

Recall and Return

7/18/23

After the Spring gather...

Thorne returned to the forward base, though the trek for his spirit felt long overland when he recalled. This is what it all was for, and he was hungry when his body formed where he recalled. As soon as he stepped out, his aide came to his side. They had taken this so-called Forge Father, and the imperious Inquisitor cast his eyes down to the war table he'd been led to. The Vice Inquisitor would be returning with his own news soon enough. There were casualty numbers as well as stock of what they had gained from taking Haven, and he surveyed them with cool detachment.

"That is enough," he murmured to his aide. Thorne didn't often have to speak up, others quieted themselves to listen. To the proud Librahm at his side, he nodded and turned to his assembled field lieutenants. "Send the Vice Inquisitor to them on the morrow, and the thirteenth company. They are pitiable and spirited, but if they cannot understand reason, perhaps they will understand force. If they understand neither," Thorne allowed for a pregnant pause, closed his eyes and lowered his head in a deadpan pantomime of mourning. "Then we will make better use of their resources, for the good of the Protectorate."

In the flickering light of standing torches and eldritch lights, the stone on his forehead refused to shine, seeming to absorb the light. When Thorne looked up, his cold gray eyes looked through his people as if to distant horizons. "We will protect, and we will endure."

With that, he cast his arms out to the sides, drawing in a deep breath, staff clutched in his right hand. Despite the grand gesture, he did not have to shout. "For the Protectorate." His icy monotone was final as a bell's tolling, and it was followed by a hearty chorus of voices in unison. Without speaking again, he raised his arms and drank in the voices of his people, bolder than wine, as they rose again. "WE WILL PROTECT. WE WILL ENDURE. THE PROTECTORATE IS ETERNAL." After the rallying cry was complete, he brought his staff down into the soft earth and nodded to them. "Let us prepare for tomorrow."

Thorne turned and dinner was laid for him. Orderly. Immaculate. Hot. When the servants stood by, hiding their worry for the Inquisitor's displeasure, he nodded deeply to dismiss them. They learned.

Long before twilight, Vice Inquisitor Errant returned. There was no fanfare as the Vice Inquisitor and the thirteenth company trickled back. Thorne's lieutenants sat them aside to wait, the Inquisitor would be with them at his discretion. When he did approach, his steps were measured,

his great coat floating back behind him, driven by the wind stirred by the supposed Mistress of Storms' temper tantrum. He did not need to inquire what had happened for explanations to pour forth. "Let Vice Inquisitor Errant speak," Thorne stated, flat as the palm of his hand, held up toward them to motion for quiet and order.

So it was - Song of Life had come to their aid. What special interest these Elementals had taken in the cairn-dwellers of 'Bastion' was new and tantalizing information. No matter. They would be subjugated just as the Forge Father and brought into line, and that sort of power would serve the Protectorate well. This Song of Life had shown her willingness to intervene, a willingness that would prove folly. "Good. Now, clean up. We have much work to do."