the Isle of Dread, but the city of Keys. Port Miere, it seemed, was nothing but the unfortunate power source for something far worse. For Salas of the Deep greatly desired dominion over all of the oceans, and he could not have it whilst the Green Mana Dragon stood. In the Dragon's Cathedral within Keys, the wizards began to prepare to manifest it once more, to protect the city as it had in the past.

Meanwhile in Port Miere, members of the Inquisition watched with terror as the city's last resort - the defences that would draw it into the Mittenacht should the worst happen - began to fail and falter under the weight of Salas's power. But they did not fall. Instead, a presence that had settled within the city several months before made itself known - a figure rose from Marcus Blunt's shrine to the Netter, wreathed in the mist that had begun to pour from the city's defences. It raised one hand, then another, and from it poured a woven shield that kept the mist from being washed away in the wake of Salas's entropy.

And whilst the focus was on Port Miere, a small team of mercenaries slipped into the Halls of the Reaver Lord, deep within the Xathrean Ocean. There, bereft of opposition, they beheld Asa Volki's greatest trick - the secret that he had guided them to with his seemingly unimportant words. Of what happened in those Halls, little is known throughout the Empire - but three things are certain to be true. When they departed, Asa Volki was no longer the Reaver Lord; when they departed, the Reavers were free of Certizal's corruption; when they departed, it was in the company of a Reaver who had once given up life as she had known it, and now lived once again by the miracles of hope.

An hour later, Port Miere vanished from the face of Primus, reappearing - thanks to old ritual structures and the Netter's intervention - safely within the Mittenacht, no longer occupied by enemies.

By then Salas's attention was fully on Keys. Caring not for the loss of Port Miere but greatly angered by the tricks of Asa Volki and his allies, Salas and Certizal sent their united forces to descend upon the city and its lands. Whilst the mercenary group in the Broken Lands secured assistance from the Blue Tower of High Magery to evacuate those in the vicinity of Salas's target, another group helped to rescue and aid the ritualists who were desperately trying to raise the wardings over the city.

A third group went into the Cathedral of the Green Mana Dragon itself, on a far more dire and terrible mission.

For they had discovered that the thing many had thought would protect the city - the manifestation of the Green Mana Dragon - was precisely what Salas wanted to happen. If the Dragon was there, truly and completely, he would be able to consume it in its entirety. It had to be stopped, at any cost.

Stood before the Cathedral's altar, a green wizard prayed painfully for forgiveness as he helped a city spirit and a fiery witch to deconsecrate the altar. And when the Shade of his Dragon appeared, the wizard allowed it to cut him down - perhaps in the hope that his death would prove his loyalty, or perhaps because he wished no part in what was to come. A battle ensued: just as a jade warrior had fought the Shade of the Onyx Mana Dragon years before, so did the group of mercenaries battle the Green. Too angered by its deconsecration, the Shade refused to back down or listen to the mercenaries' explanations. The witch who had helped to corrupt the altar hurled flame after flame at the Shade, from the smallest to the most cataclysmic of spells - and eventually, after the witch's power was spent and all that remained was a pair of flaming blades, the Shade fell.

But as with all Shades, it did not cease: it invoked the full power of its Dragon, and became a divine presence in the room. Manifested from the faith of the Cathedral, the Shade fought with renewed purpose. It cut down the creature of frost that had refused to assist it, and bought several others close to death. Frantically trying to find a way to save the Dragon, the mercenaries struggled for plans.

Two samurai had stood apart as the battle had raged on, bound by honour not to strike against those of light heart - but when the honour of the

Tranquil was besmirched by the Shade, the first of these samurai invoked the power of his divine patron and joined the battle. Only his divine blade seemed to have any true effect on the Shade, and it was greatly weakened as it fought him. Meanwhile, a pair of healers whose penchant for mischief was often hidden behind their uniforms called in a favour that would change the tide of the battle. Soon there were three divine powers in the room, for moments later the Trickster appeared in response to his allies' summons. Understanding their intent at once, he made off with the sacred artifacts of the Green Mana Dragon and began to sap away the Dragon's power - taking it from the Dragon, but ensuring that Salas would not take it.

And with its faith depleted, the Shade collapsed - its patron weakened, but still secure in its position as one of the most powerful Dragons on Primus. Entropy washed over the city as the spray from Salas's wave hit in the wake of the Shade's fall, all of its power wasted on consuming the wardings raised but an hour before by the gathered mercenaries.

By this time the beacons of transport had been placed throughout the city of Keys and beyond. Within the walls, merchants and legionnaires clustered together around ritual poles as blue magic washed over them and sent them to safety. Soon the city was empty of a single soul, the streets cold in the ocean wind and the boats in the harbour without crew or captain.

In the rural lands, a noblewoman took the arm of the man who had been with her through terror after terror. They looked out over the lands that they had sworn to protect, and over the people they had sheltered - and watched as one by one they faded from existence around the beacons. Placing her hand on her abdomen, the noble stepped into the arms of her husband and closed her eyes, opening them to an unknown land.

For a few moments, there was nothing in Keys or in the lands beyond but the sound of Salas's wave, which by now was wrapped around the coast. Then silently, a figure rose up once more from a shrine, their form made of the glittering jewels of the city's walls. It grew until it towered over the land, one foot in its shrine and the other within the river, and once it stood in equal size to the wave it shattered into a million pieces.

The jewels of the Netter fell like rain into the river, into the streams, into the edge of the ocean itself. They scattered over the ground near the water where the leys reached out their splayed fingers - their protection a last, desperate shield made by the acts of mercenaries months before.

Then the weight of Salas's wave crashed down upon the city of Keys, destroying it utterly.

The land that had been raised by ten noble houses from the bay of Armastas into a flourishing city of trade was gone, now part of the Xathrean Ocean. With it went much of the rural lands, though the mountains to the northwest remained intact as did Gileenim and half of the road down to Alguz. But thanks to the miracle of two dozen mercenaries, no one was killed by the wave - and the ripple that washed over Primus as it landed was little more than a tremor.

And in a ship deep within that ocean, a shadowed figure chuckled.

"Funny," whispered a voice that came from within, from the darkest parts of the self, from the terrible possibilities of free will. "It looked for a moment like it was going so well."

The Lord of the Deep answered his ally with nothing but fury, calling up a storm of his anger that made the oceans shake and the clouds above them become heavy with thunder and lightning. He had been thwarted, again, and they would see the fullness of his wrath. They would understand the depths of his revenge. They would see how the oceans would one day consume the world. The mortals and the Trickster both would be damned for ruining his plans.

The storm raged, and Salas with it.

IMPERIAL NEWS

EDITORIAL *For those of you who have been stuck on the wheel of being reborn, you may not have heard of the City of Rodanne - well until a few months ago, none of us had, knowledge of the whole city had been erased from Primus through ritual during the Magiarchal Wars. But now it's back, from whence it came. Will it join the Empire or does it have plans to remain a Magiarchal City - if so will the Empire allow it?*

RODANNE



Almost as soon as the mercenaries appeared in the main square, then the Kallah of Rodanne were upon them. A small knot of adventurers formed protectively around probably the least likely flute player amongst them. As the Kallah encircled them and began to pick at these intruders, seemingly appearing from the very walls, it was Tangle, City Spirit of Deci who was everywhere, cajoling, exhorting and goading the group into action. As the fight spread, thin notes came from the Sceptre of Justice, gaining in strength and calling the Kallah Lord of Rodanne to account. The Kallah renewed their assault on the aggressors, some claiming to be their Lord in a series of ruses, until at last the Lord himself came, summoned by the sound of flute music.

'Why have you called me here?' he intoned, only to be met with violence.

'He needs to be killed in darkness,' shouted one mercenary and then all was chaos as the battle spread through the streets of the former Magiarchal city. The kallah clustered around their enemies, a golden light glinting in their eyes, looking for weakness in the mercenary ranks, all the while their Lord sliced his way through opponents, a pair of knives carving up one victim after another. The tall ivory drave was a tower of strength, yet the onslaught of the Kallah Lord saw Sirac Drakeson pinned to a pillar. A powerful mage of cold, whose mettle had been tested in Torstand no less, fell to fire from the Kallah Lord. Foggy, despite the previous days events, had no time to wallow but rallied to the defence of weaker mercenaries as he held off the Kallah Lord alongside Valentine. Scattered groups of mercenaries began to regroup and the solution to the Kallah Lord's seeming invulnerability was found: his soul was bound to an angel, the darkness had been a ruse perpetuated by the Lord himself.

Re-inforcements appeared from across Primus, but they bought uncertainty as well as hope. Had Sonasello of the Circle turned on his allies? had the Gathen been released to wreak havoc? Woodrow and Nico of the Panama Clan vanished in a desperate bid to engage and contain the Gathen and buy more time.

Finally the Kallah Lord fell beneath a multitude of blows, Tangle saw his chance and grabbed the body only to realise the Lord had feigned death, returning in panic, again the lord fell to many blows, this time the life left his body, and unseen, so too did much of his power.

With the passing of the Kallah Lord, his followers slowed their assault, then ceased altogether as if waking from a collective dream. Yet there was no time for the mercenaries to congratulate themselves. They left as they had come, in a hurry, vanishing to meet some new and greater threat. Behind them was Rodanne, a city on the edge of convergence, a city without a spirit. Yet at the last moment, unseen by most, the knowledge of how to create a city spirit was gifted to the Kallah of Rodanne by the most unlikely of saviours. So Rodanne was returned to Primus, nested at the foot of the Gilmedian hills and the source of the River Moot; as the sun set on the prodigal city all was golden and calm as the quiet of the Final Dawn settled upon the place and Primus saw it once more. A quiet that was swiftly punctuated by strange noises and inhuman cries that came from far beneath city in the direction of the long untapped mines



O WHAT A TANGLED WEB THEY WEAVE

Just as it looked like things were beginning to calm down - there was a new City Spirit and a new Kallah Lord, the King was also the Governor, and little or no sign of the drowe, the Murder, as well as rumours that Radah had found Michael and gone south . . . Deci was ritually struck.

At first there were suggestions it was Radah, then Tangle, then it was ascribed to the Final Dawn. All anyone on the streets seemed to be certain of was that the Empire, and by Empire they meant that lot in Halgar, did nothing. The Empress and the Senate didn't lift a finger, if they even knew what had happened. Deci had been weakened by forces unknown and the people weren't happy about it. Some just grumbled but others began to ask questions. What was the point in being in the Empire? It was just a whisper in the smog, at first, then daubed on a wall in Cheapside, then another wall, then on the side of the Cathedral to the Black Dragon, then across the city: The Free City of Deci.

Towards the very end of the Final Dawn, the city felt a small surge of power coming from near Primus; Deci was ever so slightly stronger, but would it be enough . . .

NOTE: SINCE THE WRITING OF THIS PIECE, THE OFFICES OF THE PRIMAL TIMES IN DECI HAVE FORMALLY SECEDED AND WILL NOW BE PRODUCING THE DECI TIMES

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NOBLES OF THE EMPIRE

*So much rests upon your shoulders
So great are the burdens placed upon you
by simple accident of birth.
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and a competitive quote for our personalised tailor-made package simply leave your name, title and family house with the Door Steward at the Magiarchal Club
Don't delay, the land needs you.*

EARTHOLME:

Towards the end of Noveas a number of imps were seen to flee from fires around the city. They were mostly harmless, just seemed very keen to not return from where they had come from. Fortunately a group of young heroes in the Young Adventures Defence Association were there keep the matter from getting out of hand. Hopefully . . .

HALGAR

It seems the Imperial Capital didn't fare quite so well as some of the other cities. Mercenaries at the Final Dawn were not quite able to reach Halgar in time and some kind of entropic spindle apparently detonated or unravelled releasing quite a lot of entropy. Once aware of the situation the city was quick to mobilise. Was it enough though?

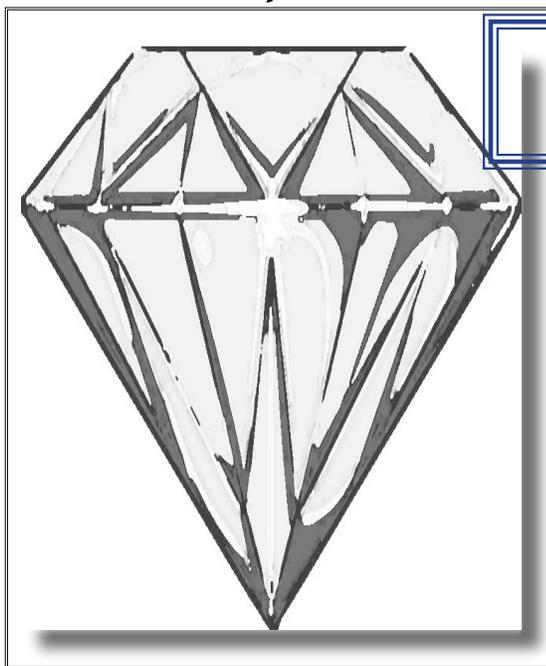
WHAT'S HAPPENED TO UNDEAD MEMBERS OF THE 68th?

In the sense that some of the Penal Legion with a previous penchant for hissing and trying to stop enemies of the Empire (or anyone really) from moving are exhibiting an annoying penchant for breathing, enjoying food (such as it is in the 68th) and using complete sentences that don't involve the word 'brains,' Answers on a post-card to T vo Lecht, who's probably not very happy

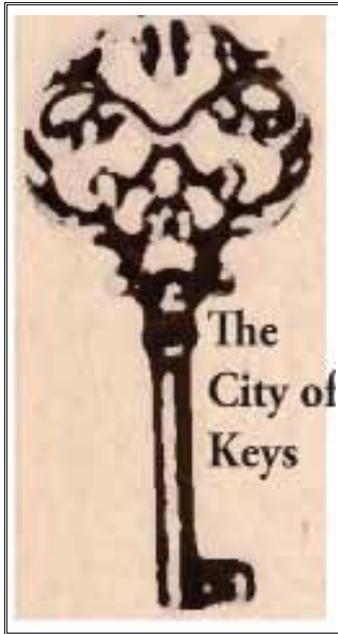
***PORT MIERE:** has dissappeared. Someone has lost an entire Imperial City. Turns out it was the Lord Inquisitor, on account of him having been on the Council for years and putting it out of Salas' reach. Apparently it's quite safe. Not on Primus. But quite safe. When's it due back I want to know.*

***ALGUZ:** was saved. Mercenaries reached Alguz just in time to avert the cascade of entropy from one of Salas's ritual spindles. Not everywhere else was so fortunate.*

***SCARLENE:** seems to be barely hanging on, another of these spindles unleashed its entropy over the city which seems to be suffering more than any other from the alliance between Salas the Deep and the Shadow of the First Evil. Little news is coming out of Scarlene at the moment, with the beggars*



seemingly all in league with or under the sway of Certizal. Governor Hylos has been characteristically tight-lipped about the situation. Still, at least it's still standing which is more than can be said for Keys, and even though their rituals were completed at the Dawn, not everything went their way, as well as Salas and SoFE there were other powers at work in Scarlene, both good and ill. Rumours of House Naquita working alongside the evil duo spread through the streets, but also that they were being opposed. By a long dead noble of Scarlene no less, the Netter and her ally Lord Marcus Blunt. And further that the Golden Princes had looked up from their trading affairs and were beginning to put their house in order. Perhaps that explained the imposing golden door which appeared in the centre of the city. A door which has, thus far, remained firmly, despite several efforts, shut.



It was the best of times, it was the worst of times: to be a citizen of Keys was to have seen certain death rushing towards you and then at the last moment to have been whisked away by Imperial saviours in blue and their unlikely allies.

Yet gratitude doesn't last forever and the discovery that, although the people and city spirit had been saved, all their possessions and the entire city itself had been washed away was a hard thing to bear.

The city of Keys is physically no more, any trace of it is now below water. Its people have been saved, but they and the Empire are now faced with a quandary - do they resettle the people in other Imperial settlements? To do so will surely spell the end of Keys as we knew it. In the interim, almost immediately after the Final Dawn a tent town has sprung up. On the very coast which was once part of the rural lands of Keys there is now a sprawling mass of tents and makeshift shanties. The people there are making do,

but something will need to be done to maintain law. Also Keys was always contested with the tribes, Armastas, upon which it was built were sacred tribal lands. Whilst much of those lands are now below water, will the tribes be content to let things lie? Keys was built through the investment of various noble houses - will they want to do so again? If not then who? Will the Empire cut its losses? The Realm of Glass already lost Gileenim, will it so readily let go of Keys?

ICKYBIGGLE

Deep in the ruins of Ickybiggle has appeared a great wooden head, jutting forth from the dusty ground that was once a city street. It is roughly 15ft tall, with slowly shifting features, but appears masculine with a thin layer of yellow-green moss forming itself into a thin layer of hair. Local goblin tribes have already fallen into squabbles surrounding this entity, with many claiming it as their new totem with little regard to any other claims. Rarely the



eyes if the head are rumoured to crack open, its giant oak lips slowly move to allow a booming voice to speak. Those who claim to have heard it speak note the name "Oakenheart Amora The Grand" to be how it refers to itself. At the same time druids in the area have noticed huge swathes of land turning black and plants rotting away as if the ley in the area had been destroyed. This is an issue that, so far, seems to be spreading rapidly and shows no signs of stopping. Atop such areas, many note screeching, grey-skinned tribal creatures shambling around.



SELLAVILLE

WHILST RELATIVELY QUIET OVER THE DAWN, IN SELLAVILLE IT WAS EVER BUSINESS AS USUAL:

On the Seventeenth day of Deeber a group of mercenaries set forth from Sellaville in the employ of the Inquisition. It was comprised of the mighty Mojo, Iigmar Silverbeard, Jaile of Port Miere, Egats the orc or goblin, Rye of Shehan, The furious angel, Monty Silver, Owh and the legendary Kheldar of the Phoenix.

They had been employed to deal with various loose ends after some of the lands greatest Legends had dealt with the demonic army that was amassing there.

Talk was of a falling star that had landed within the Shadowdells that had been entered by the group.

Within they found an elderly jailer of the star-prison, who had apparently been imprisoned by he who was supposed to be held within the Star. He seemed very pleased when the party freed him and went on his way. The intrepid adventurers then headed off after the rag tag remains of the demonic force. The demons have found themselves trapped on a hostile plane without the basics they need. This has led to some infighting, a bit of cannibalism, a brief power struggle, followed by raids out from the Shadowdells into the nearby rural areas of the Sellaville territory.

The largest group that formed from the demons had taken an old mages tower, having discovered it contains the resources required to sustain the demons physically and supernaturally, for a while. However, the brave mercenaries stormed the tower and put all the demons they found to the sword. Hurrahh!

OBITUARIES

Liara-Rememberance-of-Glory

They made an unlilely pairing, the Senator & the Penal Legionnaire, but it seems one half of the duo dubbed Team Healer is now going solo. Liara died for the last and (apparently) first (and only) time facing off against Salas's Avatar having helped save the people of Keys, which isn't a bad way to go. The mercenary turned convict after an early fatality involving a fellow mercenary made a name for herself in the Torsland Dales and was mysteriously popular with the ordinary Imperial spears, a surprising number of which removed their helms on hearing the news.

Snow

Yet another Torsland veteran fell for the last time over the Final Dawn. Snow, as the name suggested was a potent winter mage. His main claim to fame, was that on occasion he was only vulnerable to fire. This was perhaps not the secret it should have been. In the final days before the Dawn, even the Green Dragon killed him with fire. Likewise the Kallah Lord of Rodanne. Many were surprised to learn he was also a silver mage. Still he died, and died well against potent enemies and will surely and shortly return to Primus, stronger and perhaps a little wiser than before.

FOREIGN NEWS

THE BARONIES

The procession left as the first rays of sunlight crept over the summit of Coris Mount. Slowly they wound their way down the steep mountain path. Two members of the Ritter Grayve in faded, worn greys flanked a man stripped to the waist with a rough hood over his head. Behind them trailed a man with an axe. Their destination was the Town at the Mount's feet and the town square and the Circle's justice that waited there. What would normally be a show of force and grandeur had been reduced to a minimum required for the Circle was busy. All through the Baronies there were talks of small convergences. Half of a building appearing in a village here; A patch of desert there. But the Circle took no chances. All parts of the Circle were out in force ensuring that the new arrivals were safe and enforcing the Edicts on the unfettered users of Power that found themselves within the Circle's control. All parts, that is, except the Ritter Drachyul. Of this sect there was little sign - they had withdrawn to their strongholds within Wallastovia and Druitavn. The four reached the destination. The hooded man knelt, defeated and accepting of what was to come. The axe fell. A ripple started to build as the axe approached the man's neck but stopped abruptly as the two Ritter dropped to the ground. Bright red blood mixed with the mud. Deep within Wallastovia's forest something stirred at the scent of a death it had tasted over and over and yet been denied.

THE FAR NORTH

The church of Mortai, lead by High Priest Lithmore, headed to the village of Heldencroft in response to a request for aid. A village full of undead had arrived not far from them, and they were worried they posed a threat .

The church went to investigate, and found much more than first met the eye going on. Through careful negotiation, skill at dealing with the undead and thoughtful decision making they were able to help 2 tribes, both of whose banishment to the netherworld had ended. Only time will tell if peace will come to the village, but the Church has given them that chance.

ELSEWHERE IN THE NORTH

Small convergences have been taking place in the far North in a similar fashion to the Baronies, fractures in the land are however being mended, these bits of land vary in season, with a field of ripe golden corn flourishing whilst surrounded by snow, as if the seasons themselves are unwound. And a name is spoken with dread, something came with the Seasons, something that hungers, unquenched, Vel'Koz, Lord of the Eternal Thurst, swordless he broods and waits for the ice to melt

IN 未用此图
DETAILS ARE SCARCED, BUT IT SEEMS A GREAT BATTLE HAS BEEN FUGHT AND WON. HOWEVER, MANY-ARMED, THE EMPEROR'S HONOUR, LEAD A FURTHER OF COURAGEOUS TO APPEAR, THE BATTLE OF RAGS, FURTHER GAINING SOME VICTORIES AND FURTHER THE OTHER NATIONS. THE BATTLE WAS NOT SIMPLY ONE OF MARTIAL PROWESS BUT TO ENSURE THAT THE BATTLE OF CALM ALSO RISES, AND RAGS AND CALM WERE, ENDED MORE IN SILENCE

OOO CREDITS & THANKS

This Primal Times could not have been produced without the hard work of the following people. In no particular order thanks to the following:

Rebecca Milton, Lee Dale, Rob Benson, Richard Fromant, Giles Anderson, Richard Craig, Paul Dallen, Chris Andrews, Chris Greenaway, Pete Long, Grant Wills, James Isted and Alan Morgan.

I should say it is also necessarily not a complete account, simply a collation of what I have received. I would also encourage players and referees to submit things for inclusion in the Primal Times. Pages 1-9 are fully intended to be used and referred to IC. Many thanks to all the refs involved (not just those who wrote things) and especially those involved in this years Final Dawn.

As an aside - players wishing to follow up on anything within the Primal Times can contact me and I will pass such things on to the relevant referee.