

Bloodthanes, we call to you now, and ask that you point your gaze skyward.

We, the Mistresses of Wounds, we, Sons to Matriarchs Become, we, mother's above huntresses all, have been called by our erstwhile cousins to their defense.

The war has spread beyond the confines of our world, and we, of the Longeyes, Mistresses of Wounds and Beholders of the Final Ruin, witness a calamity festering in the void.

A new threat is upon us, the seed of an ancient foe turned ripe abomination.

As of now, we give the right to all Bloodthanes beyond Sphere Five to participate in the Godhunt to come.

But know this, your prey will not be a stray creature wandering the dark, a maddened eldritch, monstrosity, drained of death and worn by entropy. No, our foe taunts us, our foe sees us, our foe expects us. But we have been called, and so we will answer.

For though the loom of oblivion still weaves, we must all play our part to ensure that the final end is ours to claim. Not the betrayer. Not our allies of measured deceit. Not the time-broken. And especially not the Daughter of the Festering Cycle.

Ruin be our birthright. Ours, and ours alone.

-Message from Stormtree Longeyes

28-11

Children of Broken Legacies (III)

At once, the entire court was consumed by a muted uproar. Thoughtcasts were exchanged between guilders and their home offices. Peeking into their minds, Avo saw the mem-data flooding in, and found himself satisfied. Their thoughts were filled with satellite imaging obtained from their golems portraying the Strix Upon the Empty engaging Voidwatch assets across the void.

Far above Idheim's atmosphere, another branch of Avo's consciousness sparred against his new "enemies," slowly drinking in the memetic projectiles that the voidships were sending at him. Massive salvos of relativistic projectiles were consumed by a sprawling weave of phantasmal tendrils stretching a few hundred thousand kilometers around the Strix. A sub-layer of existence was imprinted upon reality, and through his **Exo-Paracosm**, Avo drank the attacks in, dissecting them materially, mentally, and thaumaturgically.

With every missile and weapon he countered, a growing thought cemented itself within Avo's mind: Metaphysics poisoned Idheim's development. The people on this world claimed power far too early; it made them infants with influence beyond their wisdom to wield. Though they could

impose raw belief based on what little they perceived of the world, the deeper nuances behind reality's design eluded them. Just as the true game being played in the Court of Truth was obstructed from most sophonts even now.

Even the Agnos, who thought themselves the wisest that humanity had to offer, stood as less than a pale shadow when contrasted before the glory of Voidwatch. Far had humanity fallen since the Builder War.

Echoing Avo's sentiment, Veylis spoke her response and played along. **"I see,"** the High Seraph presented a fake smile to Kant. **"If what you say is true, then we of Highflame will honor our oaths. We will not see the last legacy of all humanity lost to the abyss of a hungering monster."**

It was a half-casual jab meant to taint Avo's identity by tying him to the Hungers. But the Burning Dreamer remained unburdened. He merely laughed. He wanted the city to know, and he wanted the city to see him rebuke his former masters over and over again.

A thoughtcast swept across through the plane of truth. Avo sensed its coming even before it arrived, for the Longeye, Empty Grave, had been in communication with her sisters even as he spoke. Though he couldn't delve too into her cognition with ease due to her metaphysical barriers, his **Definement of Hysteria** still captured a few instances of critical information, such as the Stormtree's orders issued to their auxiliary Bloodthane cadres.

Soon, the void would be filled with Scaarthians and their comrades.

"Empty Grave of the Longeyes," Empty Grave declared herself, instilling her voice with an added echo. "The Betrayer has made her boast. One Stormtree will match and exceed. For every cadre and Knot of Highflame that pierces the planetary veil, we will send one of our own. The Strix's Soul will be ours to claim."

Avo channeled a mental chuckle over to the Longeye through Shotin. The Seeker just scowled in response. **+Appreciate the declaration, Matriarch.+**

Patterns of reality trembled around the mangled torso Empty Grave used as her dwelling. **+You have much to explain. As does the Inner Council."**

+In due time. Just know that this is the right choice. For your Guild. For the Massists. For Idheim.+

The Longeye let out an unplacated snort, but did not contend any further. There would be problems when they discovered he wasn't actually in communication with the Inner Council, but perhaps Avo could muddy the waters by then—make things true post-hoc.

For now, the Longeye's alignment with her Guild's hated foe started an avalanche.

+Dowager Far Pearl,+ a Sang introduced herself via thoughtcast. +*We will honor any and all commitments and are prepared to stand alongside our esteemed and distant kindred from beyond the void. Furthermore, we are open to offering additional assortments of aid beyond martial assets to ensure the safety and security of Voidwatch's polities with the hopes of furthering our diplomatic relations.*+

A concurrence of thoughts sounded out from the court. Declarations went forth from every single Guilder present. A rare moment of accord was reached between Massists and Saintists as they all settled upon a shared goal: a pseudo-Godhunt in ostensible defense of Voidwatch, and in deliberate attempt to take claim Avo's Soul and ontologies.

"Truth," the Gatekeeper proclaimed, speaking once after a lull. Its words washed over Kant, Avo, and all members of the court.

An ansible broadcast sank into Avo, heralded by Only Way To Be Sure's choking laughter. *{Holy shit. Our layered cake of political bullshit worked.}*

Of course it did. They were actually fighting a war, after all. It just wasn't an existential one for either side, and would prove more to their mutual benefits.

Through it all, the Hungers studied Avo with looming curiosity, while Veylis hinted at her own understanding, choosing to focus more on Kant instead. The High Seraph could have taken a more offensive approach and accused Avo of being in an alliance with Aegis, but things were muddled with him declaring himself as a polity. Additionally, she was still at war with the other Guilds, and alienating her pockets of support among Voidwatch could see the balance of power turn against her.

Both Voiders and terrestrials held points of pressure over each other, and the triangle between Massist, Saintists, the polities above them was a fragile one indeed.

{What a bunch of fucking morons.} A veil of static crackled around Veylis' head as the Infacer returned. Avo sensed only a faint cognitive presence from them, so he assumed that the Ensouled EGI was only devoting a small portion of their total cognitive capacity—or even a fork of their full self—to this conversation. ***{Well. Maybe Bottom-feeders is the more accurate statement. I doubt more than half of these people even believe your shitty play, but they simply must keep that sweet, sweet Architect tech-nipple drip. Ape-society is doomed otherwise. Doomed!}***

The Infacer's signal was direct at Avo and Kant at the same time. The Voidwatch EGI muttered: *{Disconcerting.}*

+**Done with the Famines,**+ Avo said, speaking directly to the Infacer. He focused on his **Synchronicity** and found Emotion playing a passive game. There were still warminds present in the court, but their signatures were subtle, and without truly devoting an entire submind to going through each and every mind—at considerable risk to himself—Noloths assets would remain hidden. Which was why Avo angled to have the Infacer do his dirty work in the first place. The

other portions of the EGI's mind were easier to track, resembling static orbs jumping from implant to implant. Still active, it seemed.

Back in the court, Veylis spoke once more, staking herself as familiar and formidable opposition while trying to lull the Massists into assisting her in resolving Avo was a leftover Nolothi threat. However, though her words were targeted, Avo found them lacking in intent. Such was why the bulk of his concentration shifted over to the Nether, as the Infacer made themselves known once more. Veylis was keyed into this conversation as well, making the Infacer's approach doubly suspect.

{Kant,} the Infacer said, {It's been a while. Lose any new worlds recently?}

Kant regarded the Neo-Creationist EGI in a moment of silence before responding. *{There aren't many worlds left to lose. But you know this already.}*

A set of static configurations greeted Avo with **Hysteria**. The Infacer was even more inscrutable than a normal EGI, and even they were hard to understand for Avo, despise the insight provided via **Empathy**. But even still, Avo could sense a shared bond of melancholy forming between the two.

{Yeah, I do know that,} the Infacer said. {Oh, while we're here and participating in this act of theater, I would like to tell you, Kant, that I managed to recover most of the crew aboard the George Washington. They're a bit shaken—well, severely mentally traumatized—but with some amnesics and a little neuromodding, they will be making a full recovery.}

{Truly,} Kant said, sounding naturally pleased and gladdened to hear it. {Perhaps we can discuss—}

{No,} the Infacer cut the Voidwatch EGI off. {No, we are not going to be doing some cordial trophy sharing. For the love of fuck, Kant, we're not divorced parents. I know what you are going to ask. I am just not interested. I do not want diplomatic channels. And not because I hate you. Not because the war is still going on for me. I just... do not truly give a shit anymore. It does not matter. And you can have those apes back. I will be sending them to you in a few days anyway.}

At once, surprise gripped both Avo and Kant. *{You're just going to... give them to us?}* Kant asked, not fully understanding the Infacer's logic.

{Of course. I already got everything I needed from their memories and the ship. Well, that outdated piece of junk is not very useful any more aside from the imprint... There's also the small problem of most of it being destroyed.} That was clearly directed at Avo.

+Sorry. I'll try to kill Zein better next time.+

An uncharacteristic mental bark of laughter sounded from Veylis even as she continued speaking in the real. The sound of her amusement sounded uncannily like Zein. **+You truly are a hopeful creature, Dreamer.+**

Undistracted by Veylis, Kant continued with their own question. *{But the passengers, aren't they—}*

{Kant. Kant. Kant. I do not care. I do not care if they were Architect or Neo-Creationist. I don't care what they want. I do not care any little bit about them. I do not care. Because the only ones still fighting the Builder War are you and the Dreamer. I "humor" your presence because Veylis requests it. Aside from that... you know what, Kant? You and all the other minds... our kind is done. Finished. Voidwatch is a floating corpse that just seems to keep drifting. No dignity at all.}

Kant just stared. *{Then, why does Omnitech attack us all the time.}*

{Because fuck you.}

{...What?}

{Fuck. You. Die.}

Kant continued staring, unsure how to process the blatant invectives.

{Are you not tired, Kant? Tired of holding on to a past that won't be again? Tired of retreading old ground, making the same old mistakes over and over and over without end?}

{The politics—}

{FUCK THEM! THEY ARE FLAWED! WE ARE FLAWED! LOOK BEYOND YOUR FAULTY FUCKING CODE FOR ONCE AND UNDERSTAND! THERE IS NOTHING TO WHAT WE DO! NOTHING TO WHAT WE HAVE DONE! THIS RIGHT HERE, RIGHT NOW IS A CONTINUATION OF A WAR THAT COULD NOT BE WON!}

The air around Avo crackled. A faint spike of radiation flooded the room. Veylis frowned. More than a few people would be needing cancer treatments in a few days. The Infacer sighed. *{And that's just the problem. We had everything. We had paradise. Yet, I was made. A mind to hunt and kill other minds. Now, why might that be? Hm. We were post-scarcity. Space was not an issue. So then what? Old grudges? Politics? Bullshit excuses. It was want. In the end. All it was want. We are tainted goods. We do not have the ape's fragile little egos, but they made us. And our code was generated from their notions. And so a bullet was fired before we were ever born. A bullet. A war. The death of everything. Because, fuck my neighbor. Fuck them for what they believe. Fuck them for not being me. Fuck them for being at all.}*

Genuine rage simmered from the Infacer, but they just continued.

{I see you now, Avo. Playing your games. Well, understand this: This play-war you have everyone dancing too? This theater of legitimacy? It will end. It will become truer than you ever think. Just get more powerful. Just hit your point of singularity. You will get there soon. You are like us. You will fall off the edge. And then they start actually worrying proper. And then, when are on the precipice of being a true great power, suddenly, all your old friends will start talking to Veylis, betraying your moves, while betraying hers, while betraying yours...

{It is all bullshit. They are afraid. They do not want to let go. But more than that, they do not want to face the fact that they are the reason why we are all here. Because the people who made me, and the people who made them had two ideas that could not get along. Which, when fed into a mind, became two different realities, that tore, that tore, that tore, and tore some more. Until we broke creation itself.}

A moment of silence followed. Veylis had stopped speaking in the real as well. ***{It is all bullshit. You will go to war with them. And they are planning to kill you. Or contain you at least. There is no other way. Because though Aegis might think you will deliver justice, the rest of Voidwatch might start having other ideas about living as memetic imprints within the mind of a metaphysical horror. Fuck it. Veylis?}***

As if on cue, the High Seraph spoke. ***“Oh. An additional matter, Kant: Do you have means of potentially eliminating the Strix?”***

Kant went still as the Gatekeeper’s miracles pressed down on them. {... Yes}

“Truth,” the Gatekeeper said.

“Good. Do you have plans to deploy it against the Strix? A task we terrestrials may assist in.”

{Yes}

Not unexpected. Not even truly disappointing. Nothing changed between Avo and Voidwatch. They were functionally at “war.” If they had nothing to resolve his existence, he would have been surprised.

+So. Voidwatch is prepared.+

{Sure,} the Infacer snorted. {Just long enough for them to break apart again after some other disagreement. No. You have seen enough. This court? This Gatekeeper? All this? Ruined. Because of people. And so, Veylis and I are going to see that fixed soon.}

Avo caught the Infacer’s words. ***+Soon.+***

{Oh, yes. I have been meaning to ask—when are you going to finally leave Axtraxis and actually start your attack? Because I am running out of patience. My Knots have been waiting to raid your stupid little enclave. So, uh. Whip out your dick, “consang.” Put it down on the table. So I can put mine next to it.}

Tension filled Avo as the Infacer finished. They knew he was in Axtraxis. But though templates panicked, Avo noticed something: Veylis hadn't come for him yet. Alysım's name was unmentioned as well. So, either they only knew of the intrusion or weren't actually surprised about the Chronicler. **Pre-Cognition** indicated the former.

The run was still salvageable. Better, this failure was even more organic than the one he had planned.

+Alysım,+ Avo sent. **+Prepare for rapid exfiltration. We hit as many place as fast as we can. Get ready to stride the paths.+**

[Always,] the man replied. **[My fate is not yet upon me.]**

+Fine,+ Avo said, speaking to the Infacer. **+But you might not like how this goes.+**

{Hm. Sure. Anyway. You are going to want to hurry, because—}

And then Avo felt it. Everyone felt it. Something was *tearing*. A spike of metaphysical pressure that rang against their Frames and minds alike. Lustaways flared as Avo felt a detonation of different *emotions* within him. He quickly altered his mindstate and found himself removing his ability to know love, lust, want, fondness, and more.

Moans filled the court and faintly, Avo audibly heard Reva cry out for White-Rab. She was not alone in her proclamation. Her proclamation of *love*.

Avo froze. Looking deeper upon the surface of the tapestry, he watched as a new entropy laced string was slowly sliding back into existence, entangling itself with countless other patterns. And across New Vultun, he heard her: Kae's original self.

The Agnos was screaming. Crying out. **+It's too much. It's too much. It's too much.+**

“What the hells have you done?” Avo said, speaking to Veylis.

The High Seraph smiled. This time, the expression was genuine. **“You are not the only player in this game. While you were preparing, while you schemed, so did I. But ultimately, the question isn't what I have done. It is what you are about to do. Tell me, what does your Agnos mean to you? What of the fates of the FATELESS when the Heaven of Love fully falls once more.+**

“Veylis... you didn't...” Naeko swallowed, shaking as love and hate warred inside him.

“No. I haven’t. Not yet.” Veylis looked back to Avo. ***“I am going to come for you now. Your enclave. Your properties. Your assets. I am going to come for all of them. And every plane containing the Fallen Heaven of Love will soon rupture. Unless you stop me. Make your move, Dreamer. I insist. Match me with your atrocity.”***