

The Prophecy and our Reality

Men, Dwarves and Aelves
before the War of Fellows

The coming of the Daemaah

“In the darkness we strive. We create more than simply a dwelling. We expand more than simply our borders. To the Khrn creativity and consciousness are gifts which must return, in part at least to our creator. So when someone threatens our existence or those elements of expression which we have labored to return to our Lord Baermac then that person or persons has placed above their brow a burial shroud.”

Force Commander Varther
Strongarmme, Cmdr. 8th Interdictors
(on the eve of the Siege of
the Daemaah)

It was a time of great growth and development. Men and dwarves labored side by side creating not only communities, but futures. Futures which included the increase in managed lands and available resources. Futures which saw

the two races share talents to become more than they were alone. At the fore of all of this growth and change there shone the House of Haarbrost, the clan of Beergaard I, known at that time as Beergaard the Great, The Prophet or even The Khr of Baermac. The artisans and craftsmen of House Haarbrost determined that they would embrace the needs of men in order to prepare for the coming of the Colossi of Barjia. Both Antoni and Beergaard were certain that in time they would need to fight the Colossi and find some means of defeating them here in order to eliminate them upon the home world of earth. And in the matter of defeating the Colossi, the lessons learned in defeating them would assist in the eventual overthrow of the Ah'Khr, or so it was believed. This idea was supported from within the prophesy in that the destruction of the first of the soulless would herald the coming end of all those creations without a soul.

So on they pressed working feverishly in both the heat of the sun and the heat of the deep places of Maenatae. Working in shifts it seemed to many that the leaders of both men and dwarves knew of some impending doom to which they had yet divulged to the rank and file. Indeed had it been anyone other than Antoni or Beergaard , it was said, that there should be reason to fear the

worst, but never had either leader taken even the first life within their command for granted. In fact many leaders within the great houses of men considered Antoni too careful with the assets to which he was assigned. Some even went so far as to suggest that he might not possess Scarlotti blood rather that he was exchanged at birth with some other clan, perhaps that of the house Sebastian? Of course this assumption was never sounded in any quarters where his men nor he might have heard it. For despite being fair minded and considerate of the lives under his command Antoni would kill a disrespectful patron or soldier in a swift minute.

Howbeit that not all of the inhabitants of Sardist considered this growth and development to be beneficial to the lands or to the inhabitants in general. Indeed some reported that the Mae were very near to conflict with both men and dwarves for their complete disregard of the lands the creatures and the future of the habitat in which all now shared. With this feeling in mind It was decided by the Council of Aelder that a dialogue should be setup between the khrn and their human co-conspirators. So, with the aid of the Caradian King Phillippe Sebastian who more than any other human championed the cause of the Aelves, a meeting was setup wherein all three of the races

would be represented. It was requested that the meeting take place in the city of Merriccia because of the Garden of Humanity. It was suggested by King Phillippe that the garden would demonstrate to the Mae the dedication to living things held by all of humanity. Since the accord of the house leaders determined that access to the garden could not be denied so long as reasonable behavior prevailed the request was granted. Antoni considered it curious, but suggested that if indeed the Aelves were as enamored as intelligence suggested with plant life then humanity should use this opportunity to contact them in a more positive light.

So to the north by means of their flighted shuttles Beergard and a contingent of dwarven leaders came to the city of Merriccia ahead of all other delegates. The dwarves and most especially the household of Haarbrost had dwellings built there near the keep of the Duke himself as they were considered brethren to the Scarlotti guardsmen and warriors. As was the case upon any formal meeting of “the Brotherhood” there was great revelry and festivities within the walls of Merriccia and even unto the outlying reaches as dwarven craftsmen and merchants living about the city and within the confines of Coventry took the meeting as a signal to celebrate near any and

everything which one could imagine, as if the dwarves ever needed an excuse to tap a keg. And then upon the third eve as by then all had been able to sober up they contended within the only other passion in which the two shared equal vigor. They fought in the battlefield mock ups to the bleeding. In this the Scarlotti found a kindred spirit for no other house had ever embraced combat to blood with the hearty delight that the dwarves had. And in this act alone did we of clan Scarlotti make a special name for ourselves within the ranks of the Khrnaad. When sword meets sword and weapons are wielded in real combat it is very difficult, and some suggest diminishing to training, to meter one's attack or to withhold all force that resides within the combatants. So during combat the first to be bloodied in some way is the loser and the victor embraces the responsibility of either the life or the family of the vanquished. So if a dwarf falls to a Scarlotti warrior it is the responsibility of that warrior to ensure that their foe live or take the responsibility of providing for that dwarf's family for the rest of its existence. Interestingly in those days it was all but unheard of for a dwarf or a human to be killed in one of these combats. Oh it was not because of a lack of brutality for all know that the dwarven attack is very powerful and they have no peer when it comes to the amount of force

that they bring to the blow of their hammers and axes yet the men of clan Scarlotti are amazingly fleet and have a capacity to move around their foes striking two or three times for every blow others land. In a combat which seeks only to bloody a foe such an artful mastery of combat is a great advantage. But the armor worn by dwarves is not readily breeched and so where a dwarf is often struck he is rarely touched by a blade and even then they do not cut as easily as we. So the challenges and the excitement raged on for days as one after another combatants were eliminated singly from the competition until few remained.

It was upon the last of these sessions that the Aelves arrived quite ahead of schedule themselves. Riding in upon the most lovely of animals with nary a saddle nor bridle to control the beasts upon which they rode. Some by air circling the outer walls of the city playing melodies which could entrance even the most violent minds in herald of the greater contingent. Others yet rode varied beasts many resembling horses of some kind yet others comprising some of the most unlikely of mounts all magnificent to behold and none fettered by contrivances meant to control their movement. All those in combat and they which stood about witnessing the carnage immediately broke off to face the curious

spectacle. The main party led by the impressive paladin Caradian King Sebastian and the Aelvin leader of their delegation Jaeoph F'Laerv himself the master of the druids of the Caradian forests even more grand to behold. There shone from the brow of Jaeoph a glow of light which even amidst the daylight shone through in a soft green hue. As he came forth the grasses and the plants along the way perked up and rose to face his shining grace. Some plants even began to advance their growth and sprout colorful flowers as if to place before their master a gift of love from the depths of their being. To all present it was a meeting which both mesmerized and amazed all who beheld it. Even the dwarves were amazed by the power which Jaeoph held over the flora and the fauna. Indeed when Antoni turned to acknowledge King Phillipe, jaw glaringly open conveying his amazement, Phillipe dismounted his horse and simply said, "No my Prince, you never get used to it."

Now far to the west and to the south deep beneath the mountains of frost, in the northern Khrnaa'din range a horror was breaching upon an unsuspecting victim. Deep within the tunnels of the khrn there strove mechanical mining and excavating apparatus' toiling at the behest of their dwarven and human controllers some massive in

size others not so great in stature yet equally complex in their design. Working feverishly to meet the prescribed work load for the end of week bell which would signal the start of a three day break from the continuous digging and excavating of material. The preparation for yet another segment to the lowest reaches of a city which had grown beyond the proposed confines of all who envisioned it. The bell was never heard. A ferocious attack so swift and so unprepared for that even the surveillance devices upon which the dwarves prided themselves were unable to register anything other than flashes of light, loud rumbles and the cries of the dying. However as luck would have it there had been surveillance devices setup in the surrounding halls, not yet fully active but linked to the central process center and configured to activate in the event that anything larger than a hound might come into proximity of them. A single 12 second run of video was sent back to the security center and in that was shocking image of a white haired, black skinned humanoid which looked unmistakably like an Aelf.

When word of this attack and of the likely perpetrators reached Beergaard's delegation at the conference in Merriccia the dwarven princes immediately went into a frenzy and insisted on blood for blood. It was all that he could do for

Antoni to restrain them and sequester them away from the Aelven contingent. Even Beergaard was uncharacteristically quick to jump to the conclusion that the aelves were in collusion over the attack. Antoni took Beergaard aside and was able to convince him to allow them to determine the truth. He assured Beergaard that once all of the facts were out that he would stand beside him despite the direction he chose to take regardless of what others in his court might suggest. This strength and dedication to him and his people encouraged Beergaard and allowed him to move all of the dwarven princes in the contingent to stay their demands for action until the situation could be reviewed by Antoni fully.

Antoni, not having the benefit of the type of relationship that he enjoyed with Beergaard, decided to enlist Phillipe and through the Caradian king find the truth. It occurred to Antoni, as he spoke with the leader of the Sebastian clan, that if these Aelves indeed were aware of the attacks that they were either very foolish or very powerful. Certainly, to allow themselves to be found within the confines of such a power center as the castle at Merriccia while they were carrying on an attack against our allies would suggest that they, if thinking sanely, must possess the power to leave

despite whatever force of arms that might be brought to bear upon them. Antoni suggested to king Phillippe that he speak immediately to the Aelven contingent and let them see the evidences of complicity which the dwarves possessed. Although in agreement of the need to eliminate any suggestion that the Aelves were involved, Phillippe demanded that all questions to the Aelvin princes be routed through him in order to maintain the proper level of respect. Phillippe pointed out that while he understood that Antonio was willing to fight and to die for the dwarves that he, likewise was willing to do the same for his Aelvin friends. In this Antoni respected Phillippe for his people had no hope of standing against house Scarlotti yet did he have the courage and conviction to make such a statement. So Antoni agreed to allow all of his questions to be routed through the king, Phillippe Sebastian of Caradia.

Antoni and Phillippe, dressed in their finest of apparel met in the Duke's Ante-Chamber for a private review of the evidences. The dwarven monitoring systems had been set up in advance of their arrival and upon reviewing the device in operation Phillippe beckoned for Jaeph to come into the room in order to view the evidence. Upon beholding the entire recount of events and seeing the images of the malformed mae he sat down in

the chair and bowed his head and began to whisper to himself. Antoni looked at Phillipe in hopes of attaining some answer to this activity, but all that Phillipe did was motion with the hand to wait and bowed his head in reverent silence. The whispering to unseen persons continued for a short period when at once it came to a halt with Jaeoph proclaiming that he must request a recess in order to alert his Aelders of a most dire circumstance.

Antoni cast a glance upon King Phillipe and detected the nervous stance now washing over the king. Looking back at the druid he noticed that the fellow stood there as if asking only as a courteous gesture itself a part of tradition. It was as if he were already walking out the door and proclaiming that he was now leaving. It was obvious to Antoni that Phillipe expected there to be trouble over that statement and the lack of an explanation of the evidence and to the immediate request to be excused to depart by the presumed co-conspirator. Antoni pointed out to the Aelvin leader that he was welcome to send a message to his concerned party after he explained how it was that the only evidence that was available pointed to his people as those which killed the human and dwarven miners in the holo-image. Jaeoph said that he understood the concern and how that everyone considered him complicit in the acts of

this report, yet he assured them that he and his people were in no means involved in this act. Antoni, respectful yet not willing to grant much more leniency than his dwarven allies, was about to continue when King Phillippe Sebastian spoke up and suggested that he and his kingdom and all that he is lord over be held as a ransom upon the honorable return of Jaeoph to the city of Merriccia. Antoni looked over at the king and saw in his face a resolve and a trust similar to that which he shared with Beergaard and granted the Mae his leave.

Before leaving the room Jaeoph turned to the king and spoke to him in the native Mae'n which seemed to release the tension from the shoulders and face of the king. He reached into a pouch at his side and pulled out a small silken bag and handed it to Antoni and said to him that at a time of his choosing he may plant this seedling from the trees of his family upon the grounds of his city near his home that in this act of trust and honor the ancestors of Antoni Scarlotti might provide refuge to clan Silvertree. The gift seemed to stun the king and Antoni was somewhat caught off guard in just what his response to this should be, so taking the gift he held it in his hand and bowed slightly to Jaeoph who observed him for a moment, said “three days and I shall return”, turned and left the room. Once back at the Royal

Garden he opened his connection to his own home from within the recesses of the wood and departed.

Now in asking for exclusive access to the Garden of Humanity and then it being granted to him Jaeoph had been afforded a privilege that no one since the arrival of humanity upon Maenatae had been granted. The Garden itself was said to hold the genetic markers for all of the creations which in his greatest and most shining hour mankind had crafted. Not only were the plants and the creatures there of special beauty and grace in the eyes of men, but their genes held coding which chronicled all of the super-science to which man had once risen and it was suggested worked as a repository against that day when men would return to such lofty levels of understanding. So to many the granting of exclusive access placed the garden in unwarranted danger. Any danger which faced the Garden must be met by House Scarlotti and yet it was this same house which seemingly placed the garden in peril. Many of the ruling classes of other houses of humanity took the opportunity to politically diminish the Scarlottis where direct confrontation had failed them so many times before. The effort was wasted upon Antoni in that he, unlike so many of his forefathers was slower to wrath, fortunately.

In three days Jaeoph returned to shock not

only the humans of House Sebastian, but the entire Mae'n world for with him was the Matriarch ma-primae of Clan Paelor'Laer Vaesah Fleas'c Ah. She whom the Aelves Love, as many humans referred to her, exiled herself from the affairs of the other races and even her own folk in all but the most dire of circumstances. If she had come to this place and put herself at any risk there had to have been a great debate amongst her people. They guarded her as if their own lives depended upon her safety. The small number of attendants which came with her company suggested that she had no intention of dealing with conflict. Antoni, it has been said in legend, was bewitched by her for upon her arrival she walked up to him and whispered something in his ear and from that moment on he granted all of her requests and saw to her safety with the same fierce dedication which he gave to Beergaard and his sons. No one knows what was whispered to him at that time, but once the dwarves had finished their citadel and the well of life was placed in the midst Antoni planted the tree in its midst of the well. To this day all Scarlotti rulers are laid to rest in the graveyard at the foot of the only great tree to exist outside of Aelvendom.

Now Vaesah despite her ancient age was yet exceedingly beautiful and glorious to behold. Few then who beheld her felt compelled to debate

her. In fact many of those persons afforded the privilege of the company of the matriarch tended to defend her. Phillippe of Caradia became so overwhelmed by her presence that he was moved to retire from her presence for as he later recanted, “She is like a fine wine which it is far easier to overindulge than one might believe and when one does become sodded it is all the worse for that poor soul having become drunk upon such grace at a hearty cost”. The suggestion has been that her power over all was in her grace for she literally embodied all of the greater gifts of deity those being compassion, sensitivity, kindness and love. It was sent to the troupe of king Phillippe to make certain that all of those requiring an explanation ready themselves by getting a full days rest before coming to her upon the morning of the third day hence for the tale of woe which was now theirs to hear would certainly be a long and dreadful tale to tell.

They met at the rising of the giver and all those in attendance were said to have felt the grace of this ancient female beauty. She first apologized for the attacks upon the Khrnaad people and for this the dwarves almost jumped into combat, yet did Beergaard stay his princes until more might be said. She continued in explaining that the story must be told and she was the one best suited to tell

it for she had heard of its telling from before the time of the written language. When asked what her age might be she smiled and simply stated, “In rotations of this world as we call seasons I have witnessed 8722 since my birth into the world”. She continued to suggest that she was the voice for the spirits of the sundered and that as such she was compelled to tell their story lest it be forgotten or these souls be blamed for the terror which their bodies had visited upon the dwarves.

For the next 30 hours she covered the history of the Mae all the way up to the present. The overwhelming amount of information and the clarity of a first hand account of history which spanned such a considerable period of time literally left the council speechless. All but Beergaard stood frozen to their seats staring blankly at the Aelvin diva. Beergaard rose and took out a blade from the works of his shoulder armor. The act caused the aelvin guards to bristle and challe3nge his honor for bringing a weapon. At the same time the dwarven princes in attendance gasped at the act as if it were a frightful thing never before committed. Beergaard did not speak, rather his captain rose and with a tear in his eye said, “My master does not dishonor rather he honors your people and the lady in a fashion which we have reserved from before we set boot upon the

decks of our great ships”. Beergaard cut the central braided and gold plaited lock from his impressive beard, cut his hand and squeezed the braided trophy. He gave the dagger to his captain and the hair he approached the lady with, knelt and held it up for her to take not looking upon her face.

“My Lady, we have traveled for so many years and fought so many battles in which we have lost kin and company to come to this place. I had always believed that we were on the holy path, yet with the revelation of your tale I now know that the time is at hand. The prophesy has revealed itself.” He motioned for his captain to approach and whispered something to him in their language. He sent a prince from the room and in a few minutes the fellow returned with a great book bound in the most beautiful metal binding with jewels and ornaments befitting a great gift. Beergaard spoke, “The, Soort'Baek. The telling of that which was, that which is and that which shall be. It speaks of the sundering of your people as it does of my people and of that of the humans. Our woes are shared.” And with that Beergaard presented her with the book that had been in his family for many years, one of the few relics he was able to save when his people fled their home world. But that was not all, in response to this she had the Mae'n writings of prophesy brought to

their meeting also and that book too was beautiful in its own right bound in living wood which we learned later was called Pomerolis. The wood itself living tissue which continues to flower and to grow despite being hewn from the trunk of the tree which bore it. And finally Antoni, against the will of his highest advisors had the Soort'Baek of humanity retrieved for the Matirarch to witness the condition of men. For the Soort'Baek of humanity was and is no book at all, but rather a genetic construct capable of linking into the mind of a “reader and transposing that person into the actual story. So advanced was it that it could read the mind of whomever it linked to and immediately speak their language. Yet that was and is not the greatest of its powers for it is said that all of the senses are met within the grasp of this device and in it not only resides the sacred writings and those which tell of them, but the collected history of mankind up to the point which we left our home. Few have seen this device and it is said that none but the duke now know of its location as it is passed down to each duke as they ascend the throne.

Vaesah Fleas'c Ah was moved by the connections which our three peoples shared and determined to ensure the safety of all at whatever the cost. It was certain that all of our destinies

were linked and if so much of the prophesy were true then the rest must also be correct and should one day come to pass. That at some point the combined power of the three races should redeem one another where they alone had failed. As all of the books were returned to their rightful peoples and the hearts of the committee became lighter still Antoni presented the Matriarch with a book which belonged to his mother and asked that she keep it and read it as his mother did nightly before drifting off to sleep. Vaesah thanked him and apologized saying that her people did not sleep as men do, but she would read it if he might explain its origin. Antoni told her that it was older still than the Soort'Baek and told of the origin of mankind and the pains he has endured over time. With that the committee convened its historic meeting and determined to begin plans to deal with the Daemaah as she had called them.

The fall of the House of Daerbaah

It was determined, by courier between the three races, that they three should once again convene in the lands of the Daemaah and bring to bear the full force of their armies that their respective leaders might develop a strategy for eliminating the foe. The Aelves, led by the mighty

battle mage Draes'Naar of Cae'Laestra arrived within the dense jungles of the Daemaah lands before the rest of the allies. Not willing to fall to similar treachery as had been gifted his father, Draevan by Kjaykes, he determined to have his druids setup a perimeter which no one might breach without great pain. He determined that upon this meeting it would be Clan Cae'Laestra that would walk from the field and not Clan Daerbaah. He should be the one to send word to his mother of the death of her husbands murderers in due course. His forces although composed of many mighty jungle fighters and bowmen held also within its ranks formidable sorcerers and druids capable of wielding powerful magicks. But, as fierce a warrior as he was he knew that it had always been the Clan Daerbaah and its mages which were the most powerful evokers and manipulators of Aegris energies. Indeed Draes'Naar more than anyone present desired to win the day regardless the cost. It was more than simple vengeance for the Mae placed the fault of so many woes from the time of the sundering squarely upon the shoulders of Kjaykes and his twisted and deformed people.

The Dwarves too had primed themselves for the conflict in their hopes to prove new battle tactics against what had seemed to be an

intractable foe. The losses in the recesses of the developing tunnels below Khrnaadin would be revenged once the full force of their war machine was released upon this unwelcomed guest.. Many of the dwarves had voiced their great anticipation and the desire to meet a foe in martial combat such that they might offer up proper sacrifice unto the Lord. His expectations met in their dedication to training and strategy. Indeed a proving ground for the military in that the good fortune met in coming to this world was just that and that they had not simply “gotten away” as some in the political circles had suggested. No one voiced more than Kaas Bahrn of the Stonewrought Clan his desire to bring dwarven “light fire” to bear upon this the first of the soulless foes which his people both dwarven and human would eliminate in their march to glory. Kaas, better known as Firebeard both for the deep red hue of his grand beard and locks, but also for his approach to challenges in combat, was the vocal Field Marshal of one of the most decorated armored legions in the history of the Khrn.

At this time I remind the reader of the dwarven tendency to never record failure, I submit that in the recording of success they are equally vehement in the need to accurately mark their worship. Often the manuscripts which chronicle

these events are so very detailed that even the dialogue from within the ranks is recorded for the reading of future generations and the maximum effect for worship.

Now the primary concern amongst the dwarves seemed to be the notion that the elder amongst them felt cheated in the inability for them to link up across their comp-links to the central core which analyzed and processed battles as they unfolded for dwarven war masters of the eras before their exile. But this core was no longer available to them with the coming of the Ah-khrn. And this point seemed to make the fire teams even meaner than they were upon their arrival. The message was sent throughout the dwarven ranks as it had in times long since past, Bvaard Hakgloo Ah-Khrn, No quarter to the soulless ones. They now focused upon battle and in their eyes it was said a fire dwelt which burned cold and blue, yet was it apparently searing to all who beheld the vessel which bore it.

For humanity none could match the brutality or skill of the Scarlotti Clan Guard and from within this force came the Warmaster Carmine Borecresse. Borecresse had been groomed for the position which he held by the previous duke and when Antoni ascended the throne the nod

was given to Carmine that he might make the challenge and take the mantle from the former warmaster. For Warmaster Borcesse the task which held the most significance would be to gather as much information as possible with respect to the tactics and fighting skills of the aelves and their dwarven allies. He was aware of the power which the dwarves could muster if the need existed, or so it was that they often spoke, but never had they produced such devices of the power by which they claimed to possess. Now the reports of those days are clear that the accepted thought was that there existed some unspoken underlying reason as to why they held whatever resources in reserve. Some suggested that it was merely bravado, but anyone truly familiar with the dwarven warrior caste knew that they were not given to bravado when it came to forces which they used in the act of completing their missions. There always remained that spiritual reverence to the action which they placed in the records books. For this reason more than any other the warmaster believed that they were victims of the same situation which befell mankind that being the inability to reproduce the more complex elements of their own technology. Later, of course it was proven that was exactly the situation and that the great weapons which were wielded there in the conflict of that day were some

of the most powerful that this world had ever witnessed.

Second upon the list of strategic concerns that he sought to fulfill, but in no means less important was the need to determine the skills both tactically and strategically of this new foe. How well did each combatant fare against this foe and what means of attack could be expected. Although the aelvin commander Draes'Naar had informed all present to the effects of the magicks which they themselves wielded and in detail had he described many deadly abilities which they expected to face it seemed that they had held some part back. It was, to him as though the intelligence that he was getting was rather stale. It was supported by the fact that the aelves had made virtually no contact with their former kin in over four thousand years and this notion had the warmaster concerned. It was for this reason that he requested staggering the support teams amongst the dwarves so that they might provide close support in the event that it became necessary to wheel about in the field and face more than one foe or to engage in a fighting withdrawal.

The word came down from the aelven supreme command that the dwarven forward operator was requesting fire support at the great door to the underground facility. The aelves had

used all manner of arcane power against the entrance but it was to no avail for the structure was proofed against the use of magicks. So once the probing forces had retreated back beyond the safe arc the lightfire cannons began to focus their beams upon the ancient portal. Within moments the power from the cannons had begun to melt away the huge door. It was reported that great plumes of acrid smoke belched forth into the sky once the beams broke through to the interior of the complex. The raw power of the dwarven lightcannon gave pause to all that beheld them. Even those of humanity had not been prepared for the spectacle that played out on the ragged plane as arcing beams of light came in over the horizon and smashed the gate and its ramparts to oblivion. Indeed this weapon was one which the dwarves had been holding in reserve and its power was quite impressive. This power and force frightened the aelves and caused them to take pause. Such power seemed beyond the control of one individual yet was it one who pressed the button which launched that cataclysmic bolt of light across the sky and into the depths of the kaer.

Once the recovery teams were able to cool the molten rock and metal that had flowed both into and out of the entrance to the Daemaah hive the probing forces began their meticulous and

cautious crawl into the depths of what turned out to be a fortress of incredible defense. Even the dwarves were impressed by the blending of intricate detail with simplicity concerning the many traps and snares which they had to set off or derail. The suggestion by the aelves that it might be better to probe ahead quietly was met by the dwarven response that the knock on the front door has certainly awoken any responses that would be coming to attack. The wide halls and vaulted ceilings of the main gallery were impressive in their constriction albeit that much of the earlier portions had to be shored up following the forces released at the front gate.

The full account of the conflict is staggering especially when it is considered the speed at which all of the forces were assembled to deal with this threat. From the beginning attack upon the main gate of the daemaah stronghold to the joining of battle in the grand gallery took some four days. The roadway spiraled down for what seemed to be an eternity. The dwarven engineers suggested that the depth of the grand gallery was some five and a half miles beneath the surface of the planet. Once the allies reached the end of the gallery and met the secondary door array they began to meet with the most serious of opposition. Magickal effects, traps and varied trigger devices

set off in a seemingly calculated fashion as they allowed a unit of one type to pass and then went off to kill or to maim a unit of similar configuration. The losses at the door to the city forced the dwarves to bring down a squad of light tanks in order to force their way through the impassible breach.

A great many men were killed at the door to that horrid place. It has been said that were it not for the firing of light cannon upon the door between skirmishes that the corpses of our people would certainly have closed off the entrance. It pained the dwarves to fire upon the honored dead, but it seemed that the only way to inch forward was to burn the foes and our fallen. Antoni assured Field Marshal Bahrin that they had no choice; the attack upon these demons had gotten so out of hand that it quite simply could go the other way if the foe was not met with no remorse. So on it went day in and day out, hour by bloody hour as men, dwarves and aelves poured into the breach pushing the defenders further and further back until there existed such a foothold as to allow the dwarven mechanized units to move in and begin to level the city.

And level the city they did as beams of focused light sprayed forth and sliced through all that stood between them and the final reducing of

their fearsome energies. Out into the darkness one could see the toppling of buildings of such art and macabre beauty as had never before been witnessed. Truly a sad loss, but one that must be endured. Nevertheless men and their allies took no account for such wonders in the fatal light of the death dealing tanks. It was up to the swordsmen to protect the aelvin bowmen who were focused upon the errant daemaah combatant that attempted to engage the allied forces at range. The shields which we men in the brotherhood had been gifted by the Sons of Beergaard had proven to reflect or to divert the magickal energies of the daemaah. This was discovered quite by accident and although it surprised the dwarven craftsmen also this fact hindered them not in claiming dwarven superiority in craftsmanship and design. So it was that on that day the elite guard of Clan Scarlotti did save a great many aelvin bowmistresses from certain doom at the hands of the daemaah maegistae.

On the morning of the tenth day of continual combat within the great city the command came down to the ranks that the Aelvin Battlemage Draes'Naar would be pressing forward with his elite contingent and the Caradian and Kaspartian regulars which served his clan. King Phillipe came forward to press on in the midst of

the van, yet Antoni urged him reconsider. Antoni suggested that this vendetta would undo the fragile successes which had been born to such a point, however Phillipe replied that Draes'Naar was to him what Beergaard was to Antoni and he had no choice other than to stand at his side with his men. So Antoni committed the bulk of the Clan's forces to the final defense of the gate and the ealvin bowmisstresses should the offensive fail.

Advancing to the opposing side of the city some eight miles from the gate Draes'Naar led his lighted banners cleaving or burning all which opposed him. It seemed finally that the tide had fallen and time had finally come and gone for the daemaah and their formidable warriors. Yet was it not what it seemed for as they approached the far gate an eerie blue glow ebbed forth and growing brighter still erupted in a swirling maelstrom which spewed out many hundreds of daemaah and their leader, Kjaykes. Draes'Naar, seeing his hated foe upon the field of battle, shouted out his accusations of condemnation to the daemaah leader who stood by awaiting the sentence. This was a right which the aelves, and even they who had been altered to the point that their bodies no longer were aelvin, performed and held in reverence. It represented the acknowledgement of accusation and in its debate afforded those unjustly

accused the opportunity to rebut those which would see their end. For upon hearing the whole matter at length the Ancient Patriarch of the Clan Daerbah responded to the younger mae with an indignant even arrogant tone demeaning not only him but even the act which was condemning him. Kjaykes submitted that he could not be held in contempt due to the notion that the killing of Draes'Naar's father and his cohorts was necessary to maintain a way of life and the emergence of a superior form of their race. A form which the Clan Silvertree feinted from and no longer deserve to trouble with their existence. “No more would it be said that we are daemaah” he continued, “rather that we are the Mae.”

The response infuriated not only Draes'Naar, but every aelf and their cohorts among humanity which understood the language. In a maddening rage they charged the daemaah swords flashing against arcane spells. The battle was as fierce as any that had been undertaken. When it appeared that the Mae were gaining the upper hand Kjaykes struck Draes'Naar and very nearly severed his arm at the shoulder. Reeling from the wound and falling back in distress he fell into the protection of King Sebastian and his paladins. The Caradian Clerics healed Draes'Naar and thrust him back into the fray, but not before the King was

felled by an arcane attack. The remaining Caradians feverishly worked to reach his body behind the advancing might of a renewed Draes'Naar while the daemaah equally sought to pull the body from the field and take the option of resurrection or return from the human contingent. But while he and his contingent focused so very much of their might upon retrieving the king of Caradia they missed the swift advance of the Aelvin Battlemage propelled by a recently unleashed dwoemer and Draes'Naar impaled the Daemaah Patriarch upon the very blade which his father had carried. A blade retrieved from before those walls at great peril many many years after it fell. The blade sang out in a tone which held all present within the grasp of its actions. Men and Aelves both Mae and Daemaah seemed to be captive in that shriek, yet before it could sing a final note and end the life which it so very much desired a wave of arcane energy rolled across the Caradians and the Mae present and sent the flying backward as if caught in a spring gale.

The daemaah used this opportunity to embrace the falling Kjaykes and retreat to the back of the hall away from the allies. Yet immediately upon the return to a safe position by the daemaah patriarch and his retinue did such a force as yet had not been witnessed spill out from the back of the

room through a series of magical portals. Clearly Kjaykes had meant to spring the trap, however he was not fit to be the one to do so being mortally wounded, and in the urgency of his lesser making that fateful call to attack they had committed such a force that the dwarves were compelled to fire the light cannon upon them risking all of the allies nearby. Support troops from the Dales rushed forward to spirit away the wounded upon horse drawn litters while shock troops in dwarven power armor strode forward to support the retreating vastly outnumbered aelvin allies firing in running retreat upon shielded daemaah cloaked beneath arcane bubbles of otherworldly light. The Daemaah were hot upon the heels of the mae'n command contingent as Draes'Naar carried the fully armoured body of king Phillipe back to the safety of the Scarlotti bulwark The Bulwark lied just ahead of the lightcannon which had been nestled into protected positions, just out of sight, beneath the great subterranean dome.

It would be the first true test of Force Commander Varther Strongarmme and his interdictors against the arcane powers of the daemaah. And although the lightcannon had cut through the daemaah with no great difficulty the power armour did not have anywhere near the amount off protection which the cannon possessed.

The suited dwarves relied upon the agility of their armour and the training that they had received in combat evasion from the Scarlotti's, training which in moments would prove to be the difference to being overrun and providing the needed support to save the mission. The fleet interdictors moved blindly from one foe to the next not awaiting the fall to death before moving to blast yet another 6 or 8 foes and then moving yet again through the fray. Yet with all of the carnage which they dealt upon the daemaah they could not keep up with the overwhelming numbers and the power drain to their protection grids. It would not be long before the interdictors fell in combat.

Determined to not allow the loss of the interdictors Firebeard called out over the comm links to the contingent of brotherhood warriors that he was entering the melee. As he and two of the behemoth light cannon rushed from their concealment into action Antoni and a number of his men bound into the personnel platforms at the rear of the vehicles. Upon reaching a point some 140 yards to the rear of the retreating Interdictors they began to come upon aelves retreating with their wounded. Among those in the van rode the fair yet powerful druid Kaelaana the White who was healing the gravely injured lest they be removed from combat and perish before healing

might be applied. It was she which seeing Antoni amongst the dwarves riding into the fray aboard the lightcannon and also catching sight of the image upon its side marking it as Firebeard's vehicle she leapt a great distance and landed in the basket alongside the Strike team with two of her sisters. Antoni, realizing that the fight must not be lost here called out over the comm link to evacuate all forces to the surface that he was requesting that Firebeard bring down the ceiling once they had evacuated the area. In typical dwarven fashion Firebeard replied over the link, "I have a better idea, lad".

They switched over to command channel and Firebeard announced he would set the engines of the cannon on his vehicle to go critical while the other two fended off the combatants. It was then that Kaelaana took the link from Antoni and told the stalwart team that she and her sisters had the ability to transport all which could gather about them, but they would need some time to locate a link that could receive them. By this time they cannon had joined the battle and were as busy as they could be cutting down daemaah from above and below as it appeared that many of the attackers could fly in addition to their other impressive talents. Antoni commanded his elite guard to setup about Kaelaana and her sisters in order to ensure

their safety as they opened the portal. While the conflict raged about the lightcannon word came down that all of the allies had returned to safe distance. With that announcement Firebeard replied that the engines had be bypassed and would soon overheat and go critical. It was about this time that the aelf opened her connection to the glenns across the mountains in her tranquil home. Despite a desire to remain behind with his cannon Antoni carried a kicking and struggling Firebeard out of the fray through the swirling bright portal with the druids right upon their tails. Those allies which had retreated back to the allied camp witnessed a power to which none could compare. When the engines on Firebeard's lightcannon let go it released a blinding explosion which lifted the top of the mount up and then back down some four hundred feet from where it was at the beginning of the day. The ground shook ferociously and all of the aelves braced for the coming of an unforeseen shift in the well. Once they returned to normal and came to grips with the fright of the power released by these dwarves deep within the planet they determined that the deamaah dead or alive needed to be second to their healing of the fallen and the raising of those which it might be done. Indeed the losses had been staggering. In the days and weeks to come it would be determined that over one

million four-hundred thousand were lost to the allies in that conflict. By all estimates the allies had killed well over eight million daemaah and there was no way to tell how many were killed by the savage underground blast which erupted at the close of the combat.

Certainly the daemaah were killed. Based upon the effects of a blast of the nature that Firebeard released. It was reported there would be no daemaah alive within 3 or 4 miles of the explosion and any which attempted to move into the area would be killed by the effects of the poisoned grounds around the blast site for many years to come. Had it not been for the massive losses on the part of each allied race they might have celebrated their apparent victory. The aelves had been successful in returning their stalwart ally, king Phillipe Sebastian, to life once again. It was quite some time before he was to return to his old way of life. Antoni, it is said, spoke to him of his time in the heavens yet could Phillipe not bring himself to describe very much of his stay there. "Bliss", he uttered with a blank smile upon his face, "and the greatest sadness when I realized I was being pulled back to this place". Many of those able immediately struck out for their respective homes in order to lick their wounds, get

much needed rest and pray that they had killed all of the demon aelves. The level of the carnage, the ferocity of combat and the unending strife had taken its toll upon the allies and none that survived it would ever be the same. Later, in song an aelvins mistress of song uttered the most lovely of melodies which hauntingly spoke of the loss of grace beneath the world.

Only The contingent of Beergaard and Antoni remained at the base camp with the Aelvin Battlemage Draes'Naar and his forces. Unlike others of his people Draes'Naar desired to stay upon the field and witness again and again the unequalled carnage which had been delivered upon the daemaah. For Draes'Naar the resulting outcome had turned out better than if he had the head of Kjaykes to take home to his mother for those words which the red bearded dwarf had uttered, “No way anything will be able to live there for a long count of years!” was a serenade to his ears. And he returned throughout the night to look upon the wrecked subterranean keep and to smile. It was during one of these gloating moments that his warhawke returned to him and reported incredible masses of daemaah moving through the dark wood to their rear. He wheeled about and fled with the grace of his arcane magicks, making it back to the camp before the foe was upon his

fellows. He alerted the commanders of the allied forces present before they could be set upon unawares. Quickly and quietly the battlemagi set a dwoemer of silence about the expansive camp affording the dwarves the opportunity to position their armoured craft and to comm-link for support before the imminent strife set upon them.

Beergaard coming forth from his command craft looked out upon the darkness of the late evening and seeing Draes' Naar approaching held up his hand, back first then rolling it over with all his fingers and thumb extended, displayed the command in the umbrella of silence. Five minutes to counter attack. Antoni strode to the two and holding his hand out level to the others, took their hands together in a show of union. H looked up from their embrace and motioned to them in sign, “We will hold the line with the aelves until your armored craft can get into position for the counter attack.”

Draes'Naar waved his hand above their shoulders and a glow of vibrant purples and reds flowed out upon Antoni and Beergaard. As it covered them he spoke to them, “I have lived for a great span of time with a terrible wound. Now it is healed. If I die this day then I charge that you shall

tell my clan that never before has one lived so heartily as did he upon that day.”

Scrolls of record 1903.047.110 , Archives of the Court of Clan Scarlotti

The battlefield an held advantage for the dark aelves, as the dwarves had come to call them, although it was easy enough to pick them up on the sensory devices they had proven that they could sense when they were being scanned and Firebeard had suggested moving into position based on the limited intelligence which their alevin allies had provided them. If the dark aelves continued to believe that they were undetected then they may be enticed into committing their forces only to be obliterated. Certainly it would be necessary to completely crush the force in order to demonstrate the superiority of the allied strength. The true test of the combat would not be destroying the enemy, but given his numbers, surviving long enough to call in a little surprise for him,. Antoni moved into position along the right flank of Beergaard's armored forces while Draes'Naar turned about to the left flank of Firebeards raiders with Warmaster Borcesse deploying his forces in the gap fore and aft of the dwarven armor.

As was expected the attackers were numerous and did attack before the armor could be positioned to its best effects not to mention prior to the charging of the cannons. With an insane fury the dark aelves launched one magickal attack after the other at the defenders forcing them to cower behind reflective shields which had proven themselves in the combat within the smashed underground stronghold. For those of the aelvin forces Draes'Naar had deployed amongst his battlemages, bow misstresses and swordmasters a goodly showing of druids, which being out in the open sky, were able to bring their formidable talents of protection to bear not only for the sphere of their own charges, but for the dwarven armor also. The dwarves, seeing that the battle had indeed been joined engaged the scanning systems and to their horror realized that they were encompassed by over three hundred thousand foes. The only good news being that to their rear there existed naught save the open rocky crags of the destroyed entrance to which these demons once returned home.

Firebeard organized an initial suppression burn and requested atomics, but Beergaard refused to allow atomics reminding his force commander that without the capacity to shield their allies they would kill them as well as their foes. It would be

necessary to request the services of Aerospace Martial Redforge if the defenders were going to survive this attacking force. Firebeard made his formal request to Beergaard in the command vehicle and suggested that the relief forces carry at least a minimal compliment of atomics should the opportunity arise to obliterate the massive force which the dark aelves fielded against them that day. Certainly such numbers must represent most if not all of their remaining martial strength. So great was this force that, if the need became dire, atomics should be called in on the dwarven position rather than surrender the laser cannons. Once that strength was eliminated there could be no return to the field for this foe.

With the call placed for aerospace support and the battle fully joined Beergaard began the collating of the combat data coming in from all of the force commanders and those of the humans trained to use dwarven comm-link devices. The dark aelves fought with a fury which rivaled any that the dwarves had met, yet too was it apparently without plan nor purpose. It was as if each and

every daemonic combatant were fighting their own individual war. They all came from differing angles and indeed even from the air as some could propel themselves in the air as if they were birds and their attacks came ferocious and yet furious upon the dwarven positions. But for all their powers the dwarves held a card which they were loathe to play, yet did they for it did make for their means to defeat this foe and their wild magicks. The dwarven energy shields which had been created to repel the energies of the great lasers borne about upon the frames of their walkers and striders seemed invincible against the use of the dark aelvin magicks. Focused and spatial attacks fell upon the dwarven position and beneath the umbrella of pulsating invisible energies they were able to bear up and last out the waves of energy which fell upon them. But only to the point at which the energy might be converted and sloughed off through the energy release and conversion elements. As the shielding was battered it took portions of that energy and worked to convert it or disperse it out to the ground, yet were the points at which such conversion could be made were limited by the surface area of the outflow contacts at the base of the walkers.

All could have been lost despite the shields had the druids of the aelvin contingent not been at

hand and shown such wisdom and clarity of thought as was displayed when they cast out their great energies upon the soil calling forth roots and vines from beneath the ground. These writhing tendrils of vegetation which wound out to an unseen point in the distance and fastened themselves directly to the outflow contacts effectively increasing their surface area to a point which made the shields completely impenetrable. Immediately, upon witnessing this tactic which the druids first discovered in the combat within the deep caers of the daemaah, did Beergaard suppose to himself that with such powers at our side will we destroy the Ah-Khrn also. So at the suggestion of Draes'Naar the dwarves did rest beneath the umbrella holding the energies which they wielded from their laser cannons at bay against the support of the shields. For Draes'Naar understood channelling better than any other of the allies upon the field that night and he knew that despite their formidable control Aegris energies there would come a time very soon when they would not be able to further wield the forces which they now inflicted upon the embattled allied forces. He had communed with his druids and they assured him that they were not being taxed with the assistance to the dwarven shielding beyond their means to outlast the daemaah and their magicks. Once the

foe exhausted their energies we shall use our reserves upon them and crush them, despite their overwhelming numbers.

It was as had been predicted by Draes'Naar with the exhausting of the daemaah channeling, but the dark aelves were so enraged that they cared not for any other thing save the taste of the blood of their foes and so did they thrust themselves upon the sword line of the men of House Scarlotti and their aelvin charges. We of Scarlotti did demonstrate to all the superiority in combat for which we are renowned. To that day no man had bested our people in single combat and these foes should find that they were not gifted with the thick skin of the dwarves. Those daemaah which made it past the deadly accuracy of the aelvin bow mistresses fell beneath the unparalleled dexterity of our sword masters, under cover of the dwarven shields protected from the daemaah ranged attacks. But the daemaah had numbers on their side and soon it became certain that they would breach Scarlotti lines at the flank and in the fore. Yet did the fate smile upon the allied combatants as the daemaah magicks did begin to diminish and give the dwarves the window which they had longed for.

At that moment the whirring arcing voice of the laser cannon spoke out against the daemaah

and their words were death. The diffused energies branched out from the cannon and, as had been the case in the caverns below, converted each enemy it contacted to dust billowing in the warm night air. The fury of the cannon and the energies of magick released by Draes'Naar and his combat mages had halted the attack of the daemaah, for the moment. Yet Beergaard knew that they were only some 2800 allied soldiers fighting a number far greater than they could hold out against. It was only a matter of time before they would be killed. Once this force cut them down it would certainly turn and attack Khrnaadin and from beneath the planet the daemaah were even more powerful. Certainly they must be stopped here. He took the comm-link and reported the condition to all of the force commanders. The decision to use atomics at their periphery was agreed upon regardless of the cost to their own lives. This foe must be stopped. So did Beergaard I, prophet of Mindanto call down the fire upon the rear of the daemaah position and selflessly did his shieldin rest upon the men and aelves upon the grounds about him as the fire and blast crashed over his vehicle he called out to Antoni “come to my side, for I haven't long!”

Smashed and twisted many dwarven vehicles lie about the ruined field amidst splintered

and burning trees. A stark smoking background overshadowed by a great cloud above which the aelves named on that day Gklaet'va Khr'Um “The Doom Skull of the Dwarves”. Amongst the twisted wreckage and smoldering, stinking corpses fused to the ground lie the command vehicle of Beergaard, wails of woe pouring from its smashed interior. Antoni had reached Beergaard first and lamented for him amidst the wreckage for there was naught which could save him from this end to which he had come. Howbeit that legend speaks of the allies which did survive speaking of the wailing becoming quickly silent and a green glow escaping from the cracks and tears in the walls of the crushed command vehicle. When the rescuers did finally reach the interior Antoni did sit holding the broken body of his brother in spirit and singing a dwarven dirge. Singing the song which Beergard did sing as he and his folk departed their home-world of Khrnaad in search of the prophesy which would save them all from the doom that they had wrought upon themselves.

The Citadel Merriccia

How the Sons of Beergaard revered Antoni Scarlotti

In the aftermath of the conflict with the daemaah so many great heroes had fallen on each side and despite the resolve that had been present to fight all of the “Soulless” it soon became apparent that the alliance was sorely wounded and had lost that spirit of conflict which it at first possessed. On the part of the dwarves it was a time for mourning and consideration. Time to consider the direction of the dwarven people on the world of Maenatae. To Antoni the loss of his friend became almost too much to bear and his dread, at first, limited his ability to lead. So it was that in this moment the momentum was lost and all of the allied forces returned to the sanctuary of their own homes and hid therein save Antoni who worse than they did attach himself to Beergaard's family until he was interred and give over to his fathers.

At last Antoni did return to his home in Merriccia to a country adrift in confusion and fear, questioning its future and the threats which surrounded it. With the energy and forethought he had typically displayed Antoni did embrace the

needs of our people and bring them to task on projects to firm up the defenses about the smaller communities under his grace. Men turned from their fears and to the challenges of building and reinforcing their positions over the next few years. The silence of the dwarves and the aelves was deafening in those days. No one said it, but all considered the conflict hastily conceived and ill prepared for the forces which it met. No one would lay blame openly, yet did all blame another privately. All but Antoni who tirelessly reminded both aelvin and dwarven leaders of the cause for which they had come together. He pointed out that the lack of contact proved that it was likely that the daemaah were in no condition to repel an attack and thus was the time right to take the battle to them. Yet no one replied.

So it was with a great surprise that one spring morning Antoni did witness the landing of a great dwarven transport outside of the confines of Merriccia within the waters of the great wash. The purpose of the visit was the final completion of the will of Beergaard. As it was revealed to us, Beergaard had willed that there be a citadel built at Merriccia and that the dwarves construct a memorial to their travels about the walls of the citadel there. Atop the citadel should rest the new capitol of Merriccia which would consist of a

stronghold and such amenities as Antoni or his lineage might desire for their use. Lastly there should be halls laid out for the use of Antoni's line for all time upon the uppermost level of the citadel and in its midst a well set for the planting of the future which the Aelf Jaeoph F'Laerv mysteriously mentioned in the will would gift House Scarlotti in some time of prophesy to be held in secret. There were many such commands for the creation of the citadel which seemed lost in time as it appeared that they were actually prophesies to the future of men and dwarves. In his end Beergaard had left a last scroll to be given to all three races as an addition to the Soort'Baek being a proclaiming of things to come. Not at all clear yet reassuring in its message that in the end unity would prevail and a triumph over the soulless would at last be realized. This message and this gift were delivered personally by the son of Beergard himself, Branan of Haarbrost godson of Antoni Scarlotti and only person ever named as a family member outside of the royal line. His story is one that is fraught with sorrow and trial yet in the end did he find within sadness great resolve and comfort for deeds committed outside of reason.

Branan of Haarbrost – Son of Beergaard

Now Branan did not make much of a splash within the circles of humanity before the war and the loss of his father yet he was known to Antoni and to the royal court of Coventry. However, the loss of his father proved to be a greater burden than he was capable of bearing up against. So rather than seeing the fate for what it was he recriminated and took all of the minor woes and longings in his own relationship with his father and did work to undermine the connection which his father had shared with Antoni and with mankind. Later he recounted how that he felt that if he could remove the mention of Antoni from the lips of his people that history would change and that he, somehow might take the place of Antoni in his father's heart. Indeed he was convinced that his father did love and respect Antoni above him.

Branan had been an imminent scientist and student of archeology and history upon the world of Maenatae and since the landfall he had used his influence and the name of his father to go into places that no one else would be allowed. In so doing he had become the foremost of all his people in understanding concerning the planet and the people which lived upon it. In fact it was he who

first postulated that from the interactivity of the anomaly within the shell did the energies used in the magicks of the Mae come. At the time it was fully dismissed, but before he died his theory was all but proven. Indeed Branán was one of the greatest minds of the Khrn.

But when Branán returned to Khrnaadin to mourn the death of his father he became increasingly difficult and unhappy and the longer he mourned the worse he became until he began to speak out openly against humanity and most specifically Antoni of Coventry and the members of the Brotherhood. Every opportunity which he took to speak became an embarrassment for the khrn and after so many warnings he was shunned by all but the most fringe of his people. When he was no longer given a podium from which to curse Antoni or his deeds or even the deeds of his father he began to work with his questionable associates to destroy human interests within the realms of the khrn. Frightening off some and bombing or outright destroying others he worked with separatist terrorists in an effort to completely distance the Khrnad from all alien influences. But he went too far. When the authorities finally caught the leaders of the terrorist movement the dwarven people were shocked beyond measure to discover that it was Branán who had been involved

in the cowardly killing and maiming of others.

Branan and all of his conspirators were tried and found guilty and the sentence of death by non combat convened to all save Branan. Of course all who know the ways of the dwarves realize that to die outside of old age or combat is a grave punishment whether it be accidental or on purpose for such deaths and their victims are not recorded in the history of the khrn. In fact in some cases the victims are not mentioned at all in the annals of the dwarven people. Because he was the son of Beergaard and because he was a prince of the Khrnaad Nobility Branan could not be killed directly so he would be set adrift at sea and the forces of nature would judge him. Since the crimes were against Antoni and our people, amongst others, he had been allowed to attend the trials. And with an impassive face did Antoni witness the doom which fell upon the household of his friend and brother, Beergaard.

In a move which surprised all at the trial Antoni stood and claimed the right of a father to make sacrifice of his son's life. Firstly no one was aware that Beergaard had made Antoni Godfather of his son and the executor of his clan's rights. Since the trial and so many problems revolving about Branan had come up the will of Beergaard was not read upon the end of the anniversary of his

death as was custom. When the will was reviewed by clan leaders it was discovered that Antoni was indeed in a position to make the request. In making this charge he was asking the dwarves to allow him to take Branan and make him into the Khr that he should be. To forge Branan and work him and once complete offer his conversion as an offering to Mindanto and absolve the woe from the house of Haarbrost. Although many on both sides of the argument of release did not like the request they had no alternative but to honor it as a last will of their prophet and most honored of all Khrn.

Antoni took Branan, who although young by standards of the dwarves was older than Antoni by some years, and made him to perform every menial task which one could imagine. No activity was too low for Branan to be assigned to. If the Stables needed to be cleaned then Branan received the call. If the plumbing became clogged then Branan took the nod to clean it out. If a diaper needed to be changed, despite the fact that dwarven males distanced themselves from the very young, Branan did it. Shortly he hated Antoni even more than he had in the beginning. Roads were cobbled ditches were dug for every menial task about Merriccia Branan was there wielding whatever implement was used to rectify the condition. For many months did Branan work in

the hot sun and the cold of night performing any task which could be deemed menial or degrading. Yet never was he spoken to without respect nor in a diminishing fashion by any which supervised him or oversaw his actions.

Then one day a team of men came to Branán's residence and moved him and the very few items which he possessed to the castle and into a fine apartment of rooms fit for the most respected of dignitaries. Immediately he was taken out and arrayed in the finest clothing at the most prestigious of dwarven outfitters and always he was treated not as a criminal yet as a respected prince of his people. This did confuse Branán who had determined to not let Antoni or his task masters see him fall or complain. Why was he now being treated so kindly? Why was this man giving him such treatment as was befitting one of honor?

Antoni had Branán brought before him in the presence of the Duchess and his own children and pointed out that he would be taking leave of the training of his own son's in order to embrace the needs of his latest son, Branán. All of his sons, from the oldest to the youngest came before Antoni, bowed and acknowledged him, as was custom and came to Branán and bowed and replied, "We submit to your need, brother." This troubled Branán greatly even more so when the

Duchess did bow before him. She was so lovely and so charming and he felt as if he were taking the very food from the mouths of her children. He could not bear to look her in the face. His anger was to be focused upon Antoni and his lackeys and they only. Not upon defenseless children and their mothers would he seek his revenge.

When all had departed Antoni told Branán that he would begin his training in three days at the beginning of the week. The first thing he would do would be to learn the five languages of men. Next he would learn of the history of mankind and the cultures of all which came over from the continent of Barjia. Lastly he would learn of the service of men to Mindanto and how he loved men despite their failings. Antoni spoke words to Branán that cut him deep and next to the heart, “At the end of this training you may not be a fit Khrn, but you will be a knowledgeable man if that is all you can achieve.”

True to his word Antoni did begin to teach and to engage Branán in all matters regarding the history of mankind and in the languages which had become the basis of communication amongst our people. At first Branán labored only to prove that his capacity for knowledge exceeded that of Antoni or any other man for that matter. After a time, however, Branán began to understand that he

no longer felt quite as much animosity as he had in the beginning for Antoni. Brennan was indeed a scholar and our own historians have pointed out that amongst the dwarven people he has had few if any equals over the span of time. His ability to absorb knowledge was incredible as was proven in his learning to employ the complete Pentablary (the five languages of commerce) in a mere 26 months. He absorbed the history and the scope of men with an unmatched voracity and when Antoni spoke to him of the genetic works and the heights which man had reached Branaan did fall completely under the spell of Antoni's good graces. The vast and powerful empire of men was unknown to all but a very few trusted dwarven leaders and when Branan realized that such a treasure had been gifted to him he was completely the friend to Antoni that his father had been. Antoni, it has been suggested, even went so far as to allow Branan to use the Genetic Construct which was employed to impart knowledge of man's history.

So in the end did Antoni share with Branan the secret which no other before had known and that how Beergaard had, upon his death and at the very end of his days, spoken to Antoni asking that he be a father to his son Branan. And also to ask Branan to forgive him for putting the needs of the

people before the needs of his son. This was a trait which Beergaard had learned from Antoni and his ministrations to Mindanto in his ancient worship form. Beergaard, it was said by those which knew him well, was the only khrn which had possessed the gift of regret. This gift did Antoni now pass on to his godson, the son of Beergaard of Haarbrost, Branan. So Branan learned regret from men, yet he had also to learn to bear it and to grow from it and as he labored with his pain he grew to be far greater than he should have had the woes of his latter years not befallen him.

In the end of those things involving Branan's training Antoni did the unexpected, as was his habit, regarding the return of Branan to his people. He took Branan, against his will, and returned to the Khrnaa'din in order to petition as an offering those things which he had promised to the fathers of the Khrn. He spoke to them of the growth of his god son and how he was fit now to no longer be the son of man rather he had grown and returned to the status and the force of will of a Khr. In his delivery did Antoni so impress the dwarves that they gathered about him and placed their hands upon his shoulder in a sign of trust. On that day did the fathers of the Khr accept as worship the gift of Branan of Haarbrost, the son of

Beergaard I who was a prophet amongst his people. And so Branán returned to his people to lead them in his capacity as Clan Lord of Haarbrost and as if it were possible Antoni, and House Scarlotti did rise even more in the eyes of the Khn.