



FOUR PILLARS
PRESENTS

WASTES

POST EVENT
FLUFF DOC





WALKING HOME

Sko is as cold as you all left it.

The walk back takes the best part of a day, down the land towards the Duke's Keep. The Duke of Sko Eric Bjornstad, his Minister of Diplomacy Anna Harpadóttir, and The Great Oak of The Collective Zurr Sol talk the whole time back, but no one is permitted to listen in.

Eventually arriving at the capital of Sko's North, everyone is hurried to gather their remaining pieces before being all but kicked out. And with that, the long walk back to Ásaterra started.

One thing that everyone is at least welcomed by is the favourable Boons of the Mythics. But don't they sit differently now? You all met the War Mythics; the original versions of these entities, and at least the Potential Mythics were vastly more hostile in nature than these warming and kind boons. What does that make the Sko Pantheon? Are they poor imitations? Or are they more mature and balanced? Does knowing that the Mythics of old were significantly different to those you deal with now comfort you? If the Mythics can change, then surely that makes them more Mortal than they let on?

The Radiation sickness stays for a while. Casting spells continues to make people bleed, and those that resist magic find themselves feeling sick and poisoned. The Vampires amongst you all need regular feeding, while the Beastkins still continue to feel sluggish and heavy. But after a few days, things start to feel better. The Beastkins feel better first, returning to their bodies being refreshing. Vampires' feeding are required once every few days, then back to a week - and finally, it





is fulfilling. Casting spells no longer produces adverse affects, and in fact Healing Waters helps to ease up the poisoned feelings everyone was feeling, especially the Magical Resistant individuals.

However, leaving the Wastes and the presence of Myrhian brought about a new problem: the Void-Touched among you all - the new ones. The first hour of returning, your sight is replaced by the burning white inducing blindness again. Zurr does his best to offer his help, to explain it, but words cannot bring back vision alone. For the week long trek back, the four new Void-Touched require help with most things; walking, eating, fighting off the wildlife of Sko. And, with this many, feeding off mana quadrupled among the Force. Though for now, we will leave these poor souls to themselves.

Conversation is scares on the way back. Talking isn't banned, not by a longshot, but given the divisive decisions, even the Taskmasters and Alecto can feel the tension in the air. Important chats, such as routes and calling for help against a wild Snapjaw, happen, but given the weight of that mission; at the very least, no one wants to bring it up first.

And before you all realise; you've crossed the River Dileann. You are back in Ásaterra. And nothing feels different. At one point in the last month, you all held the life of 133 million in your hands, you all weighed the lives of Mythics against that of Mortals, you all nearly died stopping Antonin. And yet, as you walk through the fields of the East; nothing has changed. The Realm has no idea what you all have had to do, and likely will never know.





The Taskmasters and Alcecto inform you that they are headed to see the Council. Anyone who wishes to accompany them is more than welcome, though they will not force you. They have an understanding of what has happened, and have been talking among themselves about what to say, but they want to extend the chance to be there to everyone. They collectively agree that it is not likely to go well.

However, first, while everyone is still here, there is one last thing to deal with: Antonin.





THE RITUAL

With the light of the sun beating down on you all, Nicholas draws out the large Devotional Circle while everyone readies themselves. Swords in hand, shields readied, spells prepared, the circle rites start with Nicholas taking the lead:

“We know not of what is to come and what awaits us all, but as the clock ticks, we all know that our paths take us towards one infallible truth; our lady, the stars, the great Lady. The ever watchful, we do not demand nor expect her presence, but in her name, and in our duty, I create this circle in her devotion.”

The circle hums to life. It’s the first time in a long time that a devotional circle works as intended. Gendry takes a step forward.

“Even in his weakened state, and with the sun as high as it can be, we cannot take any chances. By my power as a devotionalist, I cleanse this circle of all presence except our own, and I empty any excess mana that is present, only leaving what is needed for this ritual.”

The circle empties itself of anything lingering, cleansing the space. Grimmir is invited into the circle, holding the Octogramatic Mana Disruption Array pages, and places them carefully in the centre. They take a step out, watching to make sure they stay stacked.

Meaw speaks up:

“We ask for nothing in return. We are doing our Lady’s work and nothing more. We don’t know what might happen, but we know his time has come, and must now atone for his actions - for Ophelia...”





And with a nod, Gwendolyn, with shield in hand, and sword in the other, enters the circle.

“My love will call on our Lady, and once she is present, I will disrupt the pages. We will both leave the circle, and raise the Wards, and leave him to his fate. EVERYONE, be ready, and prepared.”

Gwendolyn exchanges a look with Nicholas, as he begins.

“Antonin has caused suffering and untold pain to others. Antonin has cut people short before their time. Antonin has sinned against you, our great Lady. We do not pretend to know your will, nor want to impose ours either, but we know that Antonin had to be stopped, in your name. We lost people doing so. We ask that the Justice they deserve is paid forwards onto this wayward soul. Our great Lady, we ask you to take this soul into your own hands directly, for Ophelia, for Cicero. We call on you, oh endless one, Lady Death.”

As soon as her name is said, Gwendolyn knocks over the pile of pages, before rocketing out of there, tackling Nicholas with her. Immediately following their exit, Gendry, Eauxi, Meaw, and a trying Selene call out for the Wards to be raised.

And they are.

Crackling mana erupts out of the pages, shredding them, as the strikes crash against the enclosed Wards. In a flash of light, Antonin stands, hunched over, in his mortal body; no whispering shadows, no ethereal form, not bleeding off into the night. Quickly, his eyes dart around the space, as he raises his hand: “Snapcast: Voidblade”. His hands are coated in black and purple, as he lunges at the wards in an attempt to break them. It’s now known that if Cold Iron strikes a ritual circle, there is a terrible blow back effect that can dangerously





harm the one who made the circle. However Nicholas shows no worry. He is already on his knees, with a smile, with Gwendolyn and Meaw by his side, content. Before Antonin can make contact with the wards, his arm is grabbed and halted in place, followed by a swipe downwards, severing the arm as it turns to dust. Throwing Antonin back into the centre of the circle, a shadowed form stands with stars as eyes, bleeding into open air, a two handed sword now plunged into the ground. Cicero stands to the side of Antonin, who now screams in pain from being dismembered - a likely cathartic feeling for all who experienced exactly that at his hands. Any attempts to move from the spot, he finds himself bound and unable to. He desperately stares around the Force before laying eyes on the newly created Void-Touched. With a gleeful smile fighting through the pain, he reaches out with his other hand towards them, but finds himself unable to speak, unable to draw on words, unable to make a noise outside of his howling throws of pain. In that moment, those same Void-Touched feel the hair on the back of their necks stand on end, they start to sweat, and want to flee - but they bite through the fear, as they know now that She is here. Despite not being able to see anything, just the unfiltered mana of the realm, they can see Cicero clear as day. And then a voice bellows out, her voice:

“Antonin Amberson. You have committed the eternal sin of death before one’s time. I am so sorry you have had to suffer.”

In that moment, almost like a hundred voices were removed from Antonin’s mind, a look of clarity washes over his face, like he suddenly understood the weight of what he has done. Followed by a single, effortless swipe from Cicero. And slowly Antonin’s body started to fall apart, disintegrating into dust, then into nothing, leaving only Cicero’s beret on the ground.





“I will continue to look after those that have come to me before their time. They will never know the work you all have done here, but I will say on their behalf: Thank you. I lower these wards, and shall take my leave.”

Cicero kneels down and retrieves his hat, before standing and putting it on. He turns to leave with the Lady, but halts. He looks back on the Force, his friends, the people he fought beside - a look of him soaking in the final chance to see them, for now anyway - with a sad smile. A ruffled sleeved hand appears to tug on Cicero - “Come on Father, lets go!” says a cheery voice of a certain priest. Cicero turns, and his image fades out.

The circle is empty once again.



ÁSATERRA

The first city on route once emerging from Sko is Margolur, the seat of Kusul Kalyna. You all hold your breath as you enter, just hoping that she's not there already waiting for you. And it seems some luck is on your side, as she is currently at Frithstede, the capital of Ásaterra.

It's been nearing two months since you all were back in Ásaterra. It seems that Election Fever has swept through the land since; 1300AU is an election year. As you all get your various bits and pieces (either readying to head to Frithstede, or back home), you learn of the various Elections across the land:

In the North, Constantine II finally has an opponent that seems to be able to kick him from his seats: Justin, his very own son.

In the East, Kalyna is campaigning very much unopposed. Seems that the East are quite happy since she took over, and no other Amontya is stepping up.

The South is a weird mess that only the South could be in. Only those who own land can vote, which obviously means that the general populace often go unheard. Ex-Thane Alecto implemented an actual democratic system in her Thanedom before she left (much to the anger of the land owners (who are mostly Lords)). However, current Councillor Soutar has been very vocal about adopting this policy across the South, which has the general populace ecstatically backing him. Any posters that are put up about other candidates have reportedly had them ripped down unless they too support the democratic policies that Soutar is backing. All that to say; seems Soutar is likely a shoe-in for the position again.





The West has the biggest change up; Dust is stepping down, deciding to retire from the position after only his first term. Instead, the High Priestex of Florintina Mer'ca Tura and the head of The Accountants, Peter Law are campaigning for themselves.

Next year might see a shift in the way the land is governed. Is this going to be a good thing just as The Collective has returned?...





THE COUNCIL

Frithstede is as busy as ever, but no matter how much you might try to breathe it all in, your breath is stifled by the imposing Council Chambers building at the centre, looming over you.

Your Taskmasters, Re'Taeh and Dayvis Horn, along with friend of the Force, Alecto, decide to take front. You are also invited to join them in the chambers, but are also told to steel yourself, this isn't going to be pretty.

Eventually, your number is up, and all who decide to head in shuttle themselves into the grand chamber halls. As the doors behind you close with a thud, there sit the four Councillors:

Constantine of the Legion, Kalyna of the Circle, Soutar of the Warriors, and Dust of the Guild.

Soutar stands, putting down some papers in his hands neatly onto his little desk in front of him.

“Welcome back Expeditionary Force. How was the mission?...” followed by a scouring for a Black Box among your hands. “I take it... no Box?”

Davis looks at everyone, before stepping forwards.

“Councillor Soutar, and the Royal Council of Ásaterra. The mission failed. We have no Box to hand back, but not because of our failings, but because it was decided that we could not retrieve it.”

The Councillors whisper in murmurs and confusion, before Soutar speaks again.

“Care to explain? You have been on this mission for two months; what happened?”





“The mission changed. Once the Box was within reach, we were revealed information about its truth; it was a weapon that was used to kill our ancestors, 133 million of them, The Collective. However, it didn’t kill them, but rather absorbed them. The Force made the decision to help them, to save them. But the act of saving them meant the Box could not be retrieved. Through talks with Huángjīn Xīwàng, the Force traveled out into the Eastern Wastes. An attempt was made to retrieve it again, however it did not work out. We have collated a report of the general situation for you all to read. It should bring you up to date on the situation, though it lacks finer detail as it is considerably more nuanced than a report could convey. But before you cast judgement; 133 million souls have another chance at life. If you are the Councillors that I believe in, then I truly believe that you would have done the same. I concede the floor.”

Soutar makes a gesture, asking for the report. Before dismissing everyone, instructing you all to stay outside while they deliberate. The door opens again, and you all congregate in the waiting room. The door closes behind you. Time passes. It feels like an age, and at a certain point it feels like the Councillors are just purposely making you all wait; but then again, they are learning about what happened in the last month and a bit. Eventually, the doors open again, and you are all brought back into the halls. The door closes, once again, behind you.

They seem... poised, calm, collected. Constantine stands to talk.
“By the Gods, we have to ask: this is real?”

Re’Taeh spoke up

“Everything we have written there is truthful and accurate. It doesn’t cover everything, but enough for an initial report.”





“Shit... Fine. Expeditionary Force. You have failed in your mission in retrieving the Black Box, a weapon made by the Huángjīn Empire. You actively went against the mission brief and, once again, worked outside your scope, making decisions that were NOT yours to make. As of this moment, the current Expeditionary Force is fired, and with it, the Taskforce is disbanded.

Constantine sits, as Dust stands up.

“You talk about the Death of the Gods-”

“And Daemons, Dust,” chimed in Kalyna.

“Yes. And the Daemons. Anyway, it lacks a LOT of information here. Care to explain the reason behind this Mortal vs God-... Mythic divide?”

Alecto spoke up.

“The ultimate outcome became: Saving The Collective, the 133 million trapped mortals, would mean saving those on top that had plans to kill the Mythics as we know them. So the decision was that of saving them all, thus setting into motion the possible death of Mythics, or keeping them inside the box, meaning the Mythics were safe from dying.”

“And... this Myrhian, she had the means to do this?”

“It is understood that she did, but does not currently have the means to. She-”





Dust cut in.

“Fine. We just wanted to make sure we read this correctly. In that case; we are sorry that you all were put in a position where you had to make this decision. As it stands, we stand in the middle too; two of us believe that you did the right thing in not stopping this Great Leader, the other two believe that you should have. Regardless, while we have fired you all, we hold no resentment or ill blood towards you on these actions. Given what we’ve read, we think we would have done the same in the retrieval of the Box. It is a shame that you did not trust us enough with this information and decided to take things into your own hands. Clearly, you think the worst of us-”

“At least we didn’t start a war with Treth-” snidely cut in Constantine. He was met with a smack against the head by Kalyna who sat next to him, and glares from pretty much everyone in the room. He waved his hands up as an apology.

“ANYWAY, we thank you for your work, and regret this outcome. The Huángjīn Empire will likely want answers, and firing you will at least prove... honestly, I don’t know - something? Like, we’re at the end of our ropes here-”

Kalyna stood up and gently put her hand on Dust’s shoulder.

“Dust. Enough. I’ll take it from here.”

Dust sat down, head in hands. Dayvis asked:

“What about the other countries? We don’t have a lot of details, but given what the Dukes declared...”





Kalyna answered,

“I’ll be handling Sko like before. You were exiled, we were not. We’ll wait and see about the others though. Valclya’s closed borders since the end of their war stays closed, and Treth has been... annoyingly quiet. With their strengthening soldiers on the borders, we’ll have to see. Regardless, thank you for your service. This is the decision of the Council. If we could have a chat with the Taskmasters and Alecto, the rest of you are dismissed.”

And with that, the doors open once again, and you all make your way out, leaving the three behind. As the doors close, you all stand in the waiting room. Do you breathe a sigh of relief? Do you grit your teeth in anger? Regardless, eventually the doors open again, letting out the Taskmasters and Alecto.

Re’Taeh speaks;

“Expedit-, ahem - Everyone. With our services no longer needed, we have been given the blessings of the Council to work as we see fit. And so, from this moment onwards, the Taskforce is an independent work force, with the aim of helping Ásaterra and her people to the best of our ability. For this endeavor, Alecto has been brought on as a Taskmaster, joining in joint with Dayvis and myself. We would like to invite you all to join us so we can continue our work.”

Davis follows up;

“In a month’s time, we have been asked to visit a certain pub in Frithstede. The Councillors will not be there, and have not asked for further information regarding everything that has been going on. They have not asked to be brought up to speed on the situation. So, we would not like to invite you all there at a later point in time. Anyway, please fill in reports and hand them in at your earliest convenience. And, well done. You all did well.”





TRETH

In the following days, as you all head back to your homes, information starts trickling out of Treth. They declare their unwavering support for The Collective. The general populace of Ásaterra seems to not understand the meaning behind this, but it couldn't be more clear for those in the know. Treth has chosen their side.

