

DYSTOPIAN AGE

THE WARRIOR NATION OF NORTH AMERICA

Preferring to live out their lives alongside nature, the Warrior Nation dwell in concord with the rhythms of the Earth, attuned to the seasons and the weave of life and death that binds all living things together. Able to wield a form of spirit energy, they are the defenders of the natural world, guardians of all things spiritual. Recent years have seen mounting aggression against the Warrior Nation in North America by the Union and their settlers. With growing threats and omens of darker times to come, the Warrior Nation understand that this must be the greatest cause in which they fight, for no land endures long if it cannot take up arms against those that wish it harm. Standing unified against their enemies the Warrior Nation are humanity's greatest hope, whether the rest of the world realises it or not...

*From the Journal of Teutonic Knight-Luminary
Kapitan Endris Tapfer.*

DAY 95

After three months of relative comfort in my first posting, it is the damnedest worst luck that has seen me join the Imperial forces as they push through the African tribelands. It has been decided that, given the feral nature of the Nguni Clans, none of the Teutonic Knights heavier combat units would be required. There have been strange reports coming into high command for months, and the venerable Oberst Scherer, commander of the Knights Luminary on the African Front, has dispatched me to investigate. Perhaps I have offended him in some manner to be given this honour?

DAY 96

Most of my fellow knights are all too happy to stride into battle at the helm of a Hochmeister Automata Dreadnought, their physical frailness shielded behind plates of thick armour. I have always believed the true weapon of a Knight-Luminary is his or her mind, and conviction serves as our armour. I have never sought to hide this conviction, and so my superiors have often seen fit to appoint me to such investigative tasks, even unto the front lines themselves, to better advance the Imperium's understand of our foes, our own strengths and weaknesses.

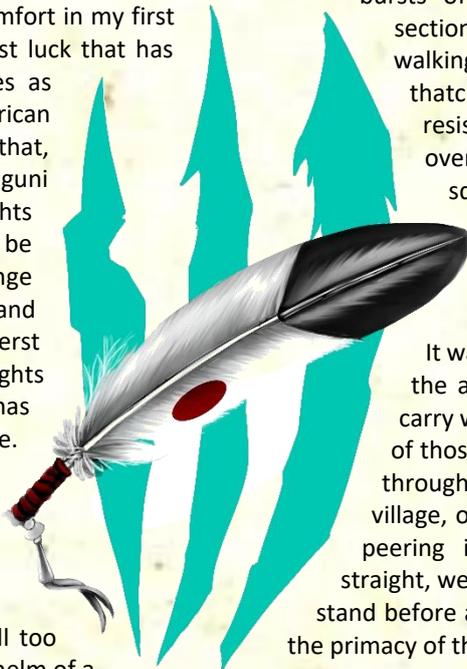
All of that changed, however, last night.

Having arrived in the valley the day before, we disembarked in good order from the *Count Nostitz* our *Gewitterwolke* airship. The grenadiers had gone into the village first, clearing the outbuildings with bursts of electricity and flame. A small section of Knight Armsmen went in next, walking straight through the burning thatch and kindling walls. Still, no resistance was met. Finally, roaring overhead with the grace of eagles, a squadron of Luftlancers fell amongst the drifting motes of ash and fire, their charged pikes sparking in the night air.

It was a brave show, no less valiant for the apparent lack of opposition. I will carry with me to my dying day the image of those brave men and women, stalking through the burning remnants of that village, of that death trap, their clear eyes peering into the swirling smoke, backs straight, weapons held at the ready, willing to stand before any foe that might dare challenge the primacy of the Imperium.

Until hell opened up and swallowed us all. The leading elements were felled by hammer blows of blue power the likes of which I had never seen before. At first, I thought we had been ambushed by the bizarrely arrayed forces of the Covenant rather than the expected native beasts. How that thoughtless word would come back to haunt me as the battle unfolded before my eyes.

Beasts, I had thought; African animals, caring nothing for the niceties of civilized warfare. But the shapes that emerged from the surrounding trees were nothing human. Twisted forms that seemed to





writhe and shudder with the guttering flames; light glinting from protruding fangs and long, distended claws. Most walked on two legs like men, but their faces were corrupted visions of a nightmare, with the features of any number of animals stirred into their bestial mix.

The bolts of blue fire continued to rain down upon the brave men and women of the Imperium, who fought back with all the tenacity and bravery any officer could hope to expect from them. The Luftancers took to the skies once more, aiming their electro-lances down into the swirling maelstrom of the melee below, only to be struck from the air by enormous shadows falling upon them from above. Their screams were cut off abruptly as each warrior hit the hard-packed earth.

The Grenadiers fell back in good order, dragging their wounded as they made for the oberst's position. Our final hope, a mighty Faust battle-walker, charged into the fray, tossing shadowy forms in all directions. For a moment it appeared as if the tide had turned. The armsmen rallied around the Faust's towering form while the grenadiers, following standard doctrine, established a firing line at the edge of the village.

But the nightmare had only just begun. Darker things still would emerge from those shadows. At first glance, I took the bellowing form to be fantastically armoured rhinoceros. As strange as that would have been, I cannot now swear that to be the case at all. The vengeful gleam of blue in the creature's eyes was a perfect match for the shots slashing into our position. An aura of azure flame seemed to cling to its flanks. It became apparent, as it charged into the Faust, that it was much larger and far more dangerous than any rhino I had ever seen.

With a single convulsive lurch of its massive horned head the charging beast tore the leg from the Faust and caused the reeling warmachine to topple to the ground. At this sight, and with the rest of my Teutonic brothers and sisters either dead or down, the battle descended into a horrific rout. The regular infantry threw aside their arms and fled into the darkness. There were no heroes of the Imperium there that night – at least none, it seemed, who had not already been killed. I remember only the burning of my chest, the pumping of my legs, and the desperate, soul-crushing certitude of death looming up behind me as the screams of my companions faded into the distance all around.

DAY 100

The oberst's forces had been scattered. As far as I know, I alone survived, and it took me three days to re-establish contact with headquarters. By then, the generalleutnant had ordered a detachment of Lucifyre walkers down upon the savannah, supported by the *Count Nostitz*. The entire region was devastated, not a single creature was left alive. Not a shred of evidence remained of the terrible ambush that had destroyed my unit.

I have been removed from my normal duties and sent back first to Graz, and then on to Berlin.

DAY 121

I have learned that the phenomenon I had witnessed has not been an isolated incident. No hard evidence of what enemy might have caused such destruction had yet been found, and although a multi-pronged attack seems to have been their plan that night, each of the points of contact had been utterly eradicated by high command. No further encounters had been witnessed across the entire area of operation. It was as if either we had destroyed every last remnant of the mysterious foe, or some decision had been reached by our enemies to forego any further use of their strange new weapons.

The general consensus at the front was that the Nguni people had received assistance from the Covenant of the Enlightened. My report countervailed that, of course, which was one reason I had been summoned to Berlin. Many of my peers believed that my mind had broken under the strain of that strange battle. No known phenomenon could explain what I had reported, and some of my closest associates among the Knights-Luminary agitated for my removal to a home for the mentally deranged.

The annals of Graz contained occasional mentions of similar phenomena from locales as scattered and distant as Australia, India, and South America. None of these reports were more than footnotes in the general record, and none of them included enough detail to clarify my confusion – or my concerns – any further. Never had a member of the Knights-Luminary or anyone else been present who could be counted on for a clinical, scientific observation. For every mention of such occurrences, a tidal wave of rationalisation and clarification would follow, sweeping away any possibility of further study. It was clear that no one had given such incidences much credence, but then, neither did it appear that



an attack the likes of which I experienced in the tribelands had ever been reported.

The fact that each and every mention, from around the globe, ended in silence and dismissal was incredibly disheartening to me. I began to doubt my own memory; a terrifying prospect for a man of science and the mental disciplines.

Luckily, however, recent reports out of the newly-reconstituted Union of Federated States spoke of episodes very similar to those I had collected in my researches. The noble savages of their western territories seemed to have manifested similar marvels in their contests against the government forces and the more esoteric hosts of the Enlightened. Flares of azure flame, genetic anomalies charging the battlefields, and other, even stranger sights had been reported. They echoed the rumours that had circulated through our own ranks in the African campaign before Generalleutnant Didschus had completely destroyed the tribal villages.

But those reports had been made by Americans, agents of the British Crown, or other, equally less reputable sources. No Teutonic scholar had infiltrated into the new world, and so no truly scientific observation had yet been assayed of these strange accounts. None had been deemed necessary, until the momentary ascension of the Nguni.

DAY 197

I am now several days into my journey West and one thing remains abundantly clear. I have never enjoyed travelling by airship.

In the midst of a deployment, I find the incessant rumbling of the engines, the hiss and whine of the machinery tries my patience. Even with the most advanced craft of the Imperium bearing me aloft, such as my time aboard the *Count Nostitz*, the ever-present reality of thousands upon thousands of feet of emptiness beneath me wears my patience – and my mind – further still.

Unfortunately, the *Prince Wilhelm* is far from the most advanced craft of the Imperium.

These civilian aircraft have always seemed even more ephemeral to me than the military craft, their structures seeming less solid than their counterparts. My sleep is plagued with dreams of falling while my days are near-endless stretches of cold, shuddering hell. The ceaseless knowledge that

the endless miles of the frozen Atlantic stretch beneath me is hardly conducive to calming my fears.

But deeper still than these close-held terrors are the thoughts that have driven me for these past months. As has been the case ever since that night on the savannahs of the Dark Continent, that which compels me relentlessly forward threatens the very Imperium itself.

Once again this night, I have been cast from my sleep in a cold sweat that has nothing to do with the *Prince Wilhelm's* juddering progress over the frozen waves. Once again, my slumber has been haunted by the screams of my comrades as they were torn limb from limb, the wet, twisting crunch of their deaths at the hands of ... heaven knows what. Images of cold, glowing blue eyes hunted me up out of sleep, their manic howls echoing off the low ceiling of my stateroom even as I clawed my way free of the tangled, sweat-damp bedclothes.

It was a familiar awakening. It has been my curse, night after night, for more nights than I care to count.

And so here I sit, on the edge of the small bed in my stateroom aboard the *Prince Wilhelm*, making my slow, terrifying progress across the Atlantic Ocean towards a chaotic, backward world that might hold the secrets of the greatest threat to the Imperium or the proof of my utter and complete ruin.

As the growling engines fill the air around me with vibration and unease, I cannot help but fear I march headlong toward the latter.

DAY 203

I will admit that some of my trepidation concerning flight was swept away as the metropolis of New York City came slowly crawling over the horizon. The lights were bright, glittering on the waters of the bay as the *Prince Wilhelm* dropped out of the clouds, approaching the tall docking towers along the eastern waterfront.

The two principal towers, each much smaller than the docks of Berlin, were empty when we arrived. The Union, I knew, is much more enamoured of fixed-wing, heavier-than-air craft, as was evinced by the massive airfield located just across the western river bordering the great city. With Tesla's defection to the barbarian nation, travel between the New World and the Imperium has been curtailed sharply. Our consulate in New York, which



is reluctantly providing my cover story, was severely understaffed. Making my way out of the city and into the west without arousing suspicion would prove to be my first major challenge.

Or so I had thought. In practice, once my papers had been scrutinized by the young Union officer at the base of the tower, I was released out into the city and had not noticed anyone else taking undue interest in my arrival. I found myself somewhat annoyed by what I consider their cavalier manner. It was clear, from their reception, that the Union of Federated States did not find me particularly threatening. By extension, they therefore do not find the Imperium to be a threat.

I know it is irrational, but I find myself hoping for a future conflict in which this error can be corrected. The Consul, a man named Graf Kushner (allegedly a distant cousin of the Kaiser) was far from helpful. It was clear from the moment of my arrival that he cared nothing for my mission, or for me, and wanted only that I vacate the consulate at my earliest convenience. I was grudgingly offered a small office in the basement from which to conduct my initial investigations, but at no time was the camaraderie of Graz, or even the basic decency of Berlin, in evidence. For the first time in my adult life, I found myself missing home.

There were few reliable resources concerning my primary area of interest in New York, as I knew there would be. Every beerhaus and tavern seemed full to bursting with self-styled 'experts' on matters concerning the western natives and their barbaric habits, but there was sadly little in the way of cold, reasoned observation. Everything I heard sounded even more implausible than the whispered rumours that had plagued our own ranks prior to the Nguni incident. I was heartened, however, at a few details that seemed consistent across the various tales I collected. Twisted, monstrous animals, shape-changing warriors, and the ubiquitous sapphire glow filled the stories of those who seemed to have at least crossed their Hudson River, to the west, at one time.

DAY 205

Though I have only been a couple days in this filthy, stinking city, I have realized that I needed to head into the great unknown of these contested territories if I am to find the truth, the hard science, behind the stories.

Kushner was not sorry to see me go, and given the quality of his hospitality, I was not sorry to leave. I

am eager to taste the vaunted frontier spirit of the American West we hear so much about. And even more so, as the rest of my journey would be made mercifully sweeter with both feet firmly planted on the earth.

DAY 210

I must admit, as dismissive as I still feel toward these barbarian Americans, their Heavy Rail system is certainly to be applauded. With well over twice the width of the standard gauges of the railroad used through the more civilized world, the Heavy Rail is able to carry an immense amount of cargo, a throng of passengers, and an intimidating array of advanced weaponry, all wrapped in a sheath of thick armour.

I was impressed until it dawned on me the threats they must be guarded against in their interior in order to validate such expenditure.

I travelled by motorcoach south to Washington D.C., where I made certain to avoid attracting the attention of any agents of the Union's Secret Service, their Bureau of Infernal Affairs, or the myriad other investigative bodies the 'free and open' society has created recently. I desperately wanted to take a walk past Tesla's vaunted *Pipeworks*. Unfortunately, the region surrounding the vast, sprawling complex was a rowdy, lawless moat, with law-abiding Washington on one side, and the blank-faced automata of Tesla's guards on the other. I thought it best to stay true to my primary mission and catch the first Heavy Rail moving west toward the territories.

Not until I had seen how enormous these behemoths were did I understand why no Heavy Rail tracks were allowed to enter Washington. I was forced to pull my collar up and my hat down and board a crowded ferry down the Potomac River, to a massive stone temple to Union hubris located five miles south of the capital.

It seemed hubris, at first sight, but when I finally caught my first glimpse of the Heavy Rail, as I said, I began to question my initial response.

I avoided undue attention by securing a small and non-ostentatious economy class berth on the westbound train and wandered the length of the beast during the long day of my journey. When we pulled into the big station in Kansas City, I truly felt as if I had entered another world.



DAY 224

This is such an amazing land. Kansas City is a dizzying mix of metropolitan chaos, frontier grit, and uniquely American contrasts. It appears as if these western territories call to all manner of folk from around the world. I could distinguish French, Italian, and even Prussian-flavored German in the babbling rush of speech that greeted me upon walking out of the cool granite of the enormous station and into the dusty world of that city on the edge of nowhere.

I have spent almost two weeks trying to pick up leads that might take me deeper into the mysteries of the indigenous peoples of this land, but it transpired that the jumble of cultures and languages hid beneath its churning waters a more insidious division. It seemed that although a man of the Prussian Imperium could walk the packed-earth streets of Kansas City without fear of judgement or approbation, the natives were not afforded nearly the same latitude, and were seen as national enemies.

This is not to say there were not members of the various Warrior Nation tribes present in Kansas City. Outcasts, exiles, and renegades could be found in many of the lower dives along the outskirts of town. But these were men and women with suspicious minds, living closed, isolated non-lives apart from both the society in which they lived and the societies which they had left behind.

A not-inconsiderable portion of my remaining stipend was spent trying to warm various informants to my cause. I was offered tantalizing bits and pieces, hints and whispers, but nothing that might provide a concrete clue as to my next course of action.

I collected notes on an entity known to the natives as the Great Spirit, which I took to mean some concept of divine power or guidance. The wildest tales I have yet gathered present this Great Spirit as the source of the mysterious power that has guided me across half the world. Between the Great Spirit and the worship of ancestors long dead, the native tribes would appear to attribute most of their strange abilities to beings above or beyond them, rather than from some font of power within themselves.

While I know these tales are nonsense, and that some rational, scientific explanation must be behind what I witnessed in deepest Africa and the tales these frontier hooligans whisper into their

cups, I cannot help but reflect back upon the legends of our own ancestors. Is not fable and folklore replete with similar stories? Powerful beings flinging the power of the sky about on a whim? Fantastical creatures twisted beyond recognition? Might this phenomenon I am investigating somehow connect with our own most ancient tales?

And, rational thought aside, would it not be grand if one day a Prussian Imperium might march forward, heads proud and high, with the power of the ancients at our fingertips? I imagine Luftlancers soaring not on the pounding roar of rockets but the silent pinions of angels' wings. I imagine electro-pikes powered by the very minds of our brave armymen. There is literally no power in the world that could stop us.

But I have learned all I can learn on the dusty streets of this frontier metropolis. I must continue now to venture west, into the savage lands of the contested territories. I must find these Warrior Nation sorcerers in their own environment and see for myself the power that they command. I hear that the Marshal of the Indian Territory is a man of some basic integrity. I am cautious of approaching local law enforcement as I understand them to be all corrupt and drunken. Perhaps he will be sober enough to help me

DAY 231

The surprisingly intelligent and charming Marshall Bart Reeves has introduced me to a native in his employ who claims to be the son of a great chief in the Warrior Nation. This native has given me the first insights into their beliefs, though these revelations have cost me greatly in both local currency and other valuables about my person that this self-styled 'Apache Kid' has taken a liking to.

The way he tells it, there is a fundamental disagreement over the origins of the world and how it relates to their venerated deity - the Great Spirit. A shaman known as Irontooth believes that the Great Spirit is truly infinite and caused this world's perfection as part of some infinitely complex plan of which humanity is but a small part.

My guide's father, a chieftain known as Raven Spirit believes differently and apparently he is of such standing amongst the natives that his view by extension is held by the chiefs of the Hundred Tribes. His father believes that the Great Spirit was uniquely formed at the birth of the planet and that the destiny of the two are inextricably tied.



Whatever the nuance on this matter, all Warrior Nation believe that the Earth has a guardian spirit, a consciousness that can be communicated with and provides humanity with the ability to unlock a potential energy within them. This Great Spirit is believed to have shepherded the planet's development, husbanding the rise of life, and watch over the development of all of mankind.

The Warrior Nation story of creation says that the Great Spirit filled the seas, and then watched as the vital energy spilled out onto the land and into the air. Occasionally a great tragedy might befall the grand work, setting back the growth; the Great Spirit (or Keeper as my guide occasionally calls him) is not an infallible deity. The Great Spirit made a mistake when, under his careful guidance, a race of small bipedal mammals, the unlikeliest of heirs, achieved the first glimmerings of awareness and forethought. These creatures are known as the Carcosa by the Warrior Nation and no sooner had their spirits, once dim and flickering, flared into life than the Great Spirit realised his mistake. Though he struck down most of them, some of the Carcosa are alleged to still roam the frontier even to this day and seem to be both feared and reviled in equal measure by the Warrior Nation.

DAY 232

I cannot fathom how the Warrior Nation in the American Frontier even know of the details of the tribes of Africa, Australia and elsewhere around the world, let alone claim an affinity. Yet this evening I have been presented with artefacts and pictograms crafted a century or more ago that clearly resemble the Nguni tribal artefacts I have brought with me from the Luminary archives in Graz.

DAY 233

After this evenings interview, my currency is now all gone, I have contacted the consulate for more funds though I suspect these will be some time in coming to me. It has been a fascinating day and my guide has become quite animated in regaling me with the stories of his people.

The way my new friend views it, once humanity had taken its rightful place as the inheritors of the Earth, the Great Spirit began to connect the disparate human tribes to the criss-crossing ley lines that encircled the globe. At points where these lines converged, the Great Spirit placed the most powerful cultures. It was apparent that, even though most humans could not sense the flowing

rivers of energy that surrounded them, its presence nonetheless imbued them with a sense of strength and purpose that made them far more formidable than others of their kind.

Like moving pieces of a puzzle, the Great Spirit shifted the cultures around, maximising the potential of the strongest so that centres of defence would exist all around the planet, ready to be called upon to protect it should the need ever arise. This is a sound strategy that again belies the primitive appearance of the Warrior Nation. This interview is invaluable!

DAY 234

It was only natural, I suppose, for my guide's bitterness and jealousy at the advances of Western culture would bubble to the surface. It is a credit to his breeding that it has taken as long as it has for the resentment to begin to show. The narrative now turns to talk of the misguided folly of Europe. The temerity of the man!

My guide observes that, occasionally, a culture founded upon a spiritual nexus would wander from the intentions of the Great Spirit. Sometimes, the lines of force moved away, abandoning them to a slow decline, and so they struck out in confused anger, disrupting the careful defences of that part of the net.

As time inexorably marched on this happened more and more often. A civilisation might arise upon the intersecting lines of energy and grow too powerful too quickly. As the tides of the planet's soul shifted, rather than follow or decline gracefully, more and more cultures developed a false narrative, justifying their continued ascendancy with a newly-developed belief structure that denied the nurturing, vaguely parental presence of the Great Spirit. These cultures studied the world around them, discovering the laws that even the Great Spirit must obey, and put their faith in these things rather than the primeval concepts of gods that their ancient ancestors had found sufficient.

These cultures still worshiped gods, but fractured them into many smaller, more manageable entities. They were given human traits and human motivations, the better to understand them and manipulate their place in the greater human story. As this rise of science and creed gained momentum among some of the greatest cultures, the Great Spirit lost touch with them. Its ability to guide them faded as they grew immune to the influence of the



spirit lines, and they began to forge their own destinies.

DAY 235

We depart this evening for the Warrior Nation's tribal lands. My guide seemed as exhausted with the storytelling as I am. I instead beseeched him to take me to visit his father. Though at first, he was more than a little reluctant, after we shared the last bottle of my schnapps, he has agreed!

DAY 268

I have witnessed miracles. I have seen sights the likes of which none since the ancients might claim. And yet, my faith in science, rather than being broken, has never been stronger.

I have been privileged to have met with Chief Raven Spirit and shared a meal with him. He is undoubtedly one of the greatest leaders of humanity on the face of the world. Worthy to sit almost as an equal with the Kaiser himself. By the time of the American Civil War, Raven Spirit was already ancient, although his vitality had never waned. He was sustained by the Great Spirit, and in battle was surrounded by the majestic energies of the spirit world.

There is no doubt in my mind that the incredible abilities wielded by these primitive tribesmen are real. I have seen wonders that would make the most dedicated sceptic fall to their knees over the past months. There is also no doubt in my mind, sadly, that this is not a power that will ever be replicated by the Imperium.

It has long been theorized that every living thing incorporates within it a field of force, electrical, magnetic, possibly a combination of powers we do not entirely understand. Simple laboratory experiments can sense this field, and even children may witness it in action through shuffling their feet across a wool carpet and then reaching out to touch another child.

Raven Spirit has explained that there has always been those among the tribal nations who were capable of channelling the power of the spirit world. The spirit of each human, as dim as reflected fireflies upon a dark lake in most instances when compared to the Great Spirit, occasionally flared to brilliance in some, granting them great gifts ranging from enhanced battle-prowess to the ability to peer into the misty reaches of the future.

With Raven Spirit's guidance, more and more of the

Nation's people became attuned to the world of the spirits, navigating the winding paths to their spirit guides and the powers they provided. Some were able to call forth weapons of pure energy from the spirit world, while others were able to imbue their very bodies with the power of their spirit guides, altering their forms to better confront the array of foes rising up on all sides. Oh, truly I have stared into the eyes of legend, and I believe!

DAY 273

A patrol of Union soldiers was killed yesterday. This has agitated some of the tribe and my belongings have been searched. Photographs I have taken and samples of the Nguni tribal artefacts I have brought with me were discovered and they have ruled that I have committed a grave transgression. I will be brought before the chieftains tomorrow morning and their judgement will be enacted upon me.

DAY 278

Fearing death, I have fled north to Montana. I now write this as I huddle in this tiny, ramshackle cabin in the woods, my breath puffing in white clouds, the small fire doing little to dispel the oppressive cold outside.

I reflect on the past month in the company of Raven Spirit and his people. His claims at being over a century in age seemed so credible then, but now I begin to wonder. It is true that I have seen warrior braves conjure electrical power from nowhere, infuse their weapons with this energy, and lash at their foes with the might of the ancient gods. I have even seen their flesh twist and writhe into new, grotesque shapes, the likes of which would blanch the face of the most stalwart romantic poet. An enormous elk, its body swollen with power, destroyed an armoured vehicle, not ten paces from where I stood. I was helpless to move, standing there locked in place, my mouth agape, as its feral, demonic blue eyes searched for another target. My mind goes back to the Faust that was felled by such a creature in Africa. We never stood a chance!

But, as what little warmth I have left in me leaches slowly away, I am faced with the hardest question of all... what is it that I believe?

There are no gods. There is no mystical salvation for my people. Were these savages ever to gain control of a region of this Earth, there is little that could stop them. They have tapped into some power, some force within the human mind that we have locked ourselves away from for a thousand years.



My conclusion, now that I am safe from them, now that I am no longer breathing the stink of their twisted creatures' breath, no longer the victim of the abject fear they instil in all civilized men, is this: Science, as I have always wanted to believe, reigns supreme.

Much like a child conjuring a shock from the carpet, although vastly more powerful, these savages have somehow learned to pull energy from their surroundings, channelling it into more offensive pursuits. Many of their warriors cannot even do this much, calling up little more than azure gleams in the darkness as they shot their arrows at the foe. But enough can channel this electrical aura to lend their attacks a power and savagery that makes them, in the right circumstances, the equal of modern weaponry.

There are some further few among their number, the greatest and most powerful leaders and wise men, who can do more. These are the paragons that are capable of twisting their flesh into horrible, potent forms for battle. But even here, I believe I have broken the secret of their power.

It is something I think we lost long ago. An ability that has been weakened over time and advancement, enervated through centuries of rational thought. They believe. It is as simple as that. The immense power of the human mind, capable of such amazing feats as has been recorded throughout history, is channelled in these primitive peoples. It is combined with the living field inherent in every plant, animal, and human on the planet, to create wonders the likes of which, truly, have not been seen by civilized man in over a thousand years.

The more impressive the works demonstrated by these tribal warriors, the more of them seem to gather around, chanting and singing to the sky, focusing their intent upon the workings of their elders. In the end, the force of their resolve, the power of their will be brought to bear upon the object of their fixation, focused by their leaders and their wise ones, is enough to bring marvels back into the world, if only for a brief period of time.

I have observed that none of these changes last for long. The energy required to maintain them even for the length of a single engagement seems to devastate their most powerful warriors. Animals subjected to their mutating attention often die when their tasks are accomplished, collapsing into exhausted slumber from which many never

awaken.

I believe this is due to a combination of the inherent weakness of the flesh and the faltering of the savages' concentration once the task at hand is passed. The intensity of the moment, the crushing single-mindedness of battle felt by all soldiers throughout history, allows them to transcend, for a brief time, the limitations of body and mind.

When did we, the civilized men and women of the world, lose this ability? I couldn't say, but I have a theory.

As we learn more about the world around us, as we are more and more capable of bending it to our will in mundane ways, not dependent upon the initial terror that compelled our ancestors to build walls, and fires, and weapons, we drift further and further from that part of ourselves capable of channelling these forces that yet linger. Our rational minds, focusing on the everyday wonders we take for granted, are no longer capable of touching these more primitive, and yet far more powerful forces that glorified our species' younger days.

Through our greatest achievements, we have lost our most powerful inheritance.

Is it possible a culture can advance and yet still maintain this ability to channel these primordial powers of the mind? I don't know. I think if that were possible, we would have known about that culture by now. In fact, I suspect if that were possible, we would even now feel the boot heel of that culture upon our collective necks. But still, one wonders...

DAY 279

Every now and then outside, I hear a startling snap. Out there, in the cold, still darkness, something stirs. I have been hiding from the savages for weeks now, hoping that they would abandon their search and allow me to find my way back east, to the towns and villages that border the frontier, and thence, to Kansas City and home to Graz.

Is that snap a branch popping in the cold? Is it a savage warrior's incautious footstep, heralding my last, violent moments on this Earth?

I carried an electro-pistol with me all the way from my chambers in the chapterhouse in Graz. Even now, as I write by the guttering light of my dying fire, it is beside me, its charge light blue and clear. If they attack me here, they will know the power of



the Imperium. The first brave through that crooked door will face my own lightning, as will the warrior behind him, and the one behind him as well. My charge will fail eventually, and I will die here, so far from home, but they will remember me when I am gone.

Or perhaps it is nothing more than a branch, snapping in the cold.

DAY 280

I have managed to staunch the blood from my wounds, but I fear my leg has become infected.

Perhaps a good night's sleep will set me right. The wolves howling no longer scares me. I have my belief. I have science. I am content... Though it is so very, very cold.