The Tome of Ancient History

Taehris the Wolf's Bane

By Vryce, Gamemaster

My name is Taehris the Wolf's Bane and I am a devout Follower of Lord Erisar. My time upon Altin is close to an end but before I leave this coil, my Lord has geased me with one final task.

I am to share with you my knowledge of the Werebeasts that I have gathered through my years of research while hunting them, studying texts, journals and even through visions blessed upon me by Lord Erisar.

Between Erisar's death and subsequent resurrection, a legion of mercenaries became quite infamous during the War of the Races. This group had taken up using Erisar's name during thier battles and started calling themselves "Erisar's Chosen" and "The Beasts of War". The use of Erisar's name was used to inspire fear invoking the dead God's name. They had also taken up the fetish of wearing animal skins and masks, emulating the beast of their choice. And to further their nightmarish reputation they attacked only at night and consumed the flesh of their enemies after any of their "victories". They hired out to the highest bidder which almost always ended up being the Horde. When there was no work for the mercenaries, they kept in practice by raiding.

Soon after Erisar's resurrection, he learned of these mercenaries and their, what he considered, blasphemy. Erisar appeared before the gathering of mercenaries and cursed them:

Erisar declares, "As you have mocked the Hunt, so shall you now be hunted as the animals you disgrace..." Erisar continues, "And only during the night will you be strong."

And so the Werebeasts were created (Wolves, tigers, bears, rats and sharks). At first, the cursed legion still worked together but that soon ended as the animal instincts now within their intellect began to take root causing strife. The Werewolves became a tightly knit family and soon struck out on their own (They have been known to work with the Tigers, Bears and Rats once in awhile). The Weresharks found an irresistable call to the Sea of Tears and made their "home" there. The Weretigers, Bears and Rats continue to lair together to this very day (Some Wererats broke away and founded an exclusive lair in the sewers of Falcion. It is still unknown to how this happened or why). It is rumored that there are a few more Werebeasts that have become lost in the sands of time.

The Werebeasts were declared enemies of The Church of Erisar by Erisar himself. Over the following centuries the Erisarians hunted down the Werebeasts and it seemed as if they had almost wiped out the Werewolves. Most of this knowledge was lost and forgotten over time for various

reasons and the steady attacks upon the Werebeasts lessened as they were no longer considered a major threat.

All of the Werebeasts share some common traits:

1. Only magical weapons will be able to strike them.
2. All of the various Werebeasts have an intense hatred for Erisar and any of His Church.
3. The preferred diet of all Werebeasts is that of humanoid flesh. They in fact, crave it.
4. The Werebeasts replenish their ranks through spreading the disease of Lycanthropy. Infected persons survive the process and become a Werebeast, overcome it, or die.
5. During the day they seek refuge in human or animal form. Upon death, they revert to either form but never the hybrid.

As Wolf's Bane, I am an expert upon the Werewolves, I will list a few of their personalities and their role within the Packs and Tribes to help further understand their psychology and personality traits.

- Large Wolf: Werewolf in full wolf form. More animalistic in general but still possesses human intellect.
- Massive Wolf: Same characteristics as a Large Wolf, only enhanced.
- Werewolf : Typical half-wolf, half-human hybrid form. This is normally the "War Aspect" the Werewolf will assume. Human intellect but completely animalistic in actions.
- Frenzied Werewolf: A normal Werewolf who has become either enraged or is starving for humanoid flesh will assume this aspect involuntarily. The human intellect is completely obscured and they are completely savage in this form.
- Warwolf: A Werewolf that acts as an armorer for the Pack. The human intelligence is more pronounced while working, but their bestial side comes on full during battle which they love above all else.
- Raging Warwolf: A Werewolf in full battle frenzy. Its bestial side totally in control.
- Werewolf Ghost Dancer: They are the "magic-users" of the Pack. It is common that they act as seers and advisors to the Pack Leader.
- Werewolf Spirit Walker: Formerly Ghost Dancers, they have attained a higher mastery of magic.
- Werewolf Pack Leader: A powerful Werewolf that controls one of the tribe packs within a lair. They are able to control their bestial side a bit more than other Werewolves. This lets them best utilize their human intellect.
- Werewolf Paragon: An elite form of Werewolf that controls one or more Tribes. Like the Pack Leader, their bestial side is controlled to best utilize their human characteristics.

I hold hope that any who read this will find something useful within if they should cross the Werebeasts. Erisar be with you if you do.

-Taehris, the Wolf's Bane

The Questor's of Oblivion

By Sirendele,

The scents of wood, paper, dust, and candle smoke mingled with an aroma that could only be described as history. A gray-haired scribe gathered up a small handful of sand, grains that had been gathered from the Eastern Desert, and let them sprinkle onto the last sheet of parchment. The sand absorbed the excess moisture from the sharp black strokes of his practiced hand as Alduous returned his ever-slipping spectacle to their perch on his broad nose and began to look over the most recent of his historical annals.

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" The Questors of Oblivion: An account of events described by Sirendele Olath'sol, as penned by Alduous Carpente' "

I was assembling the tools necessary to conduct my interview of one Nightblade of the Thieves' Guild of Nexus, a Sirendele Olath'sol, when I was abruptly introduced to his presence. He leaned casually in one of the armchairs of the inquiry room. I could not say how long he had been sitting there before the cold glint of his dark gaze caught my attention. Undeterred by his theatrics, I commenced the questioning. His soft voice echoed through the quiet room like the whispers of wraiths as he told his tale.

"It could be argued," began the soft spoken Drow, "that the most recent activities of the Cult of the Void were caused by a small group of adventurers of whom I was a member. I had been relieving some of the wandering Disciples of their goods and their ability to harm wandering citizenry when I was joined by Nethra the lady paladin, Rhelton (a fellow Nightblade), and a priest answering to the name Fafa. We were hard pressed as the Cultists began to come in greater numbers- packs of three or four instead of the loners I had been preying on."

Here the dark elf pursed his lips in thought. "Nethra led well, however, and we were able to keep our lives while taking theirs'. Things became considerably more complicated when a Cult Devotee arrived. He lay in wait, prepared to ambush us, but again Nethra was able to keep us clear of disaster. While we sat under the alley grating deciding on our course of action, several Disciples attacked us, coming from our flanks. Though we managed to fell several of the rabid cultists, there numbers eventually overwhelmed us."

I struggled to keep up with the Drow's words and he must have realized this. He held a thin-stemmed glass of wine in one
long-fingered hand (where it came from I cannot say) and peered into its blood-red contents until I caught up. "Please continue," I bade him.

"It was decided by our group that our best course of action lay in dividing the things we had gathered up and then returning to the
battle, perhaps with some reinforcements. The tolling of the Dark Brother's Bells told us we would not have the time for such luxuries. I prepared myself to go and scout out the area and made my way from Tiger's Pawn Shop to Market Street, near the magical shop there.

"I came across a large gathering of people. They appeared to have come across the Cultists in force somewhere in the streets of the city. There was no organization that I could discern, no leader, and no orders being presented. It was, I would assert, barely controlled chaos- clerics tanked and scouted, people wandered in and out of the group at random and without consent of the others, and the ranks of the would-be heroes grew so that we bumped into each other in the midst of the battle."

Though he managed to keep his dark face expressionless, I detected a hint of quiet annoyance in his voice. Before I could press the
issue, he continued. "The Bells tolled several more times as the warriors of the Void continued to flood the streets. Through the
skills of some powerful healers- including Ashen, Zharina, Kylia, and Ellwynn- we managed to press on, heading toward Maelstrom and the alley there.

"Unfortunately, during these forays I had come to discover that the cultists had grown in their mastery over the spells of displacement. While the large group forged southward on Maelstrom, I was sent hurling on the winds of magic. I barely had time to register that I was in the Town Square when a swarm of waiting cultists set upon me. I fumbled for the Misty Vortex at my waist that would carry me away but the disorienting effects of the bastard's displacement spell slowed my reactions.

"I felt the explosion of pain and smelled my own hair and flesh burning as flames erupted from within. It was like the embrace of a
Demon of the Twelfth Hell." His jaw clenched slightly and dark eyes seemed to remember something. Whether it was the effects of the Devotees' burstflames or his analogy, I could not say. "The next thing I remembered I was in the Healing Hand, rising as though jolted from some nightmare laden sleep. Knowing I would be of little use to my companions or myself if I was unarmed, unarmored, and unable to heal myself, I quickly went to equip myself for the long battle ahead."

Occasionally taking respites to wet his mouth with his wine, Sirendele went on to tell of his rejoining the group of adventurers
who traveled the streets, beating back the Void's pawns. From his account, it would seem that they encountered and defeated at least two score of the Disciples and a half dozen of the Devotees, with an assortment of Guardians involved as well. One can never be sure of the accuracy of such numbers, though.

He told of group members continuing to come and go at random, some propelled by the teleportations of the cultists and some spurred by the taste for adventure and reward. His tone continued to hold mild… annoyance… whenever he mentioned this. His account was eventually cut

short, however, as he told me of being waylaid in the chaos of a battle.

"I was in the process of removing my blade from the spinal column of one of the fiends when I was struck a wicked blow from behind. My head seemed to explode and I dropped my sword, falling into unconsciousness as I felt several hands grab hold of me and drag me into a darkened alley." His recounting of his escape from the clutches of his nefarious captors was vague at best.

"Though I did manage to get away with my goods and life intact, I can tell that they had pillaged my mind. To what end? I would prefer not to speculate on that at this time..."

Attack on the Mages Tower

By Lyrasel,

The first fireball streaked across the early morning sky, its tail suddenly exploding as it burst against the wall of the Ivory Tower. In case there had been any mistake about intent, the familiar voice spoke through our minds, "Yes, that's what I was aiming for..." My first thoughts were thanks that I knew Faulk was safe, but immediately on its heels.. Fleia! Even as I attempted to reach her mind, though, her thoughts rang out, asking if the mages were well. So began the night. Not a mage, and not my Tower, but the magicks it holds help to hold the barriers that keep Nexus safe, so I gathered myself and my things, and made my way from Rymek as quickly as I could. Just as I reached the entrance to the Tower, where were gathered a number of people, Astaroth faded into view and hurled another fireball into the door. Without a second thought, the barbarian Karnok attacked him, swinging his warmace into the mage's face, but before I could even blink, Astaroth chanted a few words... and Karnok was a puddle of goo on the ground. Fleia's thoughts came again, asking all available to help put out the fire -- worse, the Tower itself shimmered eerily in the pre-dawn dark. I hurtled in through the doorway, noting from the corner of my eye that Hellfire was running in himself, arriving from the south. Before my foot hit the first step on the stairway, Hellfire's death was felt. I started to turn back at that point, but just then the Tower shimmered again, and instead, I raced up the stairs to find Fleia standing on the topmost landing, directing the efforts to save the tower from fire. In the hustle and chaos, I noted others standing with her, but my mind did not register who they were at first. As Fleia began to gather her energies to draw on the Weave and strengthen the Tower's defenses, I tuned my lyre, and quickly shifted into Draen's Tale, thinking to myself that a more appropriate song could not exist. As Fleia's energies flagged, Jewel and Hellfire supported her efforts with healing spells and blessings, and slowly, things seemed to right themselves and return to normal. Just as the song finished, Thelia came hurrying out from a side hallway, looking wan and drained herself. As they hurriedly conferred, the deaths began again...Astaroth had loosed his zombie creatures on the city. Thelia directed Fleia to lead the group on a search of the city streets, and we set off. I hesitate to name all those who were there, for fear of leaving out someone deserving of mention. The groups split and reformed as we broke off into smaller parties to move more swiftly and rid the city of the zombies. Fleia, Thelia, Larkin, Lucillia, Martax, Zakainen, Pralys, Jewel, Rapheous, Gallows.. one by one we hunted down the zombie menaces and dispatched them. Throughout all this, the Silver Alchemist continued to gloat, but when challenged by Fleia, by Sinister, by Hellfire, by Karnok to meet the Heroes face to face he

sneered that he would choose the time and place for that meeting, and that he was waiting for someone. We learned who that someone was when Ariel joined our small party. Astaroth thought out that he had a special gift for her, that he had been waiting for her. When Ariel teased him that he didn't want a silly old woman, he said that he would make her young again. As we were informing her of what had taken place, she disappeared from our midst, apparently summoned or transported somehow by Astaroth. Fleia and Faulk were able to clair her, and reported that she was in an elegant and luxuriously appointed room, apparently within Astaroth's tower. Attempts to summon her back were fruitless. The room is apparently warded against such magicks. From that point on, we were helpless bystanders to the drama that unfolded in snatches of thought here and there. First came Ariel's startled thought that 'he put it in the tea', followed by her thoughts becoming increasingly unclear and jumbled as she slipped into unconsciousness. The last we heard was her muffled attempt to resist drinking more of the tea, and Astaroth gloating that now Ariel was his through eternity. Further attempts to reach her were fruitless. I only pray that her faith stays strong while we find a way to retrieve her from Astaroth's clutches and destroy the mad power that daily creeps further over him.

Submitted to the Archives of the Bard's Guild
Lyrasel, Minstrel

> **Below may not be the correct story, but its what comes up in the archived website under this title by Pious..**

The Battle of the Corynthian Wastes

By Pious,

I entered the realms on Dilur, the eleventh of the month of Blossoms, 1,644 years since the Godswar, and the 1,227 year of the Empire; two hours before dawn. I was at the Town Square, and with me (already there) were Darmis, Dean, and Tarkin. I smiled to see them there, curtsied to Darmis, and opened my mind to sense the presence of all others within the realms, but before I could sort through the multiple impressions my mind was receiving, I was interrupted by a sudden thought carried along the Weave to me by a certain wizard . . . Astaroth flashed, "So I could kill you and no one would care?". This confused me a little, as I had only just arrived and his sentence seemed to me like one to be used in the middle of a conversation. I wasn't sure if he'd meant to speak to someone else, but got the feeling that I was definitely missing out on part of what had been said. Still, a very powerful archmage had just threatened to kill me, and so I thought it best that since he had put it in the form of a question, I would try to convince him not to. In the physical world, I blinked, thought about it, and told Darmis and Tarkin, who had wanted to ask me something, to hold a moment, as someone else wished to speak with me. I then tried my level best to persuade Astaroth not to kill me, though hampered somewhat by trying to get out a convincing reason before he assumed I had none and killed me anyway. I told him "No, I have many friends. Why would you think that?", and he countered with, "Please, all of nexus and half the goblins want my head on a pike. Your friends are nothing.". Seeking to play for time, I asked him, "So why again,

do you think noone would care if I died?", adding "And by this point, probably half of Nexus wants me too . . . to take my (admittedly true) unkind words.". He told me, "If your guild will cast you out, others will have no pity if you were dead is my thinking.", and, amused at how easily even the powerful wizards could be fooled by propaganda, I told him, "Funny about that. I'm rather sure Dragonslayer did it as a face-saving measure -- since I left, he had to do something, and so he pretended I was back in it long enough for him to be able to say, we Outcast you! In other words, you can't leave because we threw you out. I actually left before being given that title.", sentence by sentence. He replied, "That is comical. The leadership of nexus always did have a supiority complex.", and suddenly I thought of something, and took a quick trip to the tavern to the south, to ask who Astaroth was; I found that he was about twenty-third tier of the mage's guild, called Weavemaster by some, and known more as the Silver Alchemist. (OOC: I found it amusing that, while he was a non-player character, he WASN'T a contributing player; most NPC's are.) I told Astaroth that "Sadly, not everyone will listen to me . . . So, few others get a chuckle out of it.", and he inquired "How could there be so much upheaval in a guild of bards?". I answered, That's one of the reasons I left -- the ridiculous idea that there could be a Guild of Bards.". At this point Tarkin was asking me about some kind of experiment, to see if my apprentice aura was still in place, and once I had ascertained he would not kill me if it was not, I returned my attention to the telepathic world and listened for Astaroth's voice; as he had not yet told me anything else, I felt it minutely safe to engage in an argument with Darmis, about training, and how not all combat was physical . . . I found him to be a surprisingly uneducated monk, for a Nexusian (a term commonly used in referring to one that had 'completed' their training), and sought to explain things to him. Partway through, I remembered that I never had seen who exactly was about, and reopened my mind to the impressions of who was in the realms (Astaroth was visible); and just in time too, for Darmis' comment a moment later. He said, "aside from Astaroth rearing his ugly head again"; I could not tell exactly what his comment was in response to, there was nothing in our conversation to which it seemed a logical response, so I assumed he was replying verbally to something Tarkin had sent to him telepathically. I did attempt to explan my rudeness earlier, in not speaking with him earlier, saying "Yes, that's what I meant when I said I had to talk to someone again. I thought speaking with the person who had the power to kill me with a thought somewhat took precedence over arguing with you.". He sighed, and Arkenon passed by heading to the west. I continued speaking with this stubborn young monk, gradually losing patience with his inability to see the simplest of points I presented; yet I was determined that reason would win the day. Unfortunately, I never had the opportunity to find out. From out of nowhere, a voice came, saying, "As you asked, I have come.", and then chanting "Thy blood become venom, and kill from within.". Some of you may recognize this as the chant to the Venom spell -- indeed, as the chant echoed in my ears, Astaroth faded into view and his Venom spell took effect on Darmis. As the cathedral bell tolled, sounding the knells of Darmis' murder, Astaroth chuckled, saying "Poor dead boy". At no point had I spoke to him requesting his presence, so I could only presume that Darmis had somehow done so; later I realized it was him referring to Astaroth as having an 'ugly head' that probably did it. Seeing him so easily strike down one more efficient in the arts of battle than I, I foresaw my own such doom in a few moments . . . he would say something akin to 'You don't find this amusing? I hate it when people don't get my jokes! Thy blood become venom, and kill from within!', so I drew upon my acting abilities and quickly forced out a chuckle. Some time later, he mentioned that the people of Nexus were a joke; my views upon this matter already being evident, I elected not to comment. Astaroth then commenced to chant again, invoking a magical cloak to obscure him from sight, and slowly faded from view. Thank the gods, he had spared my life! On the other hand, he might view it

as a personal favor... better not ignore it. I thanked him, and then Arkenon arrived, leading the way with a slap to the cheek (mine, not his). I felt a presence in my mind as Astaroth told me, "I could stand the fool no longer, I appologize for not staying to chat". I blinked at Arkenon; why slap ME? At that point he asked me, "an outcast and a murderer?", and I understood his reasoning . . . sort of. In a way, one wonders how he could even think that . . . true I had gained my fourth tier recently, but even so, how the heck is a fourth-tier bard with no weapons or armor or items, and one hurt spell, with mana to cast it only a few times, going to so much as put a dent in the robes of an (at least) tenth-tier monk? Never mind that a couple of blows from him would easily incapacitate me, but what about his healing ability, his devices, meditating, or just leaving? One looks at the scenario and can't place serious faith in the idea that I would have a chance. More likely, one dies laughing. (Hey, so that's how I would have done it. Maybe Arkenon wasn't jumping to conclusions after all.) I exclaimed quickly, "Not me!", and Arkenon asked me, "then who?". At this point I knew I was safe from an impromptu, Nexus-wide game of kick-the-bardling; I actually had PROOF that I was not responsible for imagined slights. Well, in this case, it was not imagined; but for the most part, I was used to being discriminated against for offenses that existed only in the minds of their avengers, or at least the idea that I had anything to with it being restricted so. I felt smug that, at last, it could not be fudged that my 'deceptions fooled noone, and anyone who was not an apprentice automatically defects to the Goblin Hoarde or Kyorl or someone', and that anyone who was hasty in killing me would be tried for murder -- at last, able to fight back with the city on my side! So, I told him to ask Darmis, and smirked with the knowledge that even the 'paladins' that had accosted me before, would have to take my side if I were murdered on this one. Arkenon told me, "you were the only one here",
and, shaking my head, I hastened to explain that I had been -- "Now, yes.". Arkenon said, "then speak", and he asked me "who?"; seeing Darmis arrive, I decided to let him answer, and knowing that I had had plenty of time to flee if I really were the murderer, I stated that I had only stayed around to guard his corpse. I shrugged, thinking I had shown at least I should not be under immediate suspicion, and Arkenon said, "I just left and only the 2 of you were here". Nonetheless, his next question was not addressed to me, and he asked, "who did this Darmis?"; Darmis replied, "I would sure like to know why he thinks I summoned hiom...". Again, at this time I had not yet deduced the link between Darmis' comment and Astaroth's words. Darmis told Arkenon, "asteroth", and Arkenon replied "darn". I was curious as to how Darmis might have summoned him, and, seeking for clues, asked "Why would you think you summoned him?". Instantly realizing the answer (thought it turned out not to be the right one, I stifled a slightly hysterical giggle, and taking a deep breath to calm my nerves, tried to concentrate on the situation. Arkenon was saying, "darn darn darn", and asked me "were you talking to him?". I told Arkenon "I was talking with him, yes . . . trying to persuade him not to kill me . . . I guess he mistook it for a summons. I didn't object, though . . . ", and Arkenon apologized, saying "and I am sorry Lathet for the accusation". Darmis broadcast, "Asteroth, Why do you say I summoned you? You attack me without provocation or cause.. Why?", and I shrugged, both to Arkenon's apology (under the circumstances, what else might he have thought?), and to Darmis' question. At this point Astaroth told me, "They run around while detecting invisible, but fail to search for what is hidden. Fools.". And fools are killed, thought I. Well. I had best remove myself from their number, then, or join them in the Hand. I wracked my mind for a way to do this. In the meantime I reassured Arkenon, "I've come to expect it.", Arkenon was saying "darmis stop being stupid", then told us "he kills for the fun of it". Darmis protested, "but he took it out on me...", and, as if in reply, Astaroth broadcast "You think I was speaking to you?". Arkenon continued calming Darmis, "so what" he said, "he kills for the sake of killing".

Getting a slight feeling, not unlike that which climbers at the end of a rope must feel just as the last strands of it begin to snap and they have not yet found a stable handhold, I told Astaroth "Yep, that's what I was thinking . . . hehe, I tried not to laugh at them.". Arkenon said "he does whatever he wishes", and advised, "do not flatter yourself or give him ammunition". Darmis broadcast, "I died, so I assumed", and Astaroth broadcast in return "Assumptions get more people into trouble.". Arkenon growled, spit, and, as Paedric arrived, asked "what did you say to Astaroth Lathet?", clarifying "that brought him into town?". Ariel arrived and hugged everyone, saying hello; Paedric cast resist-poison upon himself. I told Arkenon, that I had told Astaroth that there were those who cared for me, and thusly yes, there would be those who would care if he killed me. When Arkenon again inquired of why I was speaking to him in the first place, I reiterated that the first words he spoke to me were asking why he shouldn't just come and kill me then. In the meantime, Ariel gave us some advice, "Just a word of warning though. I keep hearing Astaroth's name. Treat him with care. He's evil and will kill you for as little as glancing at him."; he arrived (I had not noticed him leave, but with Astaroth around and having just killed him, it was perhaps a wise strategy to adopt, sneaking around the city everywhere) and, sighing, kicked his corpse. I had not entirely given up on my talk with him, and asked "Well, think it would be tempting fa -- err, him; to continue our discussion?", but apparently he was not in the mood for resuming it anymore - as a return to that might incite Astaroth to come back for a repeat session, I realized that was a good idea. Arkenon asked, "he was casting venom?", and, as if answering his own thoughts, said "that sounds about righ". Darmis nodded in affirmation anyway, and then Ariel got there; Arkenon asked her "ariel", as Darmis continued with "that's what got me", saying "can you rp rd and rw me"? Arkenon was asking for rp rd and rw that is, not Darmis. Ariel started casting the requested spells, while I ran to the tavern again to find out a few things; when I returned, she was just finishing up, and Arkenon asked if she could try to Clair Astaroth again; she replied that this was doubtful, as he kept himself well shielded, but she would try. As she attempted it, I asked, "What's to stop him from just turning the spell back on her, so that she sees from her own eyes?". I was ignored, but then again, I'm not a mage, I suppose they knew better than me that it wasn't possible . . . Ariel said, "Oh aye. He's going to love me for that.", chuckled, and cringed. Arkenon asked, "is he in a shielded room", and followed Ariel. Ariel shook her head, saying "I just can't connect to him.", and Arkenon suggested that "perhaps it will bring him here". Ariel nodded to this, and Arkenon and Florian started using devices and spells to resist all the other elements. Ariel told us, "He wanted to know if I was trying to be noticed.", and what she had replied "I told him he couldn't expect to kill without at least someone trying to find him, without repercussions.". Arkenon said "neah just wanted to see his lovely face once more ", and grinned. Ariel looked around warily; I did the same, but saw only a merchant besides Ariel and Arkenon. Ariel also began to cast protective spells on herself, and, seeing that I could not help in this one, I decided to try to get an apple from this Merchant who, for some ridiculous (or insanely brave) reason, was still here with Astaroth about, trying to sell apples. I stifled a giggle, and thought, might as well not disappoint her. Speaking to her, she said only "Care to buy an apple?"; Ariel looked around further. Florian tried to hide in the shadows, and grinned as we noticed him. After a moment's consideration of the Merchant's question, I said "Why not.", and checked my coinpurse. Ariel could feel her skin crawl, and I wondered if she was sensing Astaroth speaking to me, for at that moment he sent to me again, this time with "I am too powerful for her clairs to work. Only the mightiest arch-wizards might succeed and I have heavy wards on my tower when I am at home.". Finding that my coinpurse was empty, I asked the Merchant "Of course, I have no money with which to afford an apple, but how about a song?". She did not reply, so I began singing an invigorating song. Ariel tried to think of a reply to the claim that Astaroth had

friends, and Arkenon asked her "who said astar has friends?". Ariel replied simply, "He does.", and Arkenon said that "he only has people who are afraid of him so do his bidding". Ariel looked warily at the Town Hall, then slowly around the Square, trying to spot some sign of Astaroth. She also cast a detect-invisible spell on Arkenon. Thinking about the claim of friends, I asked, "Heck, I'm afraid of him. But do you see me obeying him?"; then, realizing how events might seem as they had already transpired that day, I said "Scratch that question.". I was just wrapping up the song then, letting the final tunes play slowly, and when I was done, I asked the Mrchant, "Well, acceptable?". Upon receiving no reply, I told her "Anyway... loved to bring some joy to your dreary life.". Arkenon whispered to Ariel, nodded, and hugged her; she said "Oh yes, Ark. Let me spar verbally with Astaroth and then desert me.", then tickled him. I waved to Arkenon, and he sighed, Ariel hugged his leg and then chuckled. Getting confused as to who was leaving, I hugged Ariel, and she tried to frown at big bad Arky but couldn't. Then she grinned and said, "He's just invited me to join him in his tower for some entertainment." Ariel chuckled, and I sighed, asking, "Did he mention what kind?", I readied my Crystal Lyre just in case. After a moment with no reply, I checked, "No?" and said "Hmm.", then sank deep into thought. Arshes arrived in the realms, and Ariel nearly had a heart attack as he suddenly appeared beside her, then hugged him anyway. Arshes said, "Hmm....didnt think I was scary" then continued "But ok.". He said, "Hmm...interesting. Astaroth not hunting Archmages anymore? Bah.." and concluded that "He must be getting old". Ariel said, "Not you, no. But when Astaroth is around, and someone suddenly appears beside me like that ... well ...", and I added "At this point, anything appearing out of thin air is bound to be scary to her.". I chuckled, and Arshes said "Hehhhh"; Stunz nodded, and Arshes exclaimed, "Boo!". Stunz commented that "old ladies scare easy", and Arshes giggled. I sighed, and Ariel looked at her fingernails and smiled a little. I shook my head at the thought of Ariel ever being 'old', and Ariel murmured to herself, "Now, what if I were to accept his invitation for tea in his Tower?". Arshes said "Uh uh", and asked, "Asta's inviting you for tea?". Stunz said "errrrr.....", and asked, "tea for two?", chuckling. Ariel continued to think aloud. "He promises he won't use me against Nexus. That I undersell myself.", and smiled to herself. Kierstin arrived, and Ariel absentmindedly hugged her. I volunteered to play the background music. Arshes told her, "Ariel.....you know, he had no intentions of killing my master either.", and said, "However, he aint with us no more.". Ariel nodded, saying that "As I said to Lathet, he will kill if he dislikes the way you smile.", and frowned suddenly. Arshes said, "So.....tea is fine.", and I nodded. Arshes clarified, "As long as you don't get tbolted along.", adding "Or disintegrated. I doubt you can stand it.". Stunz said to "please be careful Ariel", and I moved over behind Ariel, getting ready to follow her whereever she might go, and mentally reviewed all the songs I knew for one that might be suitable, just in case I asked Astaroth or Arielfor a choice in song and they both told me to pick something myself. But she moved aside, shaking her head, and hugged me, presumably goodbye. I hugged her back, and nonetheless continued to sort through songs, just in case I should suddenly find myself in a tower. As Ariel waited, I sensed Kanji, the Honor Bound, entering the realms. Arshes told Ariel, "Well, stay alive.", and she nodded. Stunz said, "we prefer you that way", and Arshes added, "You are no use to us dead.". Ariel said "Thanks, Stunz.", asking, "I spend half my life dead?". She chuckled to herself, and Arshes said "Well, yeah. But we sure would not want to see another grotesque creation of Asta walking around.". Ariel looked closely at each of the merchants and the Noblemen, but the hiding person was not there; Kanji suddenly made his presence known, bowing before each person present. Ariel murmured a swift farewell, nodded, and (as far as I could tell) was summoned away. At least, I've never known a mage to sneak around very well, she didn't cast Invisibility, and moments later she was no longer there. I didn't have much time to worry about it though, as Kanji

asked "What happened here?", and indicated the corpse. Arshes asked, "Hmm....isnt it always here?", and replied, "Seems like everytime I pass by, there is Darmis's corpse here.". Taking a moment to organize my thoughts, I answered "Hmm . . . Darmis got murdered. He rushed here, found me, and accused me of murder.". Kanji told Arshes, "No, I believe the citizens try to keep town square corpse free". I continued, "Seems pretty simple on the surface.", then amended, "But wait, there's more.". Arshes said, "Oh", and I assumed he was talking to Kanji, adding "And it gets worse.". I clarified "Or better, for me, depending on how you look at it. Astaroth could have killed ME.". Darmis arrived in the realms, and in the Town Square, and asked, "so... Anyone care to join me in wondering why he killed me?". Speaking of Astaroth still, I said "I think Aeris is having tea with now, in his tower."; I was not quite paying attention, and meant Ariel. Noone else was paying much attention though either, so for the most part it passed unremarked. Considering Darmis' question, I responded, "I can guesws.", and Darmis told me, "Ok, so share...". He whispered to me, "why did he come kill me when he claims you summoned him?"; as I had already said aloud that I could guess, I decided to save my breath, and said that "He was on his way here to kill me, but was speaking to me while he did so; I managed to persuade him not to. So as not to make the trip a wasted effort, he killed you instead.". I shrugged, not having anything else to offer in way of reason, and Darmis said "lovely.... thanks". I replied, "Makes the most sense I can think of.", then a sudden thought occurred to me, and I barely stifled a giggle. Darmis misread the cause of my humor, and said "yeah, really funny getting someone killed". I explained to him that, "Thing is, if I hadn't been so persuasive if telling him why not to kill me, he might have left you alone and poisoned me instead.". Kanji said, "One wonders how you persuaded him", and Darmis thought it was a "good question". I tried to catch up with the conversation, saying "And that's how I summoned him; I was someone to be killed.". To Kanji's query, I shuddered at the thought and said "No idea.". Darmis thought it was "by speaking to him in the first place", and remembering what I had said about not killing me, I replied, "Actually, I don't think I did.". I clarified that, "I think he's just letting me think I'm safe, to make it all the more surprising when he does come after me.". Eli eyed me suspiciously, and I asked, "He spoke to me first, remember? He mind-sent that, was there any reason that he shouldn't just come and kill me right now?". Kanji replied, "Perhaps he simply feels killing someone who was not faithful to their guild will not accomplish much"; a comment which insulted me, as, if anything, it was the IDEA, the very notion, of a Guild which I was not being faithful too . . . at least the other people who were being mean to me, got that much right. Darmis said, "I did not say you initiated it, but you kept the conversation up". I retorted to Kanji, "Actually, that was the stated reason for killing me in the first place."; he replied, "Really, interesting since he was not faithful to his". Unable to judge the accuracy of this statement to any degree (I was not sure whether it was the faith he felt or how others viewed it which counted), I countered "Well yes, I wanted to live . . . I thought I'd provide him with a reason or two not to kill me.". I then added, "He said noone would care if I died.", but Darmis said "and his exact words were.... "As you asked, I have come"". He told me, "so you asked him to come here", and I protested, "But I never did.". Darmis gazed questioningly at me (OOC: how else am I supposed to interpret some asking '?'), and said that "he said that, venomed me, then I woke up in the hand.... Those words echo through my head even after all of the trauma.". Kanji interjected, "Fighting each other for blame will accomplish nothing but furthering his goals", yet Darmis said, "I am not blaming..... Merly upset to suffer as a bystander", then asked, "What ARE you talking about?". Kanji replied, "We are at war, and Astaroth has long been an enemy, he likely would have killed you regardless if he was here". I told Kanji that "I was standing right there.", and Darmis answered, saying that, "I know you were, I was in mid sentence speaking to you". Kanji said, "Well, I am sorry you died Darmis, such casualties are

always painful", and then left the realms. Darmis shook his head and left to the east. I waited around for a bit, until there were a few people suiciding all at once . . . Ringo was first, and Firbolg, at the time the only one in the Town Square with me, frowned, shook his head, and said, "another suicide". He sighed, and Gacy soon followed Ringo into the Void. I sighed, as it was apparent the Cult had gathered another group of worshippers to feed the Void, and Firbolg asked, "what is going on?". Zum the Disciple entered the realms, and Josh broadcast, "what is this with suicide? Is it a new style?". Predicting who the next one would be, I said "And Zum.", to which Firbolg nodded and said, "I expect so". Zum committed suicide, and Paedric broadcasted, "It simply feeds the Void. In fact, I'm hoping it feeds exactly 3 Voids into this here machine.". Reassured to see that even in the midst of sadness, some things stayed the same, I chuckled, saying "Ah, Paed . . . " Firbolg smiled, I sighed, and, as Purge committed suicide, I frowned, wondering why Firbolg would smile. Jewel broadcast, "Purge just purged himself", and Paedric broadcast in return that, "You couldn't resist, could you". Jewel merely replied, "And you could?". As I sensed Marcellus, the Immaculate, entering the realms, Paedric broadcast his answer "barely ;)". I sent Jewel a teasing remark that, coming from a priest, her comment was almost funny . . . she told me she was a priestESS, and, thinking that indeed these clerics were brought up without humor, I replied that, well, then it was even funnier! Marcellus arrived, bowing, and I smiled to see a friend around, curtsying before him. After one attempt to Clair someone, and some time passing which I assumed was him talking with another telepathically (I waited for Ariel to return), his features once more animated as he returned to life. He grinned and asked, "So, how've you been?". I replied, "Oh, usual day. Argue with Darmis, watch Darmis get killed by Astaroth, have Arkenon rush in and accuse me of murdering Darmis, have Kanji accuse me of being in league with Astaroth, wave Ariel goodbye as she goes off to have tea with Astaroth.". I paused a few moments to let him absorb that, and then added, "Yep, like I said, happens all the time.". We both chuckled, and he gave me a hug and then an Iced Tea to calm my nerves with, and pulled out his I.O.U. which he was saving for Astaroth; he admitted that he would then probably be Venomed or Combusted, but it would be worth it, and said that he had already teleported Astaroth once. Jewel tried a Clarivoyance spell; when Marcellus inquired if she was trying to Clair Astaroth, she replied in the negative, saying she was thinking about Ariel. Marcellus said he was pretty sure Ariel wouldn't venom her, but I warned Jewel that Astaroth still might, for interrupting her when they were having tea. At that point Ariel returned, and said that his tower was ... sumptous. We talked a bit more about what had happened, and then she left with Dean. I also yawned and fell over... well, not *quite* that ungracefully, but I also fell asleep a short while later.

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