

+++ Retrieval // The Tale of the Shepherd Boy

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+++ The Book of the Shepherd Boy

- I When the shepherd boy was born, no sign was given to the peoples of the hills, for this was an age before signs.
- II The shepherd boy learned to tend beasts, and was named Toleth—a new name. The oldest shepherds shrugged, for it sounded well enough, and was not the first new name they had heard.
- III. For there was change upon the hills, even in those times.
- IV. Yet change or not, a shepherd gave his beasts to another when he became stooped with the weight of years, bade his farewells, and walked to the ancient place. For this was the custom.
- V. It passed that in his youth Toleth frowned and asked why men walked to the ancient place. Did not the beasts still need tending? Was not the sun still warm, shade pleasant, and winds cool?
- VI. "This is as it is," the hearth-women told Toleth. "This is as it is," sighed the shepherds. The beasts only bleated, for they had not speech to say the same.
- VII. One day the shepherd boy set aside his beasts, and broke a staff for journeying. "I will walk to the ancient place and learn why all is as it is," he said.
- VIII. The hearth-women and the shepherds were saddened, for they knew they would not see Toleth again.

+++ The Book of the SOURCE

- I. Through the hills and deep valleys Toleth strode, and in time he came to the ancient place. There he saw not the aged shepherds who came before him, but only a vast and endless sea.
- II. From the sea rose a pillar of white marble, tall and veined in patterns, which was the SOURCE and the centre of the ancient place.
- III. The SOURCE spoke without words to say: I am the SOURCE, who is you, and who made all as it is.
- IV. For the first time, Toleth felt a chill that was not of the winds. But steadfast, he spoke his question: "Why then is all as it is?"
- V. The SOURCE answered without words to say: Because you have made it so.
- VI. Toleth shook his head. "How can this be? I am but a shepherd boy."
- VII. No, the SOURCE echoed across the endless sea. You are King.
- VIII. And the SOURCE revealed to the shepherd boy the sign of the King.
- IX. The shepherd boy departed from the ancient place, with both more and less than he brought.

### +++ The Book of the King

I. Toleth returned from the ancient place to the hills, but the seasons had changed.

Of the shepherds nothing remained. Where once hearths were tended, now seed-growers watched tall grasses in stone-walled fields.

II. "Where have gone the shepherds?" asked Toleth. But the seed-growers knew nothing of shepherds, for all that they were many in number.

III. "If you cannot tend fields, then you must leave," said the burly seed-growers. "We know not your kind." But the shepherd boy formed the sign of the King, and thence he was King.

IV. Neither seed-growers nor Toleth knew what it was to be King, but as day gave to night and then day once more, that knowledge seeped from the ancient place into the roots of the fields and the hearts of men and women.

V. And the shepherd boy grew into a man, and a palace of great stones rose above the grasses. No-one now called him Toleth, but rather called him King whilst they bowed.

VI. Men and women of strange faces and stranger names came and went from lands beyond the hills. Whatever their nature, all bowed when the King formed the sign of the King.

VII. And the seed-growers prospered, and dusty roads wended the hills beneath the sun. But the King in his heart felt a gap—a thing lost with his name.

VIII. "Why is it," the King asked, "that even my most loyal seed-growers become stooped with the weight of years, and walk to the ancient place, never to return?" Not even the wisest of travellers could say.

IX. "Why is it," the King asked again, "that I am not weighed by the seasons and the years?" For the King had stood as King for long indeed, and yet was tall and strong.

X. It came that the King put aside his scented oils and his hearth-women. He broke a staff for journeying from the greatest tree in the palace courtyard, and walked forth to the ancient place.

+++ The Book of the Far Vessel

- I. Even as the King strode into the ancient place, the years fell from him and he was once again the shepherd boy, no taller than his staff.
- II. A great wind blew across the endless sea that was the ancient place, and spray dashed against the marble pillar that was the SOURCE.
- III. The SOURCE spoke without words to say: You need not ask the questions in your heart. The answer to each is that you have made it so. This you know, for I am you.
- IV. But the shepherd boy heard not, for he stared far across the sea. There amidst the swell billowed sails above a ship's hull, sleek and beautiful in the way it danced between the waves.
- V. The shepherd boy raised his staff to wave, and made to shout loud, for never had he seen such a thing.
- VI. No, echoed the SOURCE. It is not yet time.
- VII. And the shepherd boy bit his tongue, and watched the vessel sail from sight. But upon its hull was the sign of the Machine, and this he recalled.
- VIII. The SOURCE spoke without words to say: It is neither the first sign, nor the last sign. Yet once formed it cannot be reversed.
- IX. "They who sail are harmed not by it," said the shepherd boy.
- X. They sail before the wind to their end, boomed the SOURCE, in knowledge but without choice. Now go from this place. For you are become the Genius, the Seed, and the Beginning.

+++ The Book of Many Kings

- I. The boy left the ancient place as though carried by a wind and the crash of waves. The years returned to him, and broadened his frame to the strength of a King and the form of the Genius.
- II. Of the hills and palace, of the loyal seed-growers, there was nothing. Parched sands had come and buried all, even the seasons, in heat by day and chill by night.
- III. And the Genius walked far, long past the time when the sands would claim a man. He considered the sign of the Machine, and at length put it away.
- IV. It passed that upon the sands walked bands who learned the shifting ways, men who were water-hunters to see the hidden oasis, women who were rock-hunters to find scurrying beasts.
- V. The Genius greeted these bands, and made the sign of the King. And he was King, yet he was not King over these peoples.
- VI. The bands bowed before him, and made him gifts of precious stones, but said "We shall bring you to the King of Sands." And so it was as they spoke.
- VII. Amidst tents the King of Sands held court, his hands gripped tight upon the sign of the King. Yet he was struck fearful by the Genius, for he knew not the SOURCE, nor had he walked to the ancient place.
- VIII. "Do you come to make the sign of War?" cried the King of Sands, and his concubines trembled, and the winds blew sand upon the tents.
- IX. "I know not the form of that sign," said the Genius, and the King of Sands bestowed upon him many gifts, and his people rejoiced.
- X. The King of Sands then spoke of the sign of the King, twice-held, tangled upon itself to form the sign of War - and this the King of Sands feared beyond all else.
- XI. For beneath the sign of War there is triumph, and hunger, and men are sent to the ancient place in pain before their time - until one King is extinguished, or both rule only wilderness.
- XII. And the Genius journeyed away from the sands and into other lands where all knew of the sign of the King, and where from that sign now came darkness in greater measure than gold.
- XIII. The Genius frowned when he thought of the SOURCE, and made not again the sign of the King.

+++ The Book of the Machine

- I. Seasons passed like the shifting of sands, and in all lands ruled men and women who made the sign of the King. They gathered about them courts of wise men and banner-bearers.
- II. Yet also they formed the sign of War, and banner-bearers roamed wild, and men and women were struck and sent to the ancient place before their time.
- III. "Who is he," asked the Genius of wise men in each land, "who formed the first sign and neither stoops nor tires with the years?" But they spoke only strange words in response.
- IV. And the Genius in time ceased to ask, but instead brought forth the sign of the Machine from its hidden place and held it aloft. The Genius made the sign of the Machine, and then much that was new came into the lands.
- V. Mighty towers arose, and means made to lessen both the pains of hunger and blows made under the sign of War. In every land was the Genius favoured by Kings and sought after by wise men.
- VI. It passed that the Genius came to a land of hills and shepherds, and an empty palace.
- VII. "Where then is your King?" asked the Genius, "For I would show him the sign of the Machine, that will bring gifts and wonders to your land."
- VIII. And a bowed shepherd pulled forth the sign of the Machine from where it lay hidden in his croft, and said "This sign we know, and that of the King, and that of War."
- IX. "But you make them not," said the Genius. "We make them not," replied the shepherd.
- X. The Genius saw then that this was the place of his birth, uncovered by the retreating sands, and that he had walked in all lands.
- XI. He put away the sign of the Machine for a time, and lived as he had once done. But ever were there echoes of the signs in the skies and upon the distant hills.

+++ The Book of the Multitudes

- I. The seasons changed, and the shepherds walked to the ancient place, one by one. The hills became wilderness, and woods, or worn to boulder-mounds. The Genius remained, though the last flocks had long passed.
- II. Black-feathered birds that bore the sign of War upon their wings flew overhead, and this too was a change like that of the seasons.
- III. There were rains, and a storm, and a great river washed through the wilderness where there had been no river before. The waters lapped at the door to the Genius'croft, and with the river came men.
- IV. The men bore banners, inked with many designs of the signs of War and the Machine, and beneath the banners came machines of wheels and churning that were new in the eyes of the Genius.
- V. "This is now the land of our King," said the men to the Genius, "and you must bow to the banner."
- VI. The Genius bowed, for men had prospered by the sign of the Machine, and by the toil of their hands and eyes, and such is worthy of respect. Yet the banner-bearers were made nervous by his presence, for it was not the presence of a wilderness-dweller.
- VII. Then came women and artisans and children without count, who built a great gathering of palaces and towers, of marvellous forms and shapes.
- VIII. And the wilderness was no longer a wilderness, but a land beneath a distant King, made fruitful by the sign of the Machine and the hands of men.
- IX. "Now," said the banner-bearers, "we shall fall upon the land of the Foe King, and destroy his towers, and strike his people until they move not."
- X. The Genius walked by their side, and saw that the sign of War had grown great, powerful, and terrible. Vast were the lines of those sent to the ancient place before their time, and dark were the skies above the fields of battle.
- XI. Black-feathered birds watched, and fed upon the wastes left where towers were struck down. The Genius saw this and more, and was troubled.

+++ The Book of the Three Who Are One

- I. From broken towers and fallen banners, men and women in trails and huddles went to the ancient place, with eyes hollowed and bodies broken.
- II. Turning his face from the sign of War, the Genius walked alongside those struck down before their time.
- III. "Why have you so made your lands, and set the sign of War so high?" asked the Genius. But the men could not speak, and the women only wept.
- IV. So came the Genius to the shore of the endless sea. Throughout the ancient place, above and around the SOURCE, and across the foamed waves blew a wind of countless voices.
- V. Then forth from the sea came the Three Who Are One, and the SOURCE was silent, and the wind wailed.
- VI. The first was the Beast, who growled "The sign of War is yours and of your making. Do not turn from it."
- VII. The second was the Dying Shepherd, who smiled kindly even as his skin sloughed. "You have taught, and made, and that is well," he said.
- VIII. The third was the Tome of Signs, that whispered as its parchment shifted. "It is time, it is time," it hissed.
- IX. "Who are you that come here?" demanded the Genius.
- X. "We are the Three Who Are One," said the Dying Shepherd. "We are you."
- XI. "How can that be true?" asked the Genius. "You know that it is," the Beast rumbled.

+++ The Book of Temptation

- I. "Nothing is now as it should be," said the Tome of Signs, and its pages reached for the winds.
- II. "Was not all pleasant and golden when you first made the sign of the King?" asked the Dying Shepherd.
- III. "The sign of War is abused by the weak, and you would make it right," snarled the Beast.
- IV. The years tugged at the Genius, wishing to fly from him into the wind of voices such that he would be the shepherd boy Toleth once more.
- V. And the Tome of Signs opened like a flower to reveal the sign of the King of Kings.
- VI. "Rule them, and guide them" said the Three Who Are One. "As you know is right."
- VII. Yet the Genius held tight upon the years that made him. He turned from the Three Who Are One and walked from the ancient place, into the streaming winds.
- VIII. "No!" roared the Beast. "Rule them!"
- IX. And the endless sea roared in turn, and the waves grew great. The wind of voices screamed.

+++ The Book of the Warmaster

- I. "I am not the Genius," said Toleth, "and I will not make again the sign of the King."
- II. But the Kings and peoples of the lands heard him not. They had forgotten the ancient place, and it was now the wind of voices that bore them there when the time became right.
- III. Toleth looked upon what was. "Nothing is now as it should be," he said.
- IV. He took the sign of War and the sign of the Machine, and turned them upon themselves, and made them his. "I am become the Warmaster," he said, and he was the Warmaster.
- V. The Kings and peoples of the lands now heard his voice, and called upon him.
- VI. Where the sign of War was made, the Warmaster turned it upon itself and made it his.
- VII. Where black-feathered birds flew, with the sign of War upon their wings, the Warmaster turned them upon themselves, and made them his.
- VIII. Where wise men toiled upon the sign of the Machine, so ordered by fearful Kings, these wise men also the Warmaster made his.
- IX. Kings fell and Kings arose, and the sign of War was made when Kings met. Dark skies and wastelands were made of the lands of fallen Kings.
- X. And the Warmaster grew tall and broad, and his face grew hard.
- XI. Yet the sign of War was his, and he caused to be spared many lands. The towers stood unstruck, and the peoples went to the ancient place at their time, and not before.
- XII. And the Warmaster looked from afar upon the spared lands where gold flowed, women laughed, and wise men toiled upon wonders.

+++ The Book of New Signs

- I. Where the sign of War was not made, men and women built lives of grandeur beneath the sign of the Machine, and banished pain and hunger.
- II. Their multitudes grew, and the wise men became many in number, even in lands where the darkened skies of the Warmaster's toil loomed close.
- III. A day came when the Warmaster and his banner-bearers struck down a tower, and set its King to be carried to the ancient place by the wind of voices. From the throne spilled a broken sign.
- IV. And what the sign was, none of the assembled host could say.
- V. The Warmaster turned then from the sign of War, to the consternation of his banner-bearers, and crossed the lands to speak with wise men where they gathered in great conclaves.
- VI. "Who has stood upon the shore of the ancient place?" asked the Warmaster. But the wise men shied from him, for he was the Warmaster. They spoke not, or spoke nonsense, or spoke lies.
- VII. But one came alone thereafter, in silence, and said "I have stood there, but briefly, for the wind of voices is too strong."
- VIII. "You have seen new signs," said the Warmaster, and the one trembled. "I have," he said.
- IX. And new signs arose amongst all the multitudes, and with them came many more wonders than were brought by the sign of the Machine alone.
- X. Lands rose to golden splendour, whilst others become blasted empty wilderness, for men and women had forgotten the ancient place and knew not fully what they did when they made the signs.

+++ The Book of the Red Land

- I. Beyond the farthest land lay a gulf, and beyond the gulf lay the red land.
- II. Wise men gathered and made the sign of the Machine, and many other signs, and from these signs made a bridge to cross the gulf.
- III. One who had stood upon the shore of the endless sea came to the Warmaster, and bowed and said, "The abyss is bridged. The sign of the King will be made in the red land."
- IV. So it passed, and the sign of War was also made upon the red land, and new-built towers were struck down, and peoples carried to the ancient place by the wind of voices.
- V. The Warmaster and his banner-bearers turned from the Kings of the old lands and crossed the bridge to the red land.
- VI. And the Warmaster strode the red land to turn the sign of War upon itself and make it his.
- VII. The red land shook with the roar of battle. Yet many towers were left unstruck, in places where the sign of War did not loom, shielded by the Warmaster's hand.
- VIII. Seasons passed, and the Warmaster made a circle of his banner-bearers upon the highest mountain. From its height he saw that the red land was arranged as a sign.
- IX. Vast and strange, it was the both the sign of the Machine and yet unknown to him. Within the great sign lay a multitude of signs, as many and more as had come upon the lands.
- X. The one who had stood upon the shore of the endless sea looked upon these signs, and the wind of voices carried him to the ancient place, and he did not return.
- XI. The Warmaster's face became terrible to behold. He brought forth his sign of the Machine, and called upon his wise men and his banner-bearers, who came and trembled before him.
- XII. And they toiled upon the red land, such that the great sign was buried and hidden from the eyes of men and women.

+++ The Book of the Guide

- I. Seasons turned, and the Warmaster in time journeyed again to the ancient place. The endless sea now churned, whipped to spray by the howling wind of voices.
- II. The SOURCE stood silent, touched not by the spray. But the Three Who Are One were soaked by it and made greater by it, and the water fell from them like rain.
- III. Men and women now stood upon the shore of the endless sea, cloaked from the angry spray and the wind of voices by the sign of the Machine and many lesser signs.
- IV. And amongst their gathering grew a sleek vessel to set upon the endless sea, built by wise men and their followers.
- V. The Tome of Signs looked upon the Warmaster and rustled like an animal. Many signs crossed its pages, but it said nothing.
- VI. The Beast, greater and yet somehow thinner, only snarled.
- VII. And the Dying Shepherd sighed through the wetness in his mouth. "Do as you will, then," he said.
- VIII. The SOURCE then revealed the sign of the Guide, and echoed without words to say: You are become the Guide.
- IX. Amongst the men and women about the vessel, some heard the SOURCE, and looked to the Warmaster.
- X. But he was not the Warmaster, for he made the sign of the Guide, and so became the Guide.
- XI. The Guide looked out across the tumbling waves, and pointed far, and said "There is where we shall go, for it is time." And the wise men bowed to him.

+++ The Book of the Far Journey

- I. Many were the wise men come to the ancient place then, and many were the vessels set upon endless sea, their sails full and hulls deep.
- II. And the Guide showed men and women the sign of the Guide, and some learned to make the sign.
- III. From the sign of the Guide and the sign of the Machine came forth a multitude of lesser signs, for this had become the way of men and women.
- IV. The Guide sailed forth upon the endless sea, and wise men crewed his vessel.
- V. Other vessels followed, and at each bow stood wise men who made the sign of the Guide.
- VI. And they called "Where is it that we go?" For the endless sea threw spray, even far from the shore of the ancient place and far from the wind of voices, and they could not see.
- VII. The Guide pointed, and said "Beneath the lights lie lands."
- VIII. The eyes of the wise men were opened, for there were lights upon the endless sea, and beneath each light lay a new land.
- IX. Men and women sailed to those lands in mighty vessels, and upon the shores they made the signs they knew, and set towers upon the hills, and built lives of grandeur.
- X. From each shore, as he passed, the Guide looked back upon his wake to see the distant SOURCE and the sails of many vessels of men and women.
- XI. But the Guide sailed further, and far, and far, until his wise men trembled, and there were no more lights upon the endless sea.
- XII. The Guide lost sight of the SOURCE, and strange signs washed upon the waves in those reaches. A great emptiness fell upon him, and he heard the rustle of distant pages upon the air.

+++ The Book of New Men

- I. In time the Guide sailed once more to the lights, the lands, and the sight of the SOURCE.
- II. It passed that a vessel steered alongside, and the woman at the bow made the sign of the Guide and bowed. "There are new signs come to the lands," she said.
- III. "And that is the way of wise men," replied the Guide. Yet he returned to the old lands, for the woman was troubled and would not say why.
- IV. Across the old lands and the red land there now toiled new men, their bodies formed from the sign of the Machine. Men and women lived as though all were Kings, served by the new men, and made many new and strange signs.
- V. And the sign of War was carried across the endless sea by the new men, that Kings of far distant lands might cast one another down, and be carried to the ancient place by the wind of voices.
- VI. The Guide saw this, and more, before he beached his vessel in the place it was built, upon the shore of the ancient place.
- VII. The Three Who Are One rose from the sea's tumbling waves and spume, their forms greater than before.
- VIII. "The sign of War makes strength!" growled the Beast, his fangs dripping red.
- IX. "Or men and women might laze in joy, and let others be strong," suggested the Dying Shepherd, who had become fattened and bloated, his flesh discoloured.
- X. "It is the time of new men," rustled the Tome of Signs, "and not your time." Signs oozed from the tome and fell into the waves.
- XI. The SOURCE spoke without words, as hammers upon stone, to say: All is as you made it to be, for you made the sign of the Machine.
- XII. And the wind of voices howled about them all, and churned the endless sea against the shore.

+++ The Book of the Doomed

- I. "Let this be, then, an age of men and new men, and let them find their way, as they have learned," said the Guide.
- II. And he set sail again, for there were yet many lights upon the endless sea and countless vessels of men and women and new men.
- III. The seasons turned, and the Guide set foot upon many new lands. There he inscribed the sign of the Guide, taught men and women, and caused to be fashioned great wonders and splendour.
- IV. Yet in some new lands there dwelled not-men of unsightly or bestial lineages. Their ancestors came not from any land of men and women, and they made signs of strange provenance.
- V. Where men or new men met the not-men, familiar signs and strange signs tangled to make the sign of War and no other, no matter their wishes. Wastes and wildernesses were made of new lands, their towers and palaces struck to ruin, and the wind of voices spread far across the endless sea.
- VI. It passed that upon the endless sea the Guide caught sight of a sleek vessel of the not-men, that sailed beneath the sign that was Doom. He recalled the vessel's shape, and was for a moment a shepherd boy in his heart.
- VII. "Why do you sail, knowing, beneath the sign that is Doom?" called the Guide.
- VIII. "We have taken the sign, and turned it upon itself, and made it ours," said the wise amongst the not-men. "You have not, and yet you might. You see well, but do you not see what is to come?"
- IX. The Guide knew then that the wisdom of the not-men was neither false nor true, but of a different nature. It was not for men and women, for it would send them to the sign that is Doom.
- X. He sailed from the not-men, and thereafter where the not-men of the sleek vessels met with men and women and new men, it was always beneath the sign of War, made clear and true.

+++ The Book of Storms

- I. Upon the endless sea, the years passed as heartbeats and dust.
- II. And the new lands were beyond measure in their extent, and the old lands built into towering palaces for multitudes beyond numbering.
- III. Yet men and women became weak in the manner of indolent Kings, even in the new lands where the Guide had raised up grandeur.
- IV. And the wise men forgot their place and a great portion of their wisdom, and the new men became strong, for it was they who bore banners under the sign of War.
- V. Men forgot caution with not-men, and new and strange signs came into the lands, and with them a fire that burned in ways that men and women could not well describe.
- VI. It came to be that the new men rose up in countless lands, and said "We are men and women, and you are not, for you have forsaken your own meaning." And the fire burned in them, and the new signs were upon their skins.
- VII. The wind of voices became laden with those sent to the ancient place before their time, such that it circled and stormed and howled, and became as a tide that flowed above the endless sea, and sucked the waves up into its passing.
- VIII. Many were the vessels smashed upon shores, and crushed, and sunken, and vanished without trace.
- IX. Upon the roiling waters, the Guide and his wise men rode the storm. The Guide looked far across the thundering waves, and saw that the sign that is Doom had seeped from the not-men into lands beyond count, but that men and women saw it not.
- X. And the wise men who followed the Guide feared, for they knew nothing but the storm that had come to the endless sea, and which tore at the sign of the Machine upon their vessel.
- XI. The Guide said, in sorrow, "Men and women have stepped beyond my sight, and they have brought the sign that is Doom upon themselves." For that was not what he had wished.
- XII. The Guide turned toward the streaming wind of voices, and stood upon the bow as his vessel followed the wind to the old lands, where it circled and roared with terrible strength.

+++ The Book of Ruin

- I. The wind of voices, grown beyond measure, raised the endless sea in mighty waves that buried lands—and so bore yet further multitudes of men, women, and not-men to the ancient place before their time.
- II. In lands beyond count, new men burned with the fire within, and the fire in turn burned them until only broken signs remained.
- III. The wind of voices raged on, and the sign that is Doom hung above all lands, greater even than the sign of War.
- IV. From the bow of his vessel, lashed by the wind of voices, the Guide saw palaces cast down and multitudes scattered. He saw all that he once made struck and sundered, and his wise men wept.
- V. And the Guide sorrowed, for above the spray and storm he could hear the laughter that was the Three Who Are One.
- VI. For the Three Who Are One were grown mighty in size, and far across the endless sea did their forms loom. About their forms the wind of voices turned and circled, and the waves lashed at the shore of the ancient place.
- VII. The SOURCE stood as it had, yet was yet neither less nor more than the Three Who Are One.
- VIII. "You have made signs, and made yourselves foes," the Guide shouted.
- IX. "No!" coughed the Dying Shepherd, doubled and bloated.
- X. "No!" roared the Beast, such that even the wind of voices turned from his jaws.
- XI. "No!" cried the Tome of Signs, its pages cast forth like leaves in the storm wind.
- XII. And above them, and above the old lands and the red land, was the sign that is Doom.

+++ The Book of the King of Kings

- I. The Guide cleaved the endless sea and the wind of voices, and beached his vessel and the weeping wise men upon the storm-swept shore of the ancient place.
- II. And of other vessels, there were none.
- III. From the ancient place, the Guide could see only that hills burned, signs lay broken, and towers were struck and fallen. Not even black-feathered birds remained to feast upon the wastes and ruins.
- IV. The Three Who Are One loomed above as though mountains.
- V. "Now," snarled the Beast. "Before it is too late."
- VI. "There is yet the chance," pleaded the Dying Shepherd, as the rot streamed from his flesh.
- VII. "The sign, make the sign," rustled the Tome of Signs, and opened once again upon the sign of the King of Kings.
- VIII. But the Guide looked upon the sign that is Doom, and he took the sign and turned it upon itself, and made it his. In this he formed the sign of the Emperor that was the making of all signs and the making of no signs.
- IX. And he made the sign of the Emperor, and he was the Emperor.
- X. And the Emperor became woeful in the making of the sign, for in his heart was now the wisdom of the not-men, and by it was he split from the lineage of men and women.
- XI. The Beast roared to drown out the wind of voices, and grew vaster yet, and would have taken the Emperor in his jaws. But the Dying Shepherd placed a hand upon the Beast's hide. "It is not the time," he said.
- XII. And the Tome of Signs snapped closed.

+++ The Book of the Father

- I. Forth from the ancient place stepped the Emperor, and the peoples of the old lands bowed to him, those who remained, for no more were there Kings.
- II. The wind of voices faltered, and the storm calmed, for the multitudes it might carry to the ancient place were gone, and a great silence fell upon countless lands far across the endless sea.
- III. There was a breaking sound as though hills sundered, and forth from the ancient place came the SOURCE, and upon it was carved the sign of the Father.
- IV. From the endless sea arose the Fourth Who Is One, who wore the form of a shepherd girl of bleeding eyes.
- V. The shepherd girl too came forth from the ancient place, and all who saw her fell still at her feet. "I have no name, but I will be yours," she said to the Emperor.
- VI. The Emperor saw true, and said, "Your name sends not-men to the ancient place before their time, for you are the sign that is Doom."
- VII. The shepherd girl smiled, and it was terrible to behold.
- VIII. "Now," said the Emperor to the Four Who Are One, "you have become in truth my foes."
- IX. And the Four Who Are One could not reply, but retreated into the endless sea.
- X. From the SOURCE the Emperor took the sign of the Father, and held it aloft. Then there was neither SOURCE nor the Emperor, but yet remained one who was the SOURCE, the Emperor, and the Father.
- XI. Without words, that one echoed: What shall be shall be, for I have made it so.
- XII. And all the lands bowed before him.

+++ ADNOTAMENTUM // BYORDEROF Inquisitor Ullum

+++ AUTHORITY // Data requisite a9-27-10d3 // Granted

The Black Chalice, the poison dregs that slay even as the smiling victim passes them on to the next drinker. They are dark legends, the Chalice sequences—moral threats so dire that only the name is whispered in times to come. Ours was the Prellus Relinquishment.

We slew the ferals of Ael Veholt in cyclonic fire because that is where the ancient inscriptions stood, the legend that gave a birth-name for the God-Emperor, He who is the Lux Imperia. We unleashed the virus-storms to shatter Mundus Prellus, Spire-Aveal, Respite III, and Weirth because from the cathedrals of those mighty worlds came the missionaria who discovered and praised the myth, and then rose to insurrection against one another.

We did this in sorrow, as we came too late to destroy only the poison draught. The Black Chalice had been held aloft, and can you conceive of all the Imperium divided by Factions of the Name? We of the Conclave weighed worlds against that doom. But that is not why we murdered a subsector and burned millennia of Imperial glory to ashes and death. No. We destroyed worlds, and then, later, destroyed one another, because one transcriptor-elect amongst the missionaria made a single error.

This I have learned in pain and penance: upon Ael Veholt, when it lived and praised the God-Emperor in feral ignorance, Tol had the meaning of ruler over unified tribes. TolTol, by their way of building words, was the ruler of rulers or King of Kings—and TolTol-Eth, he who will ascend to be King of Kings.

There was no name within the legend. Yet we made what we made, and all of it was death. What hand directed this? What tainted hand?

Of the Conclave, I alone live, one soul remaining to walk the corpse-halls of this Librarium fortress, upon a dead moon that looks down upon a murdered world. By all that is holy, I should both end this survival and destroy the final record. But I cannot.

+++ AUTHORITY // Relinquish

+++ END ADNOTAMENTUM // Cipher Accept // CRYPT

+++ TERMINUS // Lexservitor Relinquish  
+++ His will encompasses, and grants us victory  
+++ Resource // Data Materia 10-55-fb74 // CLOSE