

Aventurian Herald

Aventurian Herald 174

Politics: The End of Haffax

Citizens of the Raulian Empire, rejoice! Your worst enemy, the most hated Helme Haffax, "Lord Protector" of his own grace, traitor to the Middenrealm, most abhorrent demon-lover and bloody warlord, is dead!

Regions: Golden Flowers in New Light

Kurkum finally snatched from the claws of blasphemous Mactaleänata: after 20 years, Gilia of Kurkum, the High Queen of the Amazons, set out in the spring of 1038 FB to reclaim Kurkum, the traditional seat of the High Queens.

Temple News:

A New Mistress in Hesinde's House

In a surprise move, Arba of Silas quietly stepped down after many years as revered leader of the Temple of Hesinde in Vinsalt. The secret reasons for her withdrawal are still open to much speculation.



Aventurian Herald, Rahja 1039 FB

A New Age for Tobrien! Mendena is Ours!

MENDENA. Rejoice, oh Empire of Raul, as finally all that belongs together is rejoined! Make way for the triumphal procession! The Empress' campaign against the traitor Haffax is over. As of the 30th of Rahja 1039 FB, after more than 20 years of fighting, the griffon banner of the Raulian Empire flies once more over Mendena. Our beloved Empress reclaimed Tobrien after dealing a devastating blow to the army of the thrice-cursed Lord Protector!

On the Day of Weaponsmiths, the Empress summoned her vassals to Gallys, where she mustered a force of guard regiments, territorial armies, knights with lances, and volunteers and supplies from Arania—12,000 combatants in all, supported by dozens of mages and Blessed Ones from all of the Churches of the Twelve. At the same time, at the behest of the Empress, Bernfried of Honorstone and Walpurga of Lionshead (the dukes of Tobrien and Weiden, respectively) arrived with their troops in Peraineford to join in the march against Mendena.

Following this impressive muster, the main Imperial army marched 'round the former Death Wall towards Eslamsbridge. Shortly before reaching their objective, one segment of the army split off and marched south, while Imperial Marshal Alrik of Bluepine led another segment northward. The original plan was to unite the three armies again at Mendena, launching a pincer attack from three directions. Things didn't go as planned, but all turned out well in the end. Such are the vagaries of war.

As was expected, the forces of the Lord Protector resisted the main army most vigorously, but even the hated battle golems from the forges of Yol-Ghurmak could not resist the Imperial soldiers at the Battle of the Tesralloop. The enemy relief force, apparently led by Haffax himself, inflicted some losses on our beloved Empress's forces via cunning use of magic and golems. However, the Lord Protector could hold out only for a short time against the onslaught of the highly-motivated Imperial ranks before his defenses gave way. What had once been thought impossible was now made

real—Helme Haffax, the Undefeated, was retreating to Mendena!

Meanwhile, the southern army had little trouble reclaiming the fortresses of Valdahon and Castlehome, and even managed to liberate the once-proud amazons' fortress, Lionstone, which was occupied by a demon in the war with Borborad, the Ravager of the Spheres. The resident demon was exorcised in an incredible show of power by the combined strength of the Churches, guilds, and warriors.

While these events were unfolding, the northern army suffered great losses reclaiming the seemingly impregnable fortress of Wolfstone, a thorn that had long festered in the side of free Tobrien. The army that marched under the double-headed Wolf banner of Tobrien and the Bear standard of Weiden soon faced superior numbers at the Battle of Dogulford. These loyal, battle-seasoned fighters from Weiden and Tobrien, together with their faithful allies from Bornland, stood their ground and eventually beat back the enemy, inflicting numerous casualties and pursuing the enemy to Mendena.

On the morning of the 30th of Rahja 1039 FB, all three armies joined up again in front of the wall of the formerly proud Tobrian ducal city, as planned. But instead of attacking immediately, our generous Empress extended a hand of mercy to the city's inhabitants and soldiers. She gave them yet another chance to surrender, swear fealty to her, and return to the fold of the Realm. In a voice that carried for miles, she promised forgiveness to all those who had not allied themselves with the demons. In reply, she heard only the laughter of Circaya Badrese, the herald of the Lord Protector. With righteous anger, her Imperial Majesty gave the signal to attack.

As one, the Imperial army charged with a shout. Surprisingly their progress was stopped by unexpectedly heavy missile fire from Mendena. The defenders, it seemed, had prepared for the battle by stationing mighty golems at the walls. The Empress' signal flags went up, and the golems' siege artillery fire was returned by the dwarf

regiment known as Ingerimm's Hammer. The second Imperial assault wave surged forward but the army was stopped again, this time by golems, demons, and Zant riders, against which the regular soldiers of Rohaja could do little. The army's many Blessed Ones of Rondra joined with the elite of the Realm, like the heroic Griffon Guard and the elite Regiment Perricum, and beat back their unnatural enemies, though at the cost of many lives. Even though the enemy was defeated, it managed to unleash one last strike in the form of a powerful magical ritual, but their curse was defeated by the combined efforts of the Empress' Blessed Ones, mages, and the best fighters of the Realm.

The enemy's will to fight was broken. Like an unstoppable flood, Imperial soldiers flowed into the city. Even Helme Haffax tried to hide in the rubble, but the brave heroes of the Empress soon tracked him down. Imagine their surprise when they found Haffax's dead body and lifted his visor only to learn that this was not the Lord Protector. Instead, it was Dherin Bentelan, a loyal follower of the traitor who had been presumed killed days earlier. Dherin had used magic to assume the guise of Haffax.

Even this bitter news could not temper the joy. Cheers went up from the victorious army when the banners of the Raulian Empire and the Tobrien Dukedom were raised above Mendena, and Count Bernfried of Tobrien knelt before our beloved Empress with tears in his eyes to reclaim his ducal city. The surviving inhabitants of Mendena slowly filtered out of their hiding places to join in the celebrations and welcome their Empress and their count.

The events of the day weighed on everyone's hearts, and all was not joy and



gladness. Many brave warriors had fallen during the war, among them Count Danos of Lourcing, the King of Knights, and Jakoon Zirkisnjak Turjeleff, Master of the Abbey of the Domain Middenrealm. May Boron be merciful to their souls, and may Rondra welcome them to her table!

*Rondraia Feriola
(Rafael Knop, with many thanks to
Dominic Hladek, Katja Reinwald,
and Daniel Simon Richter)*

An End to the Terror—Helme Haffax's Last Gambit

PERRICUM. Citizens of the Raulian Empire, rejoice! Your worst enemy, the most hated Helme Haffax, "Lord Protector" of his own grace, traitor to the Middenrealm, abhorrent demon-lover and bloody warlord, is dead! But how did it happen?

Haffax Ante Portas

Shortly before the Nameless Days between 1039 and 1040 FB, when the forces of the Empress were arriving at Mendena, the army of Haffax the Traitor sailed into the harbor of Perricum. The blasphemous enemy used demon arks to carry troops secretly beneath the waves to invade the naval base and the city. Meanwhile, far away, the Empress was unknowingly fighting Haffax's doppelganger in Mendena.

Haffax's first move was to ask for parley with the Sword of Swords, Ayla Armalion of Shadowground. Everybody expected treason. What else could one expect from Haffax? But surprisingly, in front of hundreds of anxious witnesses, he offered to place the archdemonic shard into the care of the Church of Rondra. Had the sinner finally seen the error of his ways? Was this a last attempt to save his soul? Like a rocking barrel of Hylail Fire, emotions seethed among the observers from both sides—one small spark would set them off. And that is exactly what happened! Faced with peace and parley, the hatred of the shard could not be contained. Soon, bitter fighting raged through the streets of Perricum. Ayla of Shadowground faced Haffax in personal combat and wrenched the shard from him with her bare hands. She will always be remembered for putting an end to Haffax's corruption and recovering his most powerful weapon.

Even without Haffax, the battles raged all through the Nameless Days. On the fourth day, the Empress, hurrying from Mendena,



arrived to support the brave warriors of Perricum. Fighting as one, they reclaimed the city from the demon-corrupted enemy.

Towards Gareth

Scouts knew that Haffax's army was cutting a swath along the Darpat through Rommilys to Gareth, but rumors flew about the size, position, and route of the army, and also of the whereabouts of the Marshal himself. After a time, many came to suspect that these reports were nothing but a clever campaign of hoaxes and misinformation. As they chased rumors all over the countryside, the defenders of the Middenrealm began to feel they were being deceived by enemy agents who lurked among their own ranks. When and how would the attack against Gareth take place?

The inhabitants of the city spent days preparing for whatever the enemy might throw against them, but nothing could

have warned them of the chimera hordes that were slipping by the defense of the militia to penetrate the city and spread terror. The death toll was high the night Haffax died.

The Death of Haffax

The hated master strategist and traitor almost succeeded in his plans, and would have watched the Empress' glorious army turn to dust and ashes. Haffax's clever plan drew her forces out of their garrisons to attempt to reclaim Tobrien. This grand deception would give him the chance to capture Gareth in one masterful blow.

On that fateful day in Praios 1040 FB, the Shadow Marshal stormed the Imperial City in front of his army and a giant horde of chimeras he unleashed in the Demon Fallow. His creatures were everywhere. They tore apart everything in their path, throwing the Imperial City into chaos. Only a few burghers kept their heads, among them Leomar of Berg, who died a hero's death fighting Haffax after escaping the dungeons. He and his supporters cornered the traitor in the Manticore Temple. Eyewitnesses reported what happened next.

... So I stand in my bakery, and I grab my rolling pin. None of them will get in here, that is certain! I barricade everything with boards because I know looters always look for bakeries first. My neighbor Ehrwald says to me, "But chimero-demons eat no honey-bread!" As I hammer the final nail into the wood, I answer, "How do you know what demon chimeras eat? Are you Borbarad's stable boy?" I leave a peephole, and through it I see the ugly temple of Kor. I see everything, though I should look away. Disgusting beasts, unformed, horrible... among them things so... shapeless I do not want to remember them.

Then I see Haffax, locked in battle with people from the temple. The Demon Protector issues an inhuman roar and strikes blow after blow, driving the heroes back. He bleeds from dozens of wounds but keeps fighting, as wild as one of those demons of his.

Then one of the heroes attacks like nothing you ever see! A rain of strikes, like those of Adersin, but much better! With every strike, the traitor stumbles back. Then another warrior runs at him from the left like Kor, Rondra's hound himself, and ducks under Haffax's defenses. Blood spills, and that pig Haffax is howling. "Hooraaaaah!" I cheer. "Bleed the executioner Haffax like he made our people bleed!" These were my exact words! Then there is another right-left-feint-windmill combination, like only the Sword King could do it. I know I'm only a sugar baker, but I can tell when somebody knows how to wield a weapon, and these people knew! Suddenly there is a flash, and I am blinded by magical fire or light. When I can see again, I watch the final blow, but by Phex it comes so fast that I cannot even see who made it. The blade slips past Haffax's sword by a hair's breadth, but that is all it needs to hit him, and he collapses. That was the end of the traitor, but not the end his soul. I hope he burns in the Netherhells for all eternity."

—Bosper Bellentor, sugar baker from Milersground

When demons prowl, it is not words but thrusts and cuts that matter. Kor was laughing that night because he saw a GOOD FIGHT such as had not been seen there for many a year. We humans are only worms before the gods, but on that night, one god's gaze happened upon a battle between a few mortals, exalting them above all. And now HE decides what price Haffax will have to pay.

—Korianna Ronfortez, Daughter of the Manticore and head of the Temple of Kor in Gareth-Milersground

Baltram of Liepenberg, managing editor of the Aventurian Herald
(Dominic Hladek)

Aventurian Herald, Praios 1040 FB

The Siege of Travia's Home

ROMMILYS. Following the horrible events of the Battle of Perricum, another important city of the Middenrealm awaited Haffax's mercenary thugs with terror. The forces of the Lord Protector had their eye on another main temple of the Twelve. Colonel Gritta Greystone marched the army of the traitor of Perricum towards Rommilys to threaten the Emperor-of-Peace Yulag Temple. The forces of Swantje, the Margravine of Ravenmouth, were still in Mendena, which left the city's defenses in a weakened state. Covert actions of the enemy included an attempt on the life of Chancellor Beergard of Ravenmouth, and even the White Magic-aligned *Information Institute* temporarily closed its gates—an attempt by Dean Workenrock to prevent enemy forces from entering the academy. Despite these conditions, the Rommilysians managed to shelter behind their walls in time. Expecting the Realm to send aid to the famous home of Travia, the enemy's forces became entrenched to establish their hold before proceeding to plunder the surrounding countryside.

The battle for the city erupted long before the relief force could arrive. Initial exchanges from both sides mainly involved artillery fire. Then Haffax's servants charged the city with two demon arks! But even these hellish weapons could not break the Rommilysians' spirits, and the arks retreated.

The battle had raged for five days by the time the Imperial relief force entered the fray. Haffax's siege engines held out for some time, but then the tide of battle turned in Rommilys' favor, and Colonel Greystone was forced to flee. The city survived the battle without severe damage, but the surrounding villages weren't so lucky. Much now needs to be rebuilt, and people are saying that lawlessness is spreading in the Rommilysian Marches!

Rondraia Feriola
(Rafael Knop, with many thanks to
Dominic Hladek, Katja Reinwald,
and Daniel Simon Richter)

Kosh Courier, Rahja 1038 FB

Charissia Almost Caught!



ANGBAR. The arch-villainess Charissia, who sent the Alagrimm against the Kosh and killed the Lord Mother, was nearly captured by the guards at the market. Anshold, the heir to the throne, has called for the capture of the Borbaradian.

Ambros Wickerbold, the silversmith who witnessed much of the event, reported this to the Kosh Courier:

The market was going well. My jewelry is very popular and is even worn at the lord's palace. It's not unusual for a finely dressed lady to visit my stall at the New Market. She was neither pretty nor ugly. I cannot really recall her face, but it made me think of a journeywoman shoemaker, for some reason.

"I have been told that you are the best silversmith in Angbar," she said to me. No "Greetings to Ingerimm," no hello, and she did not even introduce herself. But I ignored it. I felt flattered that she had not been sent to Rograma Daughter of Ralasha. "You will craft a headband for me," the lady continued, "It will be your masterwork, but you will create it according to my exact specifications."

She spoke like she was the Envoy of Light herself, and she handed me a parchment with a drawing. The parchment looked ancient, which seemed strange to me, but the

drawing was even stranger. At first glance, it was just a tangle of lines, but then I saw that it was composed of overlapping symbols, but not Kusliker Signs or the familiar symbols of the gods. It was magical stuff—you know, pentagrams, hexagrams, and strange circles with edges and horns, and even hooves. I almost dropped the parchment in disgust. "This stuff is not pleasing unto Praios," I said. "No righteous Angbarer would draw something like that!" She looked deeply into my eyes and repeated the words, "You will craft this headband exactly to my specifications!" I grew dizzy, and for a brief moment I had only the image of the drawing in my head, but then I thought This woman is bewitching me!

Suddenly my head cleared, and as loudly as I could, I shouted, "Witch, a witch! Guards, guards!" Luckily, two market guards happened to be nearby. They turned around and the woman looked at me in surprise. She looked enraged, but then her features melted like butter in a frying pan and she looked completely different. Her eyes were piercing green, her hair silky black, her face as pure and noble as a mare of Rahja. I did not know who she was, but the guards recognized her instantly. "Charissia!" they yelled, and the whole market erupted in chaos. The guards approached the villainess cautiously, drawing their swords and making the

Praios eye with their free hands. The woman stared at me and hissed, "You will obey me in the end, the band of power be in my hand!" Then she crossed her arms, nodded, and vanished into thin air.

Charissia's appearance has caused quite a stir in Kosh, far beyond Angbar. What did the Borbaradian plan to do with the jewelry? The Guards of Rohal took the parchment and examined it. The signs were indeed magical, as Kuniswart of Rimewater, Master of the Order, has said, so she must have been planning to use the headband for a magical artifact. He did not elaborate. We learned from Master Ambros Wickerbold that the drawing included measurements—not Charissia's, but more likely for a child between the ages of 8 and 12.

What kind of misdeed does the arch-villainess have in mind for a child? Heralds announced that Lord Chancellor Nirwulf Son of Niromon pronouncement that all Koshans should stay alert. Prince Anshold of Boarstock summoned the Thalessia Alliance to Alder Castle and swore its members to the pursuit of the arch-villainess. All in attendance rallied under the slogan "When Haffax falls, so must Charissia!" The Prince then offered a reward for any clue that leads to Charissia's capture by the Alliance. Anyone else who manages to catch her, whether alive or dead, will receive a reward of 1,000 ducats.

Stordian Monklinger (Stefano Monachesi)

Charissia and the Thalessia Alliance

As a young baroness, Charissia of Salmingen (born 983 FB) joined a secret circle of Borbaradians. She garnered much unholy magical knowledge while trying to get close to the Demon Master during those years of terror. She used this knowledge during the Year of Fire to summon the firebird, Alagrimm, which burned the northern Kosh to ashes and which was stopped at Angbar only with the divine aid of Ingerimm.

Charissia has remained in hiding since this defeat, although she launches new plans against the principality again and again. She dealt a terrible blow in 1036 FB during the consecration of the newly-constructed lord's palace, when she managed to kill Lord Mother Thalessia with poison. Prince Anshold swore revenge at the Lord Mother's grave and asked the same of those nobles who had also gathered there. That night, they drew up the charter of the Thalessia Alliance, whose members seek Charissia to bring her to Praios' justice, albeit with little success so far.

Aventurian Herald, Peraine 1038 FB

The Chattering of Wild Geese

The Duke of the Northmarches Enters the Covenant of Travia



ELENVINA. The Duke of the Morthmarches has joined the Covenant of Travia. On the 4th of Peraine 1038 FB, his Highness Hagrobald Gruntwin of the Great River entered into wedlock with her Highness, Concabella Blance of Honorstone-Streitzig, daughter of Count Ragath in Almada.

The engagement period was short—only three months, during which negotiators from both provinces debated the prenuptial agreement. Among other things, they determined the rights of inheritance (nobody can gain rulership over both the County of Ragath and the Dukedom of the Morthmarches), and her Highness Concabella's future title was agreed to be "duke's wife," not "duchess." Romantics from both realms believe that the flame of Rahja started to burn in the hearts of the bride and groom the moment they first saw each other. Observers from Castle Eilenwid-over-the-Waters of Elenvina think it more likely that the duke's advisers (his mother Grimberta, and Illuminatus Godefroy of

Ibencastle-Louring, especially) wanted to hold the wedding before the beginning of the latest campaign against the traitor, Haffax. Should something happen to the young duke (gods prevent it!) on the field of battle, the throne would fall to his younger brother Ludowart Jast, who currently serves as a legal scholar at the court of Elenvina.

Despite all these deliberations, the nobles of Almada and the Morthmarches celebrated energetically but peacefully beneath the wings of the wild goose. For their part, the new couple invited the nobles to a splendid tournament. Warriors from the Morthmarches, Kosh, and Perricum could earn prizes in jousting and combat with one or two-handed weapons, and the caballeros from Almada would also have opportunities to display their courage, wit, and riding skills.

May the Twelve bless this union and lead both Iron Forest provinces to a strong and united future.

Alara Togelstein-Horning (Tina Hagner)

Aventurian Herald, Rahja 1039 FB

Golden Flowers In New Light



KURKUM. After 20 years, Gilia of Kurkum, the High Queen of the Amazons, set out in the spring of 1038 FB to reclaim Kurkum, the traditional seat of the High Queens. This was no spectacular army she led into the Vidrom Valley. Instead, she and her women warriors marched with some trustworthy allies who were eager to see the hated renegade amazons deposed. With their help, she managed to reclaim Kurkum from the grasp of Mactaleänata the Blasphemer and raise the Amazons' proud banner above the ruins. Even though the castle was utterly destroyed (and is not likely to ever be rebuilt), the Lion's Temple of Kurkum escaped the conflict almost untouched. At the behest of Queen Gilia, the Sword of Swords sent a handful of Blessed Ones to assist the amazon Lionesses. With their help, the city will soon be a new pilgrimage site. Their hard-earned victory, which cost the life of Blood Lioness Ayla Yrasil of Donnerbach, among others, spurred the amazons to ever greater valor and prompted High Queen



Gilia to contribute a half squadron of female warriors to assist our glorious Empress' campaign against the traitor, Haffax.

With Cavalry Captain Bernisha Rondriana of Shossko in the lead, these brave amazons desired to face the terrors unleashed by Borbarad himself against the Lionstone Fortress—a goal that could not be achieved with swords alone. Marshal Alrik of Berg brought skillful mages, Blessed Ones, and warriors to join the amazons in battle.

Rondra herself might have stood with them as, united, the band of warriors managed to reclaim Lionstone! The castle bears the scars of years of abuse, and the new lady of the castle—Bernisha, mentioned previously—has begun working with Varvara of Yeshinna, recently promoted to Blood Lioness of Lionstone, to restore the edifice to its former glory.

*Rondraia Feriola
(Katja Reinwald, with many thanks to
Dominic Hladek, Rafael Knop,
and Daniel Simon Richter)*

Aventurian Herald, Praios 1040 FB

The Book of Ayla Has Been Closed

PERRICUM. “The Book of Ayla has been closed.” With these familiar ritual words, Thorgrim Ironfist of Angbar, Arch-Chancellor of the Fellowship of the Sword, confirms the death of Alya Armalion of Shadowground in this year of 1040 FB. Ayla sacrificed her life gloriously to free the world from the corrupted presence of the shard of the archdemon Belhahar, Rondra’s enemy. According to reports, the ground shook and flashes of silver and purple lightning split the sky while the matriarch fought with Helme Haffax, the despised traitor. The villainous cur fled when the exalted Sword of Swords put an end to his demon-given power, unfortunately sealing her own fate as well. Doubters then understood why the matriarch had declined to join the Empress’ army, and also why her Church’s destiny was to be decided not in the Lost Lands, but in Perricum.

Mere hours after the death of the beloved head of the Church of Rondra, believers suffered another heavy blow. According to dozens of eye-witnesses, two silver flashes of lightning struck down from the heavens shortly before midnight on the 30th of Rahja 1039 FB, shattering the dome of the Temple of Saint Leomar of the Eternal Fellowship of Nebachot. Within the space of a few heartbeats, the main temple of the Fellowship of the Sword had collapsed, and thunder sounded throughout Perricum.

Once again, the Church of Rondra showed determination and bravery in the face of terror as Alya of Shadowground named a successor with her final breath. According to her wishes, Bibernell Aelânbaburq ay Baburin, former master of the Southern Domain, was appointed to be the new Sword of Swords. For her first act, Bibernell seized the hilt of Armalion, lifted it high, and confirmed Mythram Lionstrike of Perricum in his position as the Church’s Master of the Army on the eve of the capture of the traitor Haffax. At his command, dozens of Blessed Ones of Rondra moved into the streets to spread the word that the destruction of the Temple was not a punishment by the goddess, but rather a sign to leave the past behind. Rondrians, city guards, and determined citizens fought



side by side against the terrors unleashed on that “Day of Blood.” As we well know, they were soon joined by the Empress, who had forced-marched her troops to get here in time, and the armies of Light triumphed in the end.

Once the Book of Ayla had been closed and the Book of Bibernell had opened, the matriarch quickly turned to the matter of filling the many now-vacant positions. Telash al’Ayahi ay Baburin succeeds her as Master of the Thunderstorm Domain in the south, and Heladis Kagorad of Drileuen replaces the fallen Jaakon Zirkisnjka of Turjeleff as Master of the Domain Middenrealm. She sent encouraging words to the believers shocked by these events, she has these words: *“The walls of our main temple are shattered, but our alliance with the goddess is unbroken and will endure forever. We will rise out of the ashes of our temple, as beautiful as an iris, as merciless as the storm, and as pure as our faith, to do the bidding of Rondra, the undefeated guard of the battlements of the Fortress of Alveran. We were, we are, and we will be her Church, and we will fight where the Lioness commands us. Aiawah!”*

*Xandros Fernel
(Katja Reinwald, with many thanks to
Dominic Hladek, Rafael Knop,
and Daniel Simon Richter)*

Credits

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Xelodonian Mirror, Firun 1038 FB

A New Mistress in Hesinde’s House

Unexpected Change in Vinsalt’s Temple of the All-Knowing

VINSALT. In a surprise move, Arba of Silas quietly stepped down after many years as revered leader of the Temple of Hesinde in Vinsalt. This news has not reached all parts of the Empire—and the secret reasons for her withdrawal are still open to much speculation. Her successor has already been appointed, and her identity is another surprise.

With the blessing of the Magister of Magisters, the Arch-Knowledgekeepers of the Old Realm elected a simple Blessed One named Lucara of Vinsalt to be leader of the Temple. Those who know the All-wise Church perhaps know her better as Lucara da’Malagreira, a Blessed One from Chababia. At a young age, she earned a reputation as an expert in lizardfolk pre-history and dragon worship among pre-human societies before joining Sotera to serve as Preceptor of the Hall of Dragons, site of the Draconite Hoard of Kuslik. Many had believed that this ambitious nun was headed for a promising career within the Draconites, or even with the Church of Hesinde, instead.

However, six years ago she suddenly resigned from all offices and honors and passed the duties of Preceptor of the Hall of the Dragon to her deputy, Dorogar of Eiselborn. She then resigned from the

Draconites and traveled to Teremon to lead the life of a simple Blessed One. Nobody knows what made her give up her promising life and go into exile on the Cyclops’ Islands, but some suspect a connection to the mysterious events that occurred in Silas during Travia 1032 FB. Another rumor says that she was exiled by the Argelianic Court as punishment for undisclosed crimes.

Now, six years after she sailed for Teremon, she returns to the heart of the Empire as Lucara of Vinsalt, to lead the temple in the capital. Since it was the Arch-Knowledgekeepers themselves who summoned her back from exile, she must have repented and found forgiveness for her crimes in the eyes of the goddess. Nevertheless, this stain casts a shadow across her new appointment. It is unclear how she intends to lead the temple—and what type of person has Lucara of Vinsalt become, now that this formerly ambitious and promising church politician has returned from exile?

Only the future will tell. But her calling to high honors, and her life up to this point, can teach us that Hesinde’s paths don’t run straight as arrows but instead meander like a serpent’s tracks.

Sanya Serpolet (Michael Masberg)

Aventurian Herald, Praios 1050 FB

University in Nagra!

BRABAK. The educated (and those that only think they are educated) listened closely when news arrived in Brabak that a university had opened in Nagra during the final weeks of 1038 FB. People first suspected it might be another Xelodonian joke, but the royal chancery’s silence on the matter lends some weight to the story. Given that Brabakans are celebrating the opening as a great deed pleasing unto Hesinde, we at the *Aventurian Herald* decided to seek out the truth behind these rumors and provide our readers with the facts to which they have become accustomed.

Setting out, we traveled to Nagra along the proposed route of the new coastal road. Along the way, it pleasing Ingerimm, we had a chance to inspect the first paving blocks to be set down. We also took a look at the construction of the midway tavern, which was announced in an earlier edition of the *Herald* (AH 172). Both projects are going smoothly, as confirmed by the master builder.

Anyone familiar with the Nagra of a few years ago will be surprised at the changes. Nagra used to be a sleepy village of fishers making their quiet living in a well-protected bay. Today, Nagra has grown into a lively settlement and many large construction projects are underway, the new Horasian harbor fortress being one of the most impressive.

It did not take us long to find the source of these strange rumors about a university

in Nagra. It seems that Nandurio, a Blessed One of Nandus from the Horasian Empire, stopped his wagon near the coastal cliff a short way from Nagra and decided to make it his new home. Here he teaches literacy and a variety of sciences to anyone with an interest in learning. He was pleased to talk to us, and explained that he first arrived here seeking new stories from foreign lands. Since ships returning from Gyldenland and the mysterious continent of Uthuria frequently anchor here, the opportunities to hear new tales are many. We asked him why he had not chosen Brabak instead, and he answered, “To create something new, one must walk new paths.” The Blessed One invites other researchers to his home to exchange knowledge. In a few decades, he hopes that his High School of Knowledge and the Sciences of Lord Nandus and His Divine Mother will be counted among the likes of the exalted universities of Methumis and Al’Anfa. And to demonstrate his intent to make his school a success, he has propped up his wagon and had the wheels removed.

Despite the school’s long and impressive name, we must admit that it does not seem likely to live up to Nandurio’s expectations. Inquiries in Brabak confirmed that there are in fact several free spirits in the royal city who intend to visit Nandurio for a few days and share their knowledge. How this daring endeavor will develop over the next few decades, only Satinav can tell.

Muliro Larekos (Christian Bender)