

Kastali's Diary – Early Winter, 434 Tz

The Moonborn – Early Winter, Day 1

Tonight, under the light of the full moon, all of the scheming finally becomes apparent. Much as Darq fearlessly strode into Nabar's camp only a few weeks ago, tonight walked into the Galeshi refugee encampment without even a sword lifted against him. At the heart of the camp, the seven leaders of the Galeshi awaited him, with their venerable leader bedridden at their side. Having already sent word of his coming by means of a shadow wolf, Darq merely stood and made his proposal. If a hundred Galeshi warrior volunteers swore service to Darq, and became his vampiric slaves, then Darq would use the vampire warriors to slaughter the Orcs looting the Seven Cities.

The Galeshi, having no idea that Darq was behind the entire plan, agreed. With their people being a day away from annihilation by the Rabahn's Orcs, the seven leaders agreed unanimously to his terms. Many of the veteran warriors cried out with hatred at the idea, saying it was better to fight and die cleanly than become a thing of darkness. While in the end no true Galeshi warrior came to stand at Darq's side, more than two hundred desert fighters chose to accept his offer, and to embrace dark power in order to free their people of the Orc menace. When the choosing was done, and the deal sealed, Darq and his Ladies began the process of converting the warriors into an army of vampires – thus beginning the creation of Darq's Moonborn army.

Prince Darq – Early Winter, Day 2

In a bloody spectacle, Darq the Corrupt's vampire army mowed down the Orc horde like spring wheat before the scythe. Feasting upon fallen Orcs to regain their strength, it was only a matter of time before the vampires confronted and destroyed Kzar Rabahn. As the Orc killed his Vampires, Darq's mistresses raised them from the dead, sending them back into battle again and again, until Rabahn was reduced to little more than bloody meat. Once the the Orc Kzar had fallen, Darq strode amongst his feasting vampires, kicking them aside from the carcass as if they were hungry vultures. With his own hands, he reclaimed Rabahn's bones himself, placing them into a bloody sack, and then entrusted the relics to the care of his four dark mistresses.

And once the Orcs were eradicated, Darq personally led his vampire army right back into the Galeshi camps, and specifically slaughtered the seven leaders of the Galeshi peoples. Claiming the deserts in the name of the Order of Vladd, and ultimately the Necropolis Sect, the Vampire-Lord proclaimed himself Prince Darq, and that all the lands of the Galeshi were now his own.

Darq didn't lift a finger to stop the refugees from fleeing further into the trackless deserts, and ignored the blood oaths of the Sunborn Galeshi swearing to destroy him and his vampires. Returning to the greatest of the burned-out cities, now the Vampire sits quietly in the throne of its leaders, pondering his destiny. Greedy stragglers from the lower levels

of Galeshi come to swear fealty to him, some hoping to betray and destroy him. But there he sits without saying a word, ignoring them, with only a smug smile occasionally.

The Fall of Fairhaven – Early Winter, Day 3

With the Wylden fully under Crusader control, and with most of the armies of the Elemental League sealed within the stone coffin of Roanne Valle, now the Dark Crusade begins the next phase of their attacks. Spreading west like a deadly plague, the Crusade has already occupied the Atlantean countries of Fairhaven, brutally executing the leaders in public spectacles of bloodshed and torture. While the Crown Prince of Fairhaven managed to escape the deadly snare, and may be organizing some kind of resistance, the Crusade domination of the delta between the Roa Sanguine and Roa Kaiten is complete.

While Atlantean sky-castles drift lazily in the skies above Duncastor, there is only so much a Sky Captain can do with a handful of mages, a few dozen Dragonfly machines and a few hundred warriors and combat Golems. Below them, the tide of the Crusade armies already spreads thick, raising the dead as they go to fill their ever-widening ranks. The Dark Crusade has truly come to the Land, and it is only a matter of time before the Crusade rules over the entirety of the known world.

An Unexpected Visitor – Early Winter, Day 4

The Orcs began their first attacks against the walls of Rokos this morning, getting a feel for the strength and strategies of the defenders. Kzar Nabar is a cunning one, wasting his weaker warriors in order to measure the worth of the soldiers and generals guarding Rokos. While some of his tribes, angered that he would throw away their lives so easily, have slipped from his camp and escape back towards Prieska to loot and steal for themselves, Nabar still has enough warriors to do the job.

In Nujarek's Throne Room, I came upon a council meeting between Nujarek and his trusted generals – the Throne Lords of Atlantis. While they spoke of strategy, and how the retreating Atlantean armies from Khamsin should arrive to defend Atlantis just as Rokos fell, none of them were expecting the visitor that shimmered into place at the foot of their table.

A Solonavi mage, resplendent in his magical armor, addressed the Emperor and his men as would an envoy to a king. The Solonavi, in plain and simple terms, offered that their long-hidden sanctuary within Rokos – the Black Needle, or the Tower of the Oracles of Rokos – was in danger from the Orc menace. They offered an alliance to the Atlanteans, to fight side by side against the Horde, without price or oath from any man or woman who fought at their side. Nujarek, after a few moments of conference, agreed to the alliance.

Within the hour powerful Solonavi beings suddenly appeared on the walkways and towers of Rokos, lending their strength and magics to the Atlantean defenders. While the Oracle's Tower is still shielded from my scrying sight, reports from a number of soldiers

on the street note that a small army of masked warriors armed with powerful Solonavi weapons now man the gates to the Needle, and seem determined to hold the walls against any outsider.

The First Day – Early Winter, Day 5

While at first the Orcs showed a great deal of trepidation at the appearance of the Solonavi in Rokos, Kzar Nabar's speeches of gold, treasure and slaves beyond count appealed to the baser natures of many of the Raider warriors. While tales had circulated for weeks about Nabar's frequent visits from a Solonavi during the march to Prieska, Nabar dismissed the tales as rumors. Stating confidently that he had banished the Solonavi "advisor" after the being's plan to set aflame the libraries of Alrisar had failed, Nabar swore that he would personally oversee the destruction of every Solonavi defending Rokos!

At noon, the first major Orc attack took place, coming at the city in two prongs, from the west and the south. Hoping to keep the city walls intact for as long as possible, two armies of Atlantean warriors met each of the Raider spearheads in the grasslands outside the city. The battle between the armies was formidable, and for more than four hours the din of battle, the rattle of the Orc's fuser rifles, and the flares from magical explosions reverberated in the area. Above the battling armies, the sky-castle Tezla's Fury did their best to fire upon the enemy, and report troop movements with dozens of mage-writ messages.

In the end, the southern army defending Rokos broke and fled for the city, with the Orcs in close pursuit. The western army fared better, driving the Orcs into a retreat with waves of blasts from Storm Golem cannons and Solonavi spells. By the time the sun set over the beleaguered city, a unit of Half-Trolls had somehow managed to tear down one of the massive gates and most of the supporting foundation.

Unless the defenders of Rokos found a way to seal the breach, tomorrow morning Rokos would be surely be filled with Nabar's Raiders.

The Second Day – Early Winter, Day 6

With wisdom born of desperation, Captain Khazic of the sky-castle *Tezla's Fury*, crash landed his flying tower into Rokos, just inside the gap in the breached wall, effectively bottling the hole with more than twenty thousand pounds of metal and Magestone.

In answer to the Atlantean act, the Orcs let out a full assault against the South Wall anyway, with Nabar declaring again and again that the structural damage caused by the earth-quaking landing of the sky-castle would weaken other sections of the ramparts. Much to the defender's chagrin, Nabar was right. By swarming the south wall a second time, the Orcs were able to climb and gain control of a section of the walls for almost an hour.

During that bloody hour, Nabar's Shamans and Chaos Mages were able to melt the very rock the walls were built upon with powerful spells, and ultimately collapsed a three hundred foot section of Rokos' defensive perimeter. While the Solonavi were able to eventually clear the area of Orc invaders, more than two dozen Solonavi were killed during the course of the battle. Tomorrow's battle will surely decide the fate of Rokos, as there is little left between Nabar and his bloody victory.

The Final Day – Early Winter, Day 7

At first light, the Orc Clurch drums began to rattle out their war-beat, and the whining drone of the Clurch Pipers began to take up their wailing war cries. More than ten thousand Orcs lined up, ready to begin the charge. Within the city, maybe half that number of veteran soldiers remained to face their charge – but every able bodied man and woman stood ready with arms and armor to take up the fight against the invaders.

Kzar Nabar strode out of the front ranks, ready to give the order to charge. The world stood before him, and the oldest city in the Atlantean Empire ready to fall at his command. Through the course of a year Nabar had returned to the Fist, become Kzar of all the Orc tribes, and led his people successfully into the underbelly of the Empire. Now, with Rokos cracked before him, and Luxor cowering behind him, Nabar had achieved goals that even Kzar Rabahn had never dreamed of, and would be hailed as a Hero and an ancestor by all the members of the Broken Tusk.

But when Nabar's old Solonavi advisor manifested behind him, and vengefully chopped him into two pieces with a broadsword made of burning light, Nabar's dream died in an instant. And the Orc tribes, suddenly without their leader, dissolved into panicked chaos.

Stunned by the sudden change of events, the Atlantean generals did the only thing they could do – they ordered the full-scale attack against the panicked Orcs, with orders for no mercy, no pity, and no prisoners. The warriors of Rokos broke from the city and fell upon the scattering horde with a vengeance, and drove amongst the Orcs as wolves amongst sheep, dividing and felling them one group at a time.

While many Orcs survived and fled the slaughter, heading north towards the safety of Prieska as fast as their legs could carry them, more than five thousand Orc warriors died that day. The Solonavi leaders watched silently from the walls, studying the ebb and tide of combat that steadily wore away Nabar's army, then returned satisfied back within the Needle.

At the end of the day, the mortals hoisted Kzar Nabar's remains onto the highest tower of Rokos in celebration of the Atlanteans – albeit treacherous – victory.

The Arrival In Atlantis – Early Winter, Day 8

When the Atlantean armies double-timing from Khamsin returned home, many had expected that they would be seen as the saviors of the Empire. But with the stunning turn

of events at Rokos, and word of the Rebel victory at Khamsin having already reached the Imperial Courts, the men and women of the armies found themselves in a strange position. Denied the chance to destroy the hated Rebellion by order of the Prophet-Magus, and secondly denied the chance to fight the Orcs by the intervention of the Solonavi, they returned to their barracks dispirited and demoralized.

While all of the Atlantean soldiers I studied were ultimately pleased that Rokos would stand, and they knew their time would come in driving the Orcs from Prieska, the strange chain of events left many of them feeling betrayed and powerless. The fact that the Rebellion was now stronger than ever before – just when the fifteen year war had almost come to a close - made many of the soldiers extremely angry. To come home as something less than a war-hero, to a city where every tavern was filled with excited conversation about the Empire's new Solonavi allies, left many of veteran warriors in a black mood.

With the loss of their two leaders, Khan Rabhan and Khan Nabar, the Orcs have fallen into two seperate sub-groups, the Broken Tusk and Shadow Khans. I have detailed the new groups and added my notes to the faction shelf in my book case.

The River Bridge – Early Winter, Day 9

My scrying led me this morning to a sizable battle between Atlantean and Dark Crusader forces along the eastern shores of the Roa Kaiten. At a river bridge between the countries of Fairhaven and Duncastor, the Atlanteans are holding out against a tide of undead, Bloodsuckers and human Crusaders fresh from the Vurgra Divide.

While Crusader forces eventually managed to beat through the defenders and claim the bridge, something completely unexpected happened. Just at the point where one of the vampire-generals loyal to the Order of Vladd reached the midspan, the length of the bridge detonated in a series of violent black-powder explosions. When the smoke cleared, and the millennia-old bridge finished collapsing messily into the torrent of the Roa Kaiten, both the Atlantean and the Crusader armies were separated on either side of the river, which doesn't have another reliable crossing point for at least a hundred miles in either direction.

While I want to blame the Freyhaven Prince for the event, I believe that the Rebel presence must come from another source, as destroying the ancient stone bridge required a great deal of powder. After today's events, I'm determined to find out who so deftly sabotaged the tide of the Dark Crusade.

The Sky-Castle *Callius* – Early Winter, Day 10

An Atlantean sky-castle, the *Callius*, entered the battle today. Settling down in a protected field like an errant balloon, the Atlanteans disgorged a fleet of powerful new golems and a small army of battle-mages equipped with Technomantic weapons against the Sect forces Trapping the Crusader army against the waters of the Roa Kaiten, the

Atlanteans fought with a vengeance, destroying every Necromancer that they could get within the range of their guns and spells. Eventually, the Atlanteans drove the Necropolis forces upriver, into the thick forests to the north of Fairhaven.

However, the day was not over for the Atlanteans. Out of the sky, riding giant Griffins like the legends of old, came a strike-force of Knights Immortal warriors. With silent efficiency the war-party landed amidst the Atlantean mages and golems, slaughtered easy three or four dozen Atlanteans, and then took to the air again before the mages could regroup.

Through the course of this strike, right under the nose of the *Callius*, the Knights Immortal carried out the attack with a grim, honorable efficiency that only a High Elf could maintain. I wonder how many other similar attacks are happening throughout the eastern edge of the Empire, and what Emperor Nujarek could possibly do against such a rash of well-executed military strikes.

Resistance – Early Winter, Day 11

While observing a meeting of Crusader Necromancers and their Vampire-Generals within the captured Council Hall of Fairhaven, I happened to witness the arrival of a breathless Dark Crusader messenger. Without hesitation, the young warrior relayed the message – that the Dark Crusade either retreats from the country of Fairhaven, or every last one of them will die within Fairhaven's borders.

While the Necromancers initial response was to have a good laugh over the message -- the eruption of armed warriors and mages from a secret passage in the central fireplace caught everyone in the room off-guard.

The devastating attack by the combined force of humans, elves, trolls and dwarves took only minutes to complete. At the end of the battle, the savaged Vampires and Necromancers were drenched with lamp oil and lit aflame to prevent resurrection. With the aid of my scrying pool I was able to follow the band of mysterious warriors down the length of their secret tunnel and out into the thick forests surrounding the capitol city. As the group moved into the sunlight, I caught a glimpse of a red-skinned Troll in the trees ahead, wearing a tattered cloak around his shoulders. Before I could react, the Troll mage suddenly turned and looked right at me, as if he could somehow sense my presence. With a wave of his magical staff, I was suddenly jolted out of my trance as the scrying pool frothed and boiled before me.

As soon as the pool settled, I immediately went back to the grove, but the warriors and the mystic Troll were already gone. Even the ancient Drakona were unable to detect my presence - what manner of sorcery does this red-skinned Troll possess?

Counterattack – Early Winter, Day 12

Six units of the Crusaders' advanced scouts have moved across the river at a ford to the north, and began to search the area, sniffing out any hidden Atlantean forts and garrisons. By following the scouts for the course of a day, there were signs everywhere that the Knights Immortal windriders have attacked every Atlantean outpost along the northern edge of the client-state of Duncastor. While the larger cities stand untouched, virtually every outpost and supply station along the major roads has been attacked and burned by aerial forces.

A Discovery – Early Winter, Day 13

Answers have come to light through today's events. While following the actions of the Captain of the sky-castle *Callius*, drifting some seven hundred feet above the forest floor, I was lucky enough to be scrying when a series of events unfolded. When one of the Dragonfly riders noted a disturbance in the forests below, the Captain ordered the *Callius* moved closer to allow for more investigation. As sky-castles can only move along ley-lines, he could only get so close to the disturbance without risking plunging to the ground far below.

To my astonishment, from within a thick grove of trees, levitated up a small tower, perhaps a third the size of the *Callius*. The tower was of crude make, mere stones and wood knitted together by mortar and spike. At its base were a series of Magestone pieces, all glowing with a bright power. While the enemy castle was already out of firing range, and was somehow able to move off of the ley-lines without any trouble - the colors flying on the parapet indicated that the flying keep belonged to the Renegade Warlord, Raydan Marz. Add to that the dozen preening Griffons nested within the central bailey of his tiny sky fortress, and the source of the attacks against the Atlantean outposts became obvious – an alliance between the Emperor-hating Marz and a group of flight-capable Rivvenheim warriors. While the question of sending Dragonflies to pursue the tower were discussed, the Sky Captain of the *Callius* didn't want to risk any of his men against an enemy with unknown military capacities. Raydan Marz had personally defeated Emperor Nujarek in a pitched battle during the first year of his rule, and was known across the Land for his diverse tactics and well-equipped allies.

In the battle for Ashon Rye, where Raydan Marz, Kossak Mageslayer and Darq the Corrupt battled some three years ago, where Kho'Ta and Carmine Sura were killed in the course of a bloody five-way combat, the Magestone from that Magestone mine had allowed the victor – Raydan Marz – to build his own floating tower. And with the tales of the legendary Sphere of Jorandal being in Raydan's possession, he clearly had the ability to fly his castle anywhere he likes in the Land, without regard to ley-lines or borders. A dangerous man, that Raydan Marz. A very dangerous man.

A War in the Wylden – Early Winter, Day 14

Nothing appeals more to my darker side than watching swarms of pit-fighters, undead, and vampires raging through the flaming remains of a Centaur village. While the determined inhabitants of White Falls fought bravely against the Crusaders all morning, a

mere hundred Centaurs could not stand against the might of Dark Tezla's wrath. Even the red-skinned Mage-Troll defending the village eventually succumbed to the tide of hungry zombies, her corpse devoured by the Crusade's dogs of war. I only hope I witness the same fate for the red-skinned male Troll I saw just a few days ago. Now the Centaur village burns, and another pillar of smoke rises into the skies, joining the other dozen burn-sites visible from the highest tree-tops.

The Elemental retreat into Roanne Valle may have saved them from initial destruction, but the attacks against the Faerie, Centaur and Troll enclaves throughout the Wylden must be doing untold damage to the already fractured political structure of the League.

Venison – Early Winter, Day 15

Tonight, Kossak Darkbringer stands before the gates of Roanne Valle, with the Crusader army sweeping behind him into the night. Once the greatest champion of the League, this Vampire Troll stands as a puppet to Darq the Corrupt and the Order of Vladd – and stands as the key to the destruction of the League. By the power of the Vermillion Crown relic that Darq wears an entire world away, the thoughts of slave and master are as one. From everything I have researched over the last few years, from Kossak's capture at Darq's hands, to the failed quest by Mageslayer's nephew Huhn to rescue him from the Necropolis, to Kossak's creation as a Vampire, all of it is made possible by the powers of the Vermillion Crown.

To celebrate his arrival, the Order of Vladd is holding a venison party tonight – exclusively collected from more than a hundred Centaurs slaughtered at the battle of White Falls!

Enigmas – Early Winter, Day 16

Within Roanne Valle, I have made an astonishing discovery. The same red-skinned mage I encountered in Fairhaven only a few days ago has somehow made his way to the Elemental capital, and is making a presentation to the Circle of Nine. While the meeting room is shielded against all forms of magic, including my magical means of scrying, I am unnerved by what I have seen. There is no way that a Troll could make his way from Fairhaven, through the Crusader lines, and up to the Wylden Plateau and into the castle without opposition. While there is some chance that the mage-Troll may have ridden part of the way on dragonback, his access to Roanne Valle without being seen is extremely alarming and may show a lethal chink in the Crusader's plans. Is there some secret way into the Valle from the Sturnmounts? Or is there an underground passage leading from the forests up into the heart of the Elemental citadel?

I have already begged my masters to let me somehow pass along the knowledge I have gained to the Crusaders. But they state that I am now forever neutral, and that I am not to be allowed to change the destiny of the Land.

Thwarted – Early Winter, Day 17

In exploring the castle of Roanne Valle, through the hundreds of beautiful, stone-carved rooms and passages that make up its labyrinthine interior, I have discovered something that disturbs me greatly. Deep within the stone, there are entire areas – areas the size of a small city – which are proof against magic and my own powers of scrying. While I know that the Glade Priestesses have this kind of capability, I thought it would be reserved for the deep forests and natural places in the Land, and not in the heart of this makeshift Elemental tomb. Whatever lies within those spaces is beyond my reach, and no one seems to enter or leave these areas, as if they have been quarantined away from the real world.

What do the Elementals have prepared? Are these the true lairs of their dragons, perhaps the breeding grounds where the young dragons and vulnerable eggs are kept safe?

Stonekeep – Early Winter, Day 18

Stonekeep Castle, to the north of Roanne Valle by a dozen leagues, is controlled by Elemental armies loyal to the Spirit of Tezla. Having won their right to hold the castle after soundly defeating the armies of the Knights Immortal last spring, the Elementals have fared against weather and Crusader attacks to keep this valuable fortress in their possession. While the High Elves are likely sealing themselves in their peak-castles against the harsh winter to come – as snow is already scattered throughout the Rivvenheims – the busy Elemental armies in Stonekeep are bustling about, preparing weapons, supplies and plans for the months to come. They plan to start sneak attacks against the Crusader forces and supply lines in the lowlands, and the combined force of Forest Elves, Troll, Centaurs and Faeries has made some talk about continuing to raise a strong resistance against the invaders – for the good of the Land, rather than for the good of the Spirit of Tezla.

Amongst my own people, this kind of talk would be a punishable blasphemy. Here in Stonekeep talk of choosing to serve the Land over the wishes of the Elemental Prophet-Priest Tremelen and the Spirit of Tezla seems to be a topic spoken by nearly everyone – and amazingly is a philosophy toasted and praised at Stonekeep's long dinner tables every night. If this kind of fracture exists here, in one of the two fortresses remaining to the Elementals, then it is only a matter of time before the League is truly destroyed from within.

The Amazons – Early Winter, Day 19

This morning I moved my scrying to the peaks of Nepharius Mons, the homeland of the Amazons. Ever since Ribhan Crag brought his Amazon slave back from a scouting mission a few years back, I've been intrigued by these warrior-women. With their reverent belief in the powers of animal spirits, the near-religious mental states they achieve when training for combat, and their complete physical and psychological domination of the "husbands" their mancachers capture in battle, at first glance the Amazons seem little more than superstitious savages. But when I look at the architecture

of their centuries-old stone buildings, the offering-sites and totem-temples found scattered throughout the forests of Cainus Mons, and the ritual scarification that accompanies every phase of the life of an Amazon, I am beginning to understand why these warrior-women have grown so talented at the skill of battle.

Additionally, the libraries of the Necropolis hold tales of the origins of the Amazon peoples. One book in particular speaks of a band of human Elemental priestesses that left the Wylden centuries ago in order to pursue their own unique version of Elemental totem magic.

Captured Males – Early Winter, Day 20

With more than eighty tribes living on the slopes of Nepharus Mons, the Amazons at first seemed to be a very divided people. Each tribe, devoted to one or more animal spirits, is led by an Amazon Queen chosen through trial of combat. While the lesser Amazon warriors may earn the right to have a handful of husbands to serve as their slaves, the Queens seem to have an endless harem of husbands ready serving them hand and foot. The males are fed food mixed with a special plant-sap that inspires a kind of dazed loyalty and worship. Only the newest husbands not yet fully under the control of the drug are prone to outbreaks of free thought and violence.

While I was provident enough to witness an escape attempt by a young human male from his owner, watching the entire tribe's warriors gleefully hunt him down like a wild boar and stab him to death with spears convinced me that any attempt by the Crusaders to capture the Amazon homeland is going to be a difficult one. The Amazon Queen that led the hunt, a powerful young woman named Valia, seems to be well respected by her fellow warriors, and was respectfully deferred to by the other Amazons when the time came to deliver the killing blow.

Totem Warriors – Early Winter, Day 21

I witnessed the initiation of a pair of Amazon warrior-maidens under the light of the full moon. In a fire-lit temple clearing, two girls prepared for battle under the careful observation of more than a dozen Amazon priestesses. One girl, armed with twin silver knives and wearing only a headdress of raven feathers, seemed to be far more avid for the battle than her opponent, a sword-wielding warrior wearing bracelets and necklaces of jaguar teeth. But shortly before the battle began, both of the maidens invoked their totems, asking for the spirits of the wild to enter them and help them in the coming fight. While I've witnessed Elemental priestesses call in vain to the Land to protect them, just before they died at the hands of my old Necropolis warband, these maidens seemed to be truly infused with the very totem-spirits they called upon for aid.

Blessed with the ferocity and traits of their totem animals, the two maidens clashed in bloody combat, slashing and feinting in a dizzying dance of death. In the end, the jaguar maiden won by rendering her opponent senseless through a bloody series of bone-snapping kicks to the head and throat. While both girls were declared by the priestesses

as full warriors of the tribe, able to hunt and kill alongside their sisters, only the jaguar-warrior was given the honorary mancatcher staff, indicating that she alone would be allowed to catch her first 'husband'.

Powder Mines – Early Winter, Day 22

I've learned something astonishing this morning, as I followed a band of Amazon warriors through the thick forests of Nepharus Mons. On the far outskirts of the massive mountain, there are entrances to underground mines - filled with Dwarves and Northlanders! While the Amazons are guarding the site, none of the outsiders are showing any signs of dazed, drug-induced loyalty, and are going about conducting some kind of mining operation!

Upon looking at the piles of dust-filled sacks stored at the entrance to the mine, it seems that I've discovered a source of the Revolutions' explosive black powder. From everything I can detect, the underground mines have been operating for years, and the network of caverns and tunnels spreads for miles underneath the mountainside. While the Amazon's role in the Revolution has long thought to be about freedom, it seems that the Amazons have more involvement in the uprising against Atlantis than the masters of the Crusade ever thought!

Queen Corella – Early Winter, Day 23

Amongst the different Amazon tribes, clashes for dominance and superiority are constant. While the dozens of tribes each follow their own calling, there is one Amazon Queen who strives to conform all of the warrior-women to her own vision. Queen Corella, the leader of a tribe devoted to the dire wolf that haunts the northern forests of the Land, seems to have at least ten other Amazon Queens under her yoke. Throughout the course of a day I followed this beautiful but cold-hearted woman and watched as she meted out justice, arranged for the building of new warrior-temples throughout her territory, and even helped herself to 'husbands' belonging to other Queens.

But most surprisingly of all was the revelation that came when I watched her undress and prepare to bathe privately in a sacred hot spring. Like a ghost, a powerful Solonavi spirit moved from within her flesh and manifested into solid form beside her in the steaming pool -- and then discussed the day's events in detail, analyzing her every action and offering advice on how to continue to dominate all of the Amazons under her rule. At the heart of their conversation, the two conspirators discussed Amazon Queen Valia in detail, and how she would need to be removed in order for Corella's rule over the Amazon territories to be absolute.

My examination of the Elven Lords is as complete as my scrying pool allows. This self-appointed peacekeeping force is determined to stop chaos wherever they find it. How they define "chaos" however, is another matter.

The Occupation of Prieska – Early Winter, Day 24

While many of the Orcs have retreated into the Blasted Lands, or are trying to cut their way through Rebel territory to return home with their loot, there is a sizable number of Orcs who are not just looting Prieska, but seem to be setting up homes and permanent structures. Having gained more gold, food, slaves and weapons than they can carry, a number of Orc Khans have chosen to stay in Prieska and occupy the territory, rather than return to the Fist and split the spoils with the Broken Tusk tribes.

The Shadow Khans plan to weather out the coming winter in Prieska, and then continue their raids into Atlantean territory next spring from a reliable base rather than trekking across five hundred miles of territory into uncertain situations. Most astonishing.

The Oracles of Rokos – Early Winter, Day 25

The Oracles of Rokos have made a presentation to the rulers of Rokos, and sent missives to Atlantis apologizing for their centuries-long deception. The Oracles, acting as the speakers for their Solonavi masters, state that Rokos is still an Atlantean city under Atlantean rule, and that only the Needle and its compound will stand under Solonavi protectorate. The Oracles state that they will continue to offer divinational information to Atlantis, just as they did for Tezla, provided that Atlantis acts in good faith back towards the wizards of the Needle.

To my knowledge, for centuries the Oracles have acted as the advisors of nations in the western half of the Land. While Sect histories report that Tezla never truly trusted them, the Oracle's prediction of his birth and divination of his remarkable career shaped his life in amazing ways. Even the ancient Kosian warrior kings were advised by the Oracles, as their hooded 'seers' were sworn to be revered and holy. By the mere warning from the Oracles, a brewing civil war between the western and eastern Kosian Empires was finished overnight, as the superstitious Kos feared the wrath of the Oracles, and dreaded what would happen to them if they stood against the hands of fate.

While the truth behind the Oracle's nature is now revealed, and their ongoing quest throughout the Land to discover young men and women of every race who possess oracular talent is now decipherable in the face of their larger plan, the origins of the Solonavi are still unknown, as are their goals and purposes. But their link to the Oracles of Rokos is now revealed, and something of their true power has been revealed.

The Offer of a Lifetime – Early Winter, Day 26

Emperor Nujarek today received a private visitor – a Solonavi the color of burning fire, of a kind that I've never seen before. This Solonavi, in a hushed conference amidst the Emperor's private garden, made the Emperor an unbelievable offer. In exchange for a favor at a later time, the Solonavi swore that they would help Emperor Nujarek personally lead Atlantis to conquer every other faction of the Land. Their list of destruction included the stalwart Rebels, the invading Crusaders, and even the vaunted High Elves of Rivvenheim. All this would be given in exchange for a single favor to be

named later on in time. For a single favor, the Solonavi will give the world to Nujarek, and the alliance between Atlantis and the Solonavi will result in ensuring the eternity of the false Tezla's cursed Empire.

Nujarek, overwhelmed by this offer, asked for a day to ponder the offer. The Solonavi agreed, and then vanished without a trace. Within minutes, Nujarek spoke of the entire affair to the false Prophet, Osiras. Osiras, as the head of the mages of the Atlantis Guild, and as the lying voice of the Atlantean's false Tezla, told Nujarek that he must accept the Solonavi's offer for the good of Atlantis. Nujarek agreed, and made preparations to receive the Solonavi the following day, to cement the alliance that would guarantee Atlantis' place in history.

Nujarik's Answer – Early Winter, Day 27

Emperor Nujarek and Prophet-Magus Osiras met with the Solonavi this morning in his private garden. Much to Osiras' surprise, Nujarek gave the Solonavi the opposite answer.

No.

For a man gripped by greed and power-madness, who was seemingly appointed to the throne of Atlantis because he was a loyal puppet of the Atlantis Guild – Nujarek seems to have thrown away the chance of a lifetime. The Solonavi, towering over the Emperor in a blaze of angry, bloody light, told Nujarek that he would not get a second chance, and that he would ultimately regret not accepting the offer. Nujarek told him that he likely would, but that it was time for humanity to have its own destiny, and for Atlantis to forge its own path, rather than relying on non-Atlanteans to pave the path for them.

The Solonavi vanished in a flare of fire; Prophet-Magus Osiras stormed out of the garden in a blind fury, muttering to himself that as he put Nujarek on the throne, he could tear him off just as quickly. Nujarek, the villain of Atlantis, sat on his marble bench, alone, gently holding his scepter of rule. The look on his face – somewhere in-between resignation and wisdom – reminded me of the old pictures of Tezla. Powerful, determined, and regal. Above all, Atlantean, before anything else. The world is about to change. I can sense it.

My notes, though brief, on the Solonavi are complete, and can be found with the other groups and factions of the Land. Also, a new series of scrolls have been added containing information on the history of the Land, from the Age of Mist to the current Age of Chaos. They are available at the very bottom of my bookshelf.

The Solonavi's Spell – Early Winter, Day 28

Last night, the Solonavi performed a masterful spell from within their tower in the heart of Rokos. With a powerful flare of power, every ley-line in the Land – the source of all magical energy for mages of every race and culture – flared with a great bright light. When the blinding radiance ceased, every mage in the Land with any aspect of talent for

magery could feel that the amount of magical energy emanating from the ley-lines had doubled or tripled, and that the raw potential for spell-crafting had just been amplified beyond mortal reason. At the heart of this effect stands the Needle in Rokos, as the tower seems to have been originally built centuries ago for this exact purpose.

At the sight of the shining lines of light, citizens throughout Rokos are in a panic; the roads are jammed with people fleeing the city. While the Solonavi have still made no claims on Rokos, they are not stopping people from leaving, nor are they calming any of the rumors that they mean to destroy any Atlantean left within three days time.

The Fall of Luxor – Early Winter, Day 29

Yesterday, a flight of more than a hundred glowing, Solonavi warriors were seen flying over the western wall of Rokos. Within minutes, I found them again, laying an aerial siege to the Citadel of Luxor. Within the space of an hour, every Atlantean Mage, Golem and Warrior in Luxor was dead, destroyed by the power of the Solonavi.

This morning, the Solonavi announced to every king, queen, leader and tyrant throughout the Land that they have the only true Tezla; that his soul lies with them, and willingly serves their cause. To add to this outrage, they also state that the Tezlas of Atlantis, the League and the Sect are all false. With respect to my masters, these Solonavi speak lies; the only true Tezla is Dark Tezla, and nothing will ever convince me of the opposite. I will follow my orders and do my duty, as I have sworn to do these next twenty years – but I will never follow a Solonavi Tezla, and nothing will ever convince me that your Tezla is anything more than a lie.

Rokos lies abandoned, save for fools and those loyal to the Solonavi. Atlantis is in chaos, and dire times lie ahead.

The Revelation – Early Winter, Day 30

Emperor Nujarek, standing before a sea of more than a hundred thousand Atlantean citizens, both common and noble by birth, gave a speech tonight that would ultimately shape the history of Atlantis.

With Prophet-Magus Osiras seething in the shadows behind him, Nujarek told the crowd everything he knew about the events of the last few weeks, ranging from the reasons for the retreat at Khamsin, to the victory at Rokos, to finally the offer of the Solonavi to Nujarek for ultimate power.

Nujarek spoke honestly, in that he said that he believed that Atlantis should be for Atlanteans, and that for outsiders to take the reins of human destiny was wrong. He admitted with uncommon candor that he did not expect to live beyond the next few days; that his enemies were many, and there where whispers of assassins around every corner. But he vowed, as the reigning Emperor of Atlantis, that he would spend every last hour with dignity and purpose.

He swore that in the next few days, he would be sanctioning the creation of a new army - the Imperial Legion – made up of volunteers rather than raw recruits. An army whose ranks were filled with humans devoted to fighting for Atlantis, ready to retake the lands stolen from the Empire by the Rebellion, and ensure that the Orcs were driven out of Prieska once and for all.

He swore that he would create a military order that would rival even that of Tezla's famous armies, and that the army would work hand in hand with the mages of the Atlantis Guild at every victory – but would rely upon the experienced generals for leadership, rather than the mages who knew spellwork better than tactics. He swore that he would lead Atlantis into a new era where Tezla's vision for the Empire would be assured, and there would never again stand a threat that would undermine Atlantis from within. He swore that if he would lead this fight for as long as he was able, against all odds, and that he would fight as an Atlantean in the dark times ahead, rather than a puppet of dark powers.

The crowd roared and surged before him, driven to passion by his words, believing in his message of humanity's manifest destiny, and fulfilling Tezla's dream of one Empire across the width of the Land. They cheered and shouted, and found purpose amongst darkness that had claimed their souls for the last fifteen years.

But then the crowd abruptly hushed. From behind Nujarek came Tezla's Avatar Golem. Expecting an assassin, when Nujarek turned and readied himself to accept the blade, he was shocked to see Tezla hovering before him. He dropped to one knee in homage immediately, and bowed his head.

When Tezla put the crown on Nujarek's brow – Tezla's very own crown, from when he was the first Grand-Magus of Atlantis – the crowd went absolutely wild. When Nujarek stood, blazing with the enhancing fire of Tezla's magical blessing, the populous of Atlantis were near ecstatic with fervor. A hundred thousand citizens chanting Nujarek's name, young and old, rich and poor, with soldiers by the thousands screaming to be the first to be taken onto the lists of Nujarek's Imperial Legion. For the good of Atlantis, the good of the Empire, in Tezla's name, they would unite and raise swords to destroy the false Tezla's in an undeniable purge of sword and Technomancy.

In that moment, my masters, Atlantis was reborn and became the Atlantean Empire. Emperor Nujarek, whether genius or fool, is no longer a puppet of the mages – but a true leader, ordained and loved by Tezla, and revered as Tezla's son by all of the Atlantean people.

The year has become 435 Tz; and it becomes the Age of Power.