

New History by Feichin

The fire ripped through the city. No one was prepared for this. No one saw this coming.

It was a day like any other in the city of Bloodloch. The cold, damp air flowing in from the Shamtotas to the east mixed with the hot air seething in from the Mhojave to create a quite warm atmosphere. spurts of hot air sprout from the fissures all across the mountainous city. There was much going on. Well, there were a lot of people going back and forth so any onlooker would assume so, whether or not they had anything to do at all mattered not. But it was midday or morning, or night... it was often hard to tell the time of day in the city of Bloodloch for it lie within a mountain in a series of caves and caverns stretching for miles. However, whatever time it was, it was when the peak of people were about the city that the fire broke out. Do not get confused though.

It was a boy who saw the fire first. He stood average height for a male Human. His skin dark, and his hair darker, he was a muscular man. He was built as thick as a tree. His arms swung like branches when he moved them to and fro. He was the boy who saw the fire first. He went by Kaleth.

Kaleth wore a black cloak with sandals. He had many earrings of foreign nature adorned on his ears and nose. He definitely did not look like a Bloodlochian...though what a normal Bloodlochian looks like is difficult to determine. His hands were covered in gloves and hidden beneath the cloak most times, only peeking out when he walked. His long legs were almost made his torso and the rest of his frame seem small. He glanced up from his walk towards the south west and spotted the smoke. You see his vision was better than most. He could see in the dark and even in the darkest darks His eyes looked almost like cat eyes or those of those Rajamalans that you'd find roaming around Saluria. Anyone looking at him though would easily determine he was no Rajamalan. So therefore, when he glanced up into the pitch black night sky of Bloodloch and saw the smoke, he knew there was a problem. He quickly shouted "FIRE" and his voiced echoed and ranged throughout the city. There was no one within the caverns who could not here his shouts of warning. Even those deaf would be hard pressed to miss the shout. Even those with no ears would not have heard the screams and cries of "Fire" that day. It was a scream a man screams as if it's his last scream he will ever scream. A shout to let the world know. A shout to shake the mountain.

Kaleth quickly headed in the direction of the fire. He knew what was over there but he was not sure quite what was burning until he could lay his eyes on it. All around him he could see people on horses and feet running with him to the spot of the infraction. Was it danger, a raid perhaps that he was running to? He was unsure. He just knew he had to get there. Everyone around him must have felt the same way. Bloodlochians are like that. They run towards the danger, towards the unknown, because they must know what is happening. The mob, as it headed south westwards towards the fire got bigger and bigger with every moment. People were coming from

all over the city to seek out the happenings. The leaders of the city was sending word to all those out on adventures as well. Everyone was coming home. This fire was huge and the entirety of Bloodloch would be here to see it smothered, contained, or, in the worst of events, enveloping the entire city.

As the journey continued, Kaleth remarked how big the city actually was. He had traveled this street many times as had everyone in the mob. He had traveled every street many times and knew this city like the back of his hand. Everyone had. Shortcuts, were just regular paths and not considered shortcuts since everyone knew of them. As they traveled more shouts echoed through the caverns of Bloodloch. "The Library", one shout said. Kaleth thought he recognized the voice but with all the movement around him and the way the caverns have a way to echo and throw off the pitch of any sounds, he could not be sure. It mattered little anyway. He just wanted to get to the fire. Another shout was heard through the caverns, "Hurry!" Kaleth swore it was for him. He knew the shout was meant for everyone to come as quickly as they could but he his mind mended and distorted the words to make him believe it was only for him. Every word shouted as he hurried along was meant for him. He knew it. It was his personal mission to get there. He had to get there before it was too late. The fact that it could have been too late already never crossed his mind. In fact, nothing crossed his mind. The mob of people he was traveling with, the aches of his feet and body for running for so long and so fast, nor the slower people he was dodging and jumping over to quickly keep pace crossed his mind. He was of a singular focus. The beads of sweat on his forehead, nor his sore ankles would betray him.

When he arrived he stood still, shocked at the sight before him. The library. It was on fire. The surrounding buildings were caught ablaze as well. The flames danced a merry dance as if orchestrated by Auresae herself. It was as if her Avatar was playing the flute and the flames danced to here melancholic tune. If the fire was anywhere else, Kaleth might have stopped to enjoy the sight. To enjoy the burning and misery that goes along with it. But the fire was not anywhere else. It was in right here, right in front of Kaleth, in Bloodloch.

Kaleth quickly glanced around and saw the mob move towards the fire, trying to help in any way they could. Some grabbed water buckets from nearby reservoirs while others helped those who were injured. Kaleth was not one to help in such a fashion. He knew the importance of the library and merely throwing piles of water on it, however it made one feel on the inside, would not satiate the hunger to burn. Without thinking, and he had to not be thinking as any onlooker would agree, he rushed forward into the great fire in the library, stripping off his cloak as he got closer. Kaleth could feel the heat of the flames on his body as pushed himself, both his mind and body, to the edge. He could feel his hair burning as he was now in the building. He knew the pricelessness of all that was stored here. The documents, manuscripts, pages, scrolls, textbooks, journals, news articles and whatever other writings and artifacts this place held were invaluable. He had to save them. He had to save them all. Unafraid, he began to gather what he could. It was not much.

He knew he was going to die but he did not fear it for he knew the Underking would forgive him and allow him another chance. He knew death was not final. Everybody standing outside knew that too but they were still afraid. The pain was still real after all. You felt every ounce of flesh burning and slide off your skin like it was a foreign object that just did not belong. You felt your blood boil like you were trying to heat up some tea made from your own essence of life. You smelt the burn of your skin and muscles like they were being roasted over a great pit fire and you were preparing to eat them for dinner that night. The blindness hits you as well as your eyes begin to melt along with the rest of your face. Kaleth felt this all and even through the years of battle training and the constant deaths he served before, he could never get used to it. He could not get use to not feeling his legs or slumping over. He could not get used to seeing death eek towards him. He could not get use to...

As Kaleth continued trying to go deeper and gather the more priceless artifacts and scrolls, something felt off. While he knew death was not final, as it never is, he began to doubt that. This fire was hotter than fires in the past. He had once fallen into the lava beneath the fissures of the city and even that seemed like a cool bath to him now. Something was wrong. He has been on the end of Luminary attacks where he felt his insides burn and even that did not compare to the scorcher he felt now. As his body began to wear down, he doubted whether he would come back at all. He wanted to save everything. He managed to save nothing. So there he lay, his body being engulfed by these flames fed by Auresae herself. He did not think twice about coming in. He did not remember the shouts "Fire God" as he ran towards the city. He missed all the warnings. He missed everything. He did not plan to die this day. He did not plan to die the true death this day. Alas, it was what it would come to he thought.

As he closed his eyes, for what he assumed would be his final time, he thought back on his life on what he had accomplished. He thought about the children he did not have. He thought about the wife he never married. He thought about the home he never built. He thought about nothing and everything. When his final breath was upon him, he felt a cool rush overtake him. Little particulates began to trickle all over his body and he recognized it as sand. He managed to open his eyes with all his strength in time to see a wave of sand pour through library. It poured through every orifice of the building. Sand piled through open doorways and windows and kept coming as if there was an endless amount. Kaleth was saved. The Teradrim he thought. They must have quenched the flames with the gift from the Earth God. His actions were not in vain and any moment would see his work to fruition. However, the sand kept coming, and coming, and coming. It was relentless, unforgiving, and uncaring. Kaleth felt the ground shake suddenly. A small tremor. Then the ground shook even more. The quakes got larger and longer. Kaleth knew what was happening. He had seen this power time and time again. The Teradrim were opening up a chasm. They were not trying to quench the flames but bury the library beneath the city. They would stop the spread of the fire this way. Kaleth felt the crushing weight of the sand all over his body until he could no longer breathe. A weird thought crossed his mind. While he thought it would be the fire that brought him the true death, he now thought it would be the endless abyss

of a Teradrim chasm that brought it. He found it ironic that he may not come back when essentially he'd die closest to the Underking.

The onlookers watched in awe and amazement as a singular Teradrim raised his hands, a flail in one and fist in the other, and controlled the sands. It was as if he was a puppeteer and the sand was his marionettes, dancing to his will. He moved his arms left and waves of sand moved and swirled off to the left. He swung his arms right and the sand reversed direction in unison with his movements. He was in control and he was powerful. It was palpable. He was the raw form of power itself. He was not just powerful to these people he was power. Anyone watching him this day could not tell you what he looked like. They could not tell you who he was. No one had seen him before. No one could see his face with a dark brown and yellow cloak covering his body with the hood raised. His hands were a little blue though and looked dry and almost cracking.

The sand, while it helped, was not working. It managed to quell much of the fire but somehow the fire seemed to continue burning. It was as if the sand only temporarily stopped it and then the fire quickly grew and immunity to the earth that was once its equalizer. The man with the flail, the Teradrim, as everyone knew he must be, stomped his foot and a crack appeared. It was a small crack, a crack one could easily find on any cavern wall or floor within the miles and miles of Bloodloch. Seeming displeased with himself, the man stomped his foot again and the crack grew wider. Again, another stomp and the crack grew again. It was as if each time he stomped his foot, he made the ground more and more angry. With a final stomp the crack grew to enormous proportions, almost swallowing the man. The crack spread from the initial contact point outwards in all directions. It caused much of the onlookers and witnesses to step backwards and run for their lives or be swallowed whole. The cracks moved towards the fire and sand mixture, unstoppable. When it got to the library and surrounding buildings it seemed to stop. For moments no one looking said anything. Many thought the Teradrim had failed.

From the distance it looked like one of the buildings began to get lower. No one was quite sure if they were seeing things right. The fire raged on and it was possible some of the building merely began to break down because of the intense and unrelenting heat. Then another building seemed to dip lower. This time you could not second guess it. They were falling. Moments pass and nothing. After, more moments passed and still nothing. The crowd stood in silence, motionless as if they knew what was about to happen but still did not believe it. They knew what was going to happen and yet waited in anticipation as it happened knowing that if they looked away for just one sec, to just glance around them or look away, that they would miss it. That every moment was crucial. That there was not a sight to be missed in this scene. And then it fell. They all fell. The cracks that led to the buildings were grew wider and wider and the buildings sank into the ground. They almost crumbled under the sudden earthly trauma but they stood steadfast and fell hole. They descended into the earth. Into the abyss. They knew people had gone inside and could only surmise that that they too had perished into the earth as the buildings had. The fires were nowhere to be seen. Auresae had stopped playing her plaguing fiery melody upon the city and the where buildings and fires had once stood and roared, nothing remained. Not even dust flew

up. It was as if everything in the vicinity had been sucked up into the chasm. It was even as if their thoughts of the area and memories of studying in the library and researching had been swallowed as well. Past, present, and future had all been carried away into the abyss and all that remained was the man in the cloak with the flail and blue hands.

The man stood over the mess he created, and by mess it was absolutely not as there was nothing left. He looked around the crowd and all eyes were on him. He did not speak. He merely watched the crowd stare wide-eyed as if they expected him to say something. It was almost as if he did something wrong. As if they would rather see their city turned to ashes, as their enemies would, then witness what he had done. He thought to himself that maybe he did go too far. He thought that maybe he could have merely saved it with more sand and a little help from other powerful people in the city. He knew there had to be some left but he did not care. He just stood there and watched. He had to say something or they would keep staring but he did not know what. He did not possess a silver tongue. He was not one to blabber and go on and on about something. He always chose his words carefully. He merely stood over the city, over the thousands of pairs of eyes and minds on him and said, smoothly but declaratively, "If the Earth burns, leave no Earth to burn," and walked away as if the fire that wreaked havoc throughout the city was a simple thing of the past. And the many that fell to the fire, were long gone.

Whispers of the great show of strength spread throughout the city. Many wondered who the man was. Only a great man could manage such a feat. A Guildmaster perhaps or a Champion, but they were all away Delve, the lost land. It was a feat only a few could accomplish alone. No one had followed the man or seen where he went when the library fell, the "Great Falling" it would come to be known. Nor any had seen where he appeared during the beginning of the "Fire that seared history," as that would come to be known. However, it was felt across the city that while the man may have saved it, he destroyed the history. All of recorded history was kept in the library. No one from Bloodloch was that old anymore to remember what happened during the first of times as it would be called. Some of the guilds had libraries and there were private libraries as well, but they all contained incomplete history. There were giant parts missing from the fundamentals of Bloodloch. How the city got the way it was, how certain guilds were formed, how certain abilities worked, and many and much more information was forever lost.

By decree of the city leader many historians and scholars began to write down as much as they could. It was not just them though, everybody began to write what they could of what they could remember. Much of it was missing facts and figures but it was better than not having it at all. If Bloodlochians failed to record what they could while much of it was still fresh in their minds, then a lot of the history would be lost forever. It was 500 years after the beginning of the midnight age and many of the people had not lived that long to know much. They were just writing down stories their families had passed on for generations. Stories they told their kids, who were recording the same stories. It was a city effort to get it all down. Much of it was duplicated but it was not important. This time would come to be known as the "Writing of Ages." It is here where our story begins.

Machello was furiously writing what he could. He had heard stories of a great Teradrim from his grandfather in the past and he wanted to do his duty to write what he remembered. His grandfather had long passed, and by passed he meant slept the final slept as most people never really die. They just sleep longer and longer and longer until one day, they do not wake up. It happened to the old and young alike. Machello always believed that some people just had stronger will than other people and when the will ran out they no longer woke up. Machello saw no signs of this in himself. He had as much energy as a young Sentaari practicing his forms. He had energy and will for days and was eager to awake every day and get on with his daily activities.

He took his stories to the Archive, newly built on the other end of the city. There was a long line of people. Everyone wanted to contribute and waited most of their day to submit their works of fiction and nonfiction alike. For some reason Machello, was proud of what he had written. He wanted to join the Teradrim because of the fellow he had written about and definitely because of what he had just witnessed a few weeks ago at the library. He knew there was great strength in the Earth and wanted to show the world as that man had showed the city. When it was his turn to go he handed his manuscript to the scholars of the archives and patiently waited as they read it and scrutinized it. While they needed the recorded history they still criticized works that would be included to maintain some form of integrity, however little. And there was very little with little basis to base much of it on. They accepted his works and motioned with their hands to move to the side to let the next person through. Machello stepped to the side and began to head home. He had thought of more to write and wanted to get it down before he forgot. He fingered a flail to his side that he always carried with him. Then he gripped it tight as he imagined himself fighting with it and calling forth the powers of the Earth and Sand. As he imagined creating a golem from the rock around him and fighting alongside it, it helping him to vanquish enemies. Then, suddenly, a shake rattle throughout the city.

All those at the “Great Falling” recognized the power. It was the same as happened that day. They saw the ground open easily, like a book and the building fall through like water in a sieve. A great shout came across the realms that shook Machello to the core. It was a mighty shout that scared Machello a little bit. It was so overpowering that even if he could shout over the shout he would not dare. He feared the shout and more so he feared the great belly this shout emerged from. It merely said “West Gate”. As before with the fire, he rushed to the west gate as fast as he could. It was an urgency that he gets there. He felt a need to be there more than his need to be at the “Fire that seared history.” He traveled briskly and arrived at no time at all. There were a lot of people traveling with him that he did not notice until he arrived. He wondered if they noticed him at all or all the other people going in the same direction at the same time. Upon arriving, Machello, noticed half the city in attendance. He looked behind him and saw the other half bringing up the rear. He wondered if there were other people on the other side of the gate but then determined that most of the citizens must be here, trying to help with remembering and writing history. He looked around and noticed everyone head was looking upwards at the gate.

Machello moved his eyes as well and glanced at a figure standing atop the gate. It looks like he might have even been a little higher than the gate. Straining his eyes, Machello squinted towards the gates and noticed he was standing on a pillar of sand. The sand shot up from the earth in a uniform fashion creating a pillar. It was very smooth like a polished marble table. Machello had never noticed that pillar before and almost considered for a moment that the pillar was there all the time. That thought quickly evaporated to logical thinking that the pillar must have been created recently. "But how?" Machello wondered. How was such a marvelous structure created so easily? It must have been done quite recently as he had passed through the gates recently as a month ago and it was not there. Moving his eyes up the pillar, going slowly as to not miss an inch of this marvelously fantastic structure, Machello finally really looked at the guy atop. It was the man. The man from the "Great Falling". The man that saved the city. The man that destroyed history. The Teradrim of infinite power. The Teradrim he aspired to be. And with awe, Machello heard this man speak for only the second time. Machello was not sure if he heard right at first. He thought his ears betrayed him as he thought his eyes betrayed him the first time he saw immense power. Nevertheless, the voice was deep and clear, and it declared, with authority unlike Machello has ever heard, authority like he would defend this to his dying breath, "I am Feichin."

Murmurs shook the crowd. Machello's heart skipped a beat. Then it skipped another beat. Then suddenly it seemed like it was beating twice as fast to make up for the times it missed. It was beating as if it was trying to protrude from his chest. Like it wanted to get out. He knew that name. Of course he knew that name. Everyone knew that name. Well, mostly everyone. No one had seen him for hundreds of years. He was a Legend, a myth, but tale told to children to inspire greatness. He was an Elder as they called them. One of those people well over 700 years old that existed during the times in the beginning. No one was that old now a days. Everyone from those early years had since long taken slumber. No one believed the Elders had the will to come back. Nobody believed they wanted to come back. Everyone thought they had transcended and forsaken their bodies for eternal slumber if that was a thing. No one thought.

But here, in front of Bloodloch stood a great one. Feichin. Feichin the Last Tera, The First Terror, Terrordrim, and Bane of Chains. It was the same Feichin he had wrote stories about. The same Feichin his grandfather had told him about. Feichin, The End. The Feichin. Feichin, Just Feichin. The same Feichin that was said to look a god in the eye and spit in their face. Feichin, the Foolish. It was Feichin who repeatedly died within a volcano so his enemies would come and think him weak so he could end them. Suicide Feichin, of the Volcano. It was Feichin of the Sand. It was his hero, and hero to everyone else. He had to be a hero to everyone, Machello thought. He was just that great. He was just that amazing and terrific. When Teradrim were the weakest, it was this Feichin that brought them to the brink of relevance. With abilities that were far inferior to his enemies', he still reigned supreme. Feichin, the Even Handed. Feichin the Unaugmented. Feichin the Unbreakable and Feichin the Overpowered. Feichin, who was said to be worth 4 fighters in combat, Feichin, the Eight Fisted. Feichin the Numerator, Feichin.

Former Guildmaster Emperor Feichin, of the Teradrim. Feichin, the Lost. Feichin, the Found. Feichin, the Unfindable. Feichin, the One and Only. After the events of the library, he was sure they would give Feichin the Red another moniker as well.

The crowd was in a full on roar as Machello thought and thought about the greatness that stood before him. He did not know why he was called here but he was intent on listening to every word that man said. The crowd continued to babble on and shout different aliases to the Great One that stood before, Lord Feichin, the Elder. Machello was not sure if they were just shouting his nicknames because they knew them or because they were genuinely happy and thrilled to be in the presence of an Elder. It mattered not though and Machello did not care. He wanted Lord Feichin to go on with what had to say. With losing history and everything that occurred, anything this man had to say was important.

After letting the crown go on for a while, the Elder raised his hands. Machello saw more of the blue hands he recognized. He was without his flail though but upon closer inspection saw it was clipped upon a weaponbelt to his left. Feichin's hood was not raised now and a lot of his facial features could be recognized. He was a deep blue color though with dry and crackling skin all over. From what can be glimpsed from his distance, scars of varying sizes littered his rough and hairless body. His hands were webbed too now that Machello noticed but it was ripped and cracked in places. He was way taller than the average man though no giant. He had sharp ears and small lines could be seen in his neck. Like the stories of old, he was a Kelki. Well, he transcended that, if the stories were true and now he was an Azudim, one of the great races. Though others had been found since Feichin's time, it was an old one and still very strong. A hush came over the crowd as Feichin lowered his hands slowly.

"I understand history was lost here," he said. Machello got excited at the thought that Feichin would start to clarify a lot of the stories he heard as a child. He thought that Feichin would begin to go on and rant about everything right there and then for his pleasure and his pleasure only. He thought no one else existed at the moment except for him and his hero.

Lord Feichin began to speak again "Yes, I am at fault. It is because of me that much of what you treasured was destroyed. As I said on the scene of what you called the "Great Falling", if the ground burns, leave no ground to burn." Machello thought back to that day again and did remember him saying that. He was not quite sure what that meant but it did sound prolific at the time. Feichin went on "What I was trying to say is that if there are no options, you sometimes have to take the only options available to you. The fire was great and if I stood by and did nothing the city that was built upon our backs would be turned to ash. I could not quench the fire so I destroyed all the fire had begun to consume. I took away the option of the fire and in such I destroyed much. I hear you call me "The Twisted" or "The Giver" but none of you can even say how I grabbed such. None of you can say much. You are lost Bloodloch. You were lost before your history was lost and for that, I apologize. I have awakened. I do not know how long I will be awoke and I see none that I have known from the days are here..." He trailed off. He looked

about the crown and continued again after a brief pause. "I am the last of the Elders. And before I sleep again, I shall instill knowledge to you. I will tell you the history." Feichin stopped for a moment and Machello looked about the crowd. Not a word was said.

Feichin continued on, "Nay, I can not do that. I can not tell you the history of the City. I can not tell you the history of the world. I can not tell you history of the Teradrim. I can not tell you the history of much of anything." Machello was confused. He thought about why Feichin could not tell them anything. Surely this elder knows a lot and can help Bloodloch remember. Maybe he did it intentionally so the city could be lost forever. But that did not make any sense. Why would anyone do that? Did he have an ulterior motive? Machello thought deep into the recesses of his mind and could only conclude at that moment that the best course of action before he made any judgments was to hear the Elder through. He obviously had more to say. Feichin went on, "I can not tell you any of this because I do not remember. That is not true, let me correct myself. I do not know. You see fellow citizens. It is weird saying that considering I was off building this city to greatness before even your great great great grandparents were born. But here, fellow citizens, I do not know because I was never one for the details. When politics were ongoing, I did not care. When raids and war occurred, I did not care. I just fought. I just liked to fight. I liked to kill. I like to hurt. I was a thorn in the side of our enemies. Not with words. Not with emotions. But with my flail and my mind. I destroyed. I conquered. I am Lieutenant Feichin, True General. Warlord Feichin of the city under the mountain. So you hear this Bloodloch. What I can tell you is my story and only my story. I can only tell you what is on my mind and be warned, most of it is about killing and death and ending the life of those who oppose the earth. Some of it may contain some history but alas, most of it will revolve around Teradrim. Be back here tomorrow, at around the same time and I shall enlighten you. If you wish to remain ignorant then, do not come for this session for I will be pulling no punches. I will go deep into the Teradrim. I will say what is on my mind. I will bring back the power of the guild and as such bring back the power of Bloodloch. It seems like it has faltered after many years. That is unacceptable. I do not know how long it will take to tell my story, my thoughts, but I can tell you that tomorrow it will begin. Tomorrow, you will all become learned." Feichin closed his eyes and bowed his head and began to sink. From Machello's vantage it appeared he sank right into the pillar. It was effortless. It was amazing.

The crowd dispersed and Machello went home. He was very excited. He was not sure if the rest of the city was as excited to hear Feichin's history, thoughts, and experiences, but he sure was. He aspired to be great like Feichin and wanted to learn all he could. He even contemplated staying at the West Gate just so he would not over sleep. He was not a very strong Teradrim at the moment so he knew he could benefit greatly from the teachers and especially an Elder. He knew most of the guild would be there as well. How could that not, he reasoned. These lessons would surely put power into all who took the time to listen.

As Feichin sunk into the sand, he thought to himself how far behind this city had come. He thought this city was quite weak that they could not quell a simple fire. He thought that maybe

they needed more help than he could provide. His great friend Mazzion would surely be of help in this situation. Mazzion, the Human Holocaust and Feichin the Impaler together could surely bring this city back from the footnotes of time and make them relevant. Alas, Mazzion was slumbering he thought and he knew better than wait on anyway sleeping to awake. It was near unpredictable to guess and one could wait years. Feichin waited in the pillar for everyone to depart the West Gate and then emerged. He was sure everyone had left because he could smell them. His sense of smell was still pretty good even through the ages. Feichin almost had not recognized much of the city it had changed in the hundreds of years since his almost forever slumber. He did not plan to awaken. No one plans to awaken. You just go to sleep one day and then you awake when it is your time. He saw so much work had been done to build the city up. It almost did not look like the same place that had seen armies rampaging the streets and undead and other creatures walk about. It was...different. There was just something he could not put his hand on nor did he care much about to delve further into. He did recognize the city as being as diverse as it once was, perhaps even more so. There were many races he did not even recognize and the fashion matched the architecture in being so alien to him. It did not bother him though. Like he told the crowd he was not concerned with all of this. He wanted to get Bloodloch back on the right track. He wanted to tell them where he had come from so they could determine where they were going. He almost wished he paid a little more attention to all the other events that happened during his time so he could relay to this city but what they got from him tomorrow onwards would have to be good enough.

Feichin walked along the streets feeling the cool stone beneath him with every step. He use to wear shoes, he thought... So thoughts faded from his memory as quickly as they came. Unfortunately some memories were very fleeting as well. Part of the reason he wanted to tell his story was because he was beginning to forget himself. He was becoming Bloodloch, the same thing that happened. He was becoming Feichin, Fate of Loch. As he made his way to the inn he could feel spurts of warm air hit him every now and then. He reasoned the lava beneath the city must not have erupted yet and must warm the air every now and then. If it had erupted, he was sure all he was looking at now would have been destroyed. As his journey continued on, he determined that he was hungry. He did not feel hungry but thought to himself that after not eating for so many years, he must be. That thought vanished quickly too as he remembered he did not eat. He was undead and required no nourishment. Though, he wondered if he could still taste food and again, did not care enough to pursue the line of thinking. He arrived at the inn shortly and looked at the innkeeper. It was a female, very pretty, standing behind the counter. Feichin was not sure if this woman was the most beautiful woman he had ever seen or if, more likely, he just had not seen any woman, well really studied one, in such a long time. He asked for a room and was not charged but quickly shown towards a bed on the second floor at the end of the hall. The room was quaint. It just had a bed and nightstand but that was all Feichin needed. He did not need sleep though. He had transcended such necessities a long time ago. He merely wanted a place to relax where he could gather his thoughts about tomorrow. He did not know how to being, or where to start. He did not know what they knew. He did not know what they did not

know. He did not know the history since his slumber and he could not trust any of the second hand information and of these people would be parading around. Ironically, he thought, that the library would have been a great place to be around now. It could give him so much information than what anyone present could provide. Sure, they had knowledge of maybe the last hundred years or so but there was still much more he wanted to know. He wanted to know everything about combat he could find and he was sure that none of these orphan killers could provide the information. He thought and thought but kept drawing blanks. Then he just said forget about it, and decided he would do it on the spot. The whole thing. It would be an amalgamation of stories and rants and a lot of heresy but it was all they had. It was the only firsthand account of much of what he was going to provide.

At that moment Feichin closed his eyes. He was not going to sleep or nap or anything but he just wanted to be one with his thoughts. No sensory information at all, though it would be a little hard closing off his ears from the noise of the main hall in the inn or the smell of dirt and piss that protruded from everything. He understood that he had a long day tomorrow. He understood that he probably had a long day after the tomorrow and so on. Probably weeks of long days. Months of endlessness. He was prepared for it. He knew he had to do it. He had been waiting to do it for a while and the Library incident only gave him amply opportunity. Despite what everyone had thought he was awake for a while before the library incident. Not much longer though, only a couple years. Still though, he could have gone to the library in all that time or told his story to someone and had them backed up with records but he had not. He was always lazy like that. Feichin, The Lethargic he would often call himself. He remembered times when the city would fight Leylines and he would refuse to help because it was too far to travel. Time was precious Feichin reasoned. And it was now that Feichin had to make use of that time.

The next day, well before his meeting time, Feichin went downstairs and greeted the innkeeper. She had asked if Feichin slept well and he responded he had, despite knowing he had not slept at all. It would be too troublesome to explain to the lady his non requirement for such necessities. He merely nodded and continued on with his day. He left the inn and headed to the West Gate. As he walked, he passed the bank. Thinking for a moment and then quickly shaking his head he reasoned a negative. He remembered putting money in the bank a long time ago and wondered if it acquired any interest. He changed his mind and stepped into the bank. The teller was surprised to see him and even more surprised when she read his bank statement back to him. He was rich. All the money he left in the bank hundreds of years ago, gained hundreds of millions of gold in interest. It was nearing a billion. He could seemingly buy the city he laughed. Unfortunately, with the rates of inflation, things getting more expensive, it was not as much as before. However, there was no mistaking it, he definitely was rich and had more money than he could reasonably spend in this lifetime which ironically was not true, since they could live forever.

He left the bank, no money in tow, for he did not need it today and continued on his journey. The post office was next and Feichin was sad to find he did not have many letters. Did no one love him he wondered? Surely they did. He smirked as he realized though, that even in his day, he no

one sent him mail. He was over mail. Mail was too burdensome in his eyes. Remarking at how the locations of many stores changed, he moved on towards the West Gate. When he finally arrived, shortly before his agreed upon time, he found many people there. He recognized many of them as Teradrim for they still used flails. He also saw scholars and other important people he thought were important by their robes and head dressing, though it could have been ordinary fashion of the time. He was not sure and did not think he would ever be able to get use to the differences between this time and his time. The turnout was not as great as he had anticipated. He heard someone call him a Legend and an Elder and he thought that if he truly was such, would there not be more here to learn. Nevertheless, he did not care. He had a story to tell. And those in attendance, he felt, would carry the burden of bringing the world back to order with Bloodloch at the forefront.

He went to the front of the crowd and took a seat on the ground. The crowd looked confused at first, perhaps not expecting such nonchalant and relaxed actions. Following his lead, Machello took a seat as well and the crowd followed in tow. Feichin then stood up and addressed the crowd, "Welcome. I am glad you all have come. It is great to see so many faces though I wish there were more." Feichin stood up and looked about his surroundings. Machello wondered what he was looking at and looked around as well like mimicking his actions would automatically make him a great Teradrim as well. After a moment, Feichin continued on, "Hmm, is there anywhere else we can go? This area is rife with traffic and I have much to say. I'd hate to be disturb."

Without thinking Machello stood up and said, "Follow me to the Teradrim Grotto. You can speak at ease there and I am sure you are to recognize it as it has not changed since its creation. The Emperor is away but I am sure he will not mind" Feichin smirked. He thought of the words "had not changed" and remarked to himself to teach these people the guildhall had indeed been remodeled since its inception. Was it once or twice that it was redone? He was not sure. He could not remember but he definitely knew it looked different while traitorous Virul tutor Acolytes. And after his removal and death, it was changed. Had it changed again though he was not sure. He was not sure of much and resigned himself to only those thoughts he could resolve cohesively and accurately.

Feichin looked at the group around him and was disgusted. Living Teradrim? Why was this possible? Why was this allowed? It made absolutely no sense to him at all. Teradrim abilities were gifts from the Earthen Lord and yet people who have not accepted him embrace were privy to all the skills. It was insulting. It hurt. He wanted to cry right there on the spot. He wanted to just give up. He did not even want to continue with his tale that he had not even begun. He could remember one or two back in his day that maintained the abilities when they were cured of the embrace of Undeath but none within the city of Bloodloch and definitely none within the Teradrim. This was an abomination in his eyes. He wanted to throw up. Suddenly a flash of memories filled his head and he remembered all he had to endure. He knew this would be a disgusting process just like the disgusting living Teradrim. He knew he would get pissed off

when these memories started to float back in. He had to endure. He felt this was his fault. He shouldered the load and responsibility for what the Teradrim and the city had become.

Arriving at the grotto brought a little relief to Feichin's mind. Not much had changed with it. It was still located in relatively the same area that Feichin had remembered and it still looked the same. But it is not saying much as the grotto was not fascinating sight to behold anyway. The entrance was plain as ever and it could have been wished if someone ignorant of the secrets happened by the place without a second glance. The crowd waited behind the Teradrim began to move forward. Led by Machello and others the Teradrim went up to the entrance and performed a secret ritual to open the Grotto and all the secrets within. Feichin did not recognize the new ritual or any of the words that were said. He was not sure if it was just because he was old and weary and had such a long slumber or whether he ever knew what was being said. Only thing he could definitely be sure of was that the words were different. Like everything else around him in Bloodloch, this foreign city, he did not recognize much at all. As the grotto open the area around the cavern shook. Feichin could tell that usually this would not happen. He knew the sounds of the earth and knew this to be an old sound that was not heard very often. He remarked that maybe these Teradrim do hold some power, some strength. Maybe they do remember something of the old ways but he knew that to be false. He had much to teach them and they would learn. They had to.

The crowd followed behind the Teradrim into a large crevice shaped into the earth. The crevice was not there just moments ago but had been created to allow such a large party into the grotto. Feichin walked in the middle of the crowd. He was behind them most of the way but they all crowded around him now as if his power would someone make them stronger through convection. It was a stupid notion he thought, but then he thought no more of it and continued on. Inside the grotto was beautiful. Large stalagmites and stalactites hung from the ceiling and protruded through the floor. They were all shapes and sizes. Some were as big as houses and some small as horses and still some smaller than the rodents that crawl all around the floor of the great city outside. The colors ranged from the deepest black to the midnight blue to white. Feichin always had a particular interest in the green stalagmites and remarked of their emerald-esque quality silently to himself. The walls were covered in all types of stones. Some were very opaque. Others he could tell were minerals like obsidian and emeralds, his favorites. Other crystals and rocky features littered the ground but Feichin took little interest. He was done being struck by beauty of the cavern. There was work to do and he wanted to get on with it. The history must be told.

“Here,” Machello said. The cavern would be a fine place for this meeting Feichin thought. Machello beckoned Feichin over to him and to a large raised area where he informed Feichin he could speak from. Feichin merely nodded at the youngling, and to Feichin, everyone was a youngling, and walked towards the raised platform. When he got there Feichin turned to face the crowd. Most of the crowd had now been seated on the ground or throughout stalagmites breaching from the ground. There was a low murmur beneath the crowd but Feichin did not mind

as they would all be quiet shortly. Looking throughout the crowd, Feichin remarked on the size. He thought there were a lot more people at the West Gate when earlier today and it looked like a lot less made their way here. He was definitely sure that the crowd today was smaller than the one of the day before. They must have lost a lot of people on the trek towards the grotto. He guessed no one cared about the history or experiences. There were still a few scholars left and a few other Teradrim here and there but Feichin was dismayed at the turnout.

“Well, it seems no one cares,” Feichin said. It was not the way Feichin wanted to start this thing off but he said what was on his mind. He was never one to beat around the bush and in fact always said most of what he was thinking. He was not politically correct and some would even say he was rash at times. Feichin did not see it this way. He just never saw the points in making things easier for other people to swallow. He knew the truth and what was important and he would convey this message in just that way. He was never good at mind games. Feichin continued on, “I am bringing you a great gift. Knowledge, experience, trials, and tribulations and your city turns its back. This city has grown weak, lethargic, and lazy. When the fire broke out, I saved the city and you, the citizens, were doing barely anything to help it. Sure, some of you were gathering water and other supplies to help fend off the flames but you had to have known that it was futile to do so. Can not you citizens even recognize magical flames anymore? What is wrong with all of you? You have grown weak and shameful. Where is your power? Where are your Guildmasters and champions when you need them? Where is your bravery and zeal? I saw a couple of people run into the flames, you know. They may have thought they would visit the Underking and be reborn but they were wrong. They would die that day in that library. Maybe they were trying to save things, I do not know. All I know is, you have grown foolish Bloodloch. You have grown impudent.” Feichin did not mean for the words to come out as they did but still, that is how it came. He was mad, angry even and he wanted to let those who stood before him know that. He wanted them to feel the same anger and displeasure he felt as he watched countless people die and the city do nothing to stop it. They were pigs in a slaughter and the worst part was they did not recognize it. Feichin wanted them to feel his pain.

Machello sat in the crowd and listened to Feichin go on about the recent events. He began to feel ashamed of himself and wondered why he was not stronger to help. He thought in his mind that if he had not skipped training once or twice or if he had done something differently sometime in his life that he might have had the strength to do something about the fire. Maybe he could have saved the city as Feichin had done or save the countless lives that were lost that day and failed to return. He did not know but he stood up when Feichin was done and was the first to answer. “Lord Feichin, the Endless Death, we have lost much. Even before the “Searing of History” we forgot much. A lot of our power from the Earth, and Necromancy, and the Blood has been lost. While many of us still choose guilds here and there, we are not as strong as those of the old world like you. Our strongest, our Guildmasters and champions and such are away but they are few anyway. They of course do not rival your power and can not hope to but they are strong as well. They are in Delve and other continents. From the stories I believe Delve was relatively new

to you during your time and the “Great War of Worlds”. But it has opened up, long since opened up, and its fruits and culture has been spread around this continent and the next. It is hard to know where anyone is now with such a vast world to be explored. We are not cowards. We were just doing what we knew how to do. I will not apologize but I will mourn those that have fallen and not returned. I will not forget those brave souls who went into the fire for their reason or the cities.”

Feichin was shocked but not really. He was just glad someone finally stood up and took responsibility. Maybe this city is not hopeless after all he thought. Maybe there was some chance that they could be saved and redeemed. “Good,” he said to the crowd and especially Machello. “I am glad that your tongue does not seem to be lost with the ages as well. The rest of you disgust me though. You do not have to defend yourselves if you do not want to but at least stand by your fellow man. I did not build this city and help shape it on my own. It was through a concerted effort of thousands of individuals. I did not always agree with the plan but I let my concerns be heard and let the leaders make decisions where they will. In the end, I made my own as well.” Feichin had a sudden flashback. It was short and not even worth mentioning to the crowd. It was about the countless times he had disobeyed instructions and did what he wanted to do instead. He always got away with it because he was of such renown, even in his own time, that people let him get away with much. Feichin went on, “I was unsure about how I was going to do this but I think I know now. I’ll let you guys ask the questions and from there I will elaborate. I can not go in chronological order because my memory fails me and most of what I remember, I could have sworn all occurred at the same time. It all blends together when you get that old. Its like if any of you tried to imagine what you did when you were but kids. Every game you played and every friend you made. Most of you are older now and would forget such, as I have forgotten. But yes, I will take about what I can when it is brought up.” Feichin stopped and looked about the crowd. To Feichin the crowd appeared to have dumb looks like they were unsure of what was going on. Feichin thought he made it very clear but did not want to explain himself again to these people. Feichin looked at the one who stood up and spoke first, initially surprising him, “You. The one with the tongue. What is your name and what is your first question? I will allow you to ask first since are the bravest amongst those here”

Machello looked surprised to be addressed directly. He did not anticipate questions to be asked so early. He thought that Feichin would speak of the beginning of his days and move on through the ages about his adventures. He did not have a question prepared. He did not know what to start with. Though he did not know it, he found himself in the same situation Feichin was in earlier when he could not figure out a way to start. It was almost as if Feichin put this burden on someone else with his smooth thinking idea to let the crowd ask questions. Machello started, “I have no idea where to start Lord Feichin. There are so many stories I have heard about you and so much I have read when the library was still here. I heard your praise’s sang at statues and paintings around the city. I guess my first question is why do they call you Feichin, The Red? I know you have many monikers and I am sure a lot of questions will pertain to these monikers but

my first question is simple about this one. What does it mean? I've heard stories about the blood you have spilt on the battlefield and wondered if that was it or if there was perhaps more." Feichin smiled at the question. He had not really heard that name in a long time.

Feichin was unsure about how to answer. He looked at the crowd and began his tale "I do not remember much but I will try to piece together cohesively what I can. Additionally, I am not sure about this one either but I think I first heard it when the Teradrim were fairly new. Back when we were first granted these gifts by Dhaivol, not Ivoln and not Dhar, but that's another story" he almost trailed off. But he got back on track, "We use to have certain skills in combat that we would use to win a fight. One of these skills, and one of my personal favorites was called Rip. You may recognize it with your Animation abilities but I am unsure if you even retain them since I fail to see any golems."

Feichin thought back to his time in Bloodloch and it surprised him that he did not see nearly as much undead walking around that he would normally expect to see. And now, looking upon the crowd and all the confused faces, he could see that the use of golems had escaped their grasp. Had they forgotten it? Perhaps if he told them about it and showed them a bit more strength they could remember. Perhaps that was the key. Feichin closed his eyes for a moment. The ground around the grotto began to shake and the crowd looked nervously about. The ground began to heave upward, slowly at first, and increasing in speed. A head began to emerge from the ground where the upheaving was taking place. It was formed of rock and had no distinctive features others than what one would expect to see of a rock. As the figure, now shaped like a man, began to emerge from the ground the crowd began to back away. They were not afraid of the golem that was emerging before them, but they wanted to move out its way lest it lashed out. Feichin continued on, "This is a golem. This animation helps Teradrim in battle. Well, it helped. It does not appear you still maintain the power or abilities to create such. Maybe this Guildmaster of yours can." Feichin shook his head. He knew that was probably a lie and it did little to help the situation than to mock the greatest they had to work with. "Now your question regarded why they call me the red. Back before the current iteration of our powers, we were given the gifts of Mentis, Animation, and Terramancy. Now with animation, we had an ability called "rip" where our golem, like the one before you, would literally rip the limbs from our enemies. This ability was very powerful as you can imagine. It caused extreme amounts of bleeding. It would even cause the battlefield to be soaked in blood. Imagine if every drop of your blood leaked out of your body. Essentially this is what occurred. Pools of blood would form all over the field. It was almost as if I was swimming in it. After the first time I destroyed twice my number of enemies with it, I gained the name "The Red". You should have seen me. I was covered head to toe with the very life-force they needed to survive" Feichin smiled. He missed combat like that. It had been a long time since he killed. He went on, "It was deemed too strong by the Gods though and I do not blame them. For where it once drained a human of all blood, it no longer did so much. It actually gave me a decent fight once in a while so I was not disappointed."

Machello was too lost in the story. He wanted to know much more. More about Teradrim mentis and other things. He asked, "Mentis? Can you tell us about that and any other of your first skills?" Feichin would be delighted to. He began with mental whispers. "Just like vampires, and I know you guys still have some of them around because I have seen them and smelt them within the caverns, we use to be able to whisper mental afflictions to our enemies. However, unlike Vampires we had the use of what would come to be known as black biles. I do not quite remember what it did but it was such a strong skill, vampires could not use it. Actually, in fact, Virul once told me that mentis was originally a Teradrim skill before vampires. Yes, he said we were older than vampires and older than Bloodloch itself. We were the first ones to find these caverns and it was only the Dwarves later on that dug tunnels to it. However, let us remember this was "traitorous" Virul we are talking about. His word is not to be trusted or believed. I digress though. So yes, we had mentis and it was a great skill in combination with some of our other skills. We had a kill called Smackdown that we used with Terramancy. It would not only prone our opponent but it would stun them causing a delay in their actions. Smackdown was such a great ability. But that, in conjunction with mentis could see our opponents overwhelmed with afflictions very quickly. You see, the more afflictions an opponent has, the closer they are to death. At our onset, after we could no longer rip people limb from limb, we used mentis and annihilation, the destroying of their minds with our minds, to defeat people. I do not think we could embrace our Earthenform back then either. It was nothing but our pure strength vs. the strength of others. We also used slings back and could create inks from the very rocks you see around you." Feichin dug in his bag and pulled out a sling. He was surprised it did not merely crumble in his hand. He had created it so long ago and yet it remained intact. The 'power of the earth', he presumed. "These slings would fire bullets into our opponents having various effects. We could strip them of some of their precious defenses or break their limbs. We could also afflict them with hidden ailments if we wanted to. All in all though, it was not as useful as it could be and it was quite unwieldy in combat." Feichin looked into his bag and carefully put the sling away. He did not have much that remained after so many years. He looked up at the crowd. Feichin could tell the crowd was listening very intently. Not a word could be heard and if not for his speaking, a pin could be dropped. The coolness of the cavern made Feichin a little more relaxed as he could tell he was getting a little hot with constantly talking.

Feichin pulled out a pipe and put some plants in it and began to smoke. He was not finished with history but needed to relax a little. He continued onward, "But despite my successes in combat, we were severely weak. While I, and others before me such as Desian, the Denominator, might have been tearing it up on the battlefield we still lacked the abilities and physicality of other classes. To any on the outside it was quite obviously that we were second class vampires. We fought just like them and killed in practically the same way. We loaded them up with afflictions until they could no longer sustain their mental facilities and we finished them." Feichin stopped here for a bit. He needed a break after going on for a while. After a couple puffs of his pipe he went on, "Of course, we had other ways of killing as well. We were able to summon stalagmites from the ground and impale our foes." Feichin raised his hand up and suddenly, a spike shot of

the ground. This stalagmite was very skinny but solid. It scared Machello and much of the crows as they had not expected to shoot forth so suddenly and without warning. "This was our secondary way of killing during the first of times. This stalagmite was your best friend. You would come to know it and trust it for it would not only save you but it would save your friends and slay your foes." Feichin stopped. He looked out into the crowd and could tell there were a lot of befuddled faces. He knew he would have to show them what he meant. He walked up to the stalagmite and with a mighty swing of his flail, he seemingly flourished from nowhere, he swung it at the stalagmite and it burst into a million pieces. "I guess I should correct my earlier statement. You see it was not the impalement of the stalagmite but shattering it while the person was still on it. That is what truly caused the damage." Feichin smirked as he remembered the countless times he had destroyed lives doing exactly what he was doing now. "Shatter was a great skill we once had. What you just saw was not exactly it because I no longer have the ability to properly do such. Well, at least not in combat at least." Feichin secretly mourned the loss of the skill. It was all he had to put him on even footing with so many other powerful abilities out there. But so was the story of the Teradrim when they were at their peaks, valleys soon followed. Feichin was not upset. It was as he grew to expect things.

"Next question," Feichin asked the crowd. There was no order. Feichin had not thought there would be so many willing participants after the earlier silence and quietness that followed his attempts to garner some kind of response. He could barely hear anything. It was all a bunch of jumbled shouts and yells and screams at him. Feichin decided, he would just continue the story along. While they organized themselves. He spoke, "I can not hear all of you at once. I understand there are many questions and many stories to be told but I can only tell one at a time. Perhaps I was a bit premature in finishing my last tale. So here is what will be done. Each of you will write down a question or comment or whatever and give it to the one named Machello." Machello was surprised to hear his name. The crowd seemed almost equally as surprised. They looked around first as if not knowing who he was talking about and then all remembering at the same time that Machello was the one who spoke first, the one who asked the first question. Turning their heads they looked at him and then back at Feichin as he continued to speak. "Once I am done telling you about the iterations and history of the Teradrim as I remember, then I will go to Machello and he will read aloud each question in turn. I will then answer them to the best of my ability. Do not be afraid to ask about anything and everything during my time. While I do not remember it all, I do remember much. I will do the best I can."

Almost immediately Feichin began to regret his decision. Before he could even begin to continue on, he could see people producing writing sticks from wherever such items are kept and paper. They began to write vigorously and at length. Feichin wondered if there would be any end to the questions he would face or if he would go on for all eternity with them. He wondered how personal the questions would get and whether anyone would care to learn about his life outside of destroying enemies and conquering cities. He wondered how many questions would pertain to his friends and allies and all those he fought beside during his tenure as a combatant. He began to

drown in his own thoughts. He reconciled himself and decided that however many, he would simply have to take it one at a time. Machello would be his liaison whether he like it or not, and Feichin was sure he would like the opportunity.

Feichin continued, “When Ivoln and Dhar had a falling out...” He paused. He was not quite sure what happened. He never cared for the workings of Gods but he continued the story from the beginning, the real beginning as he thought about it. “Let me start over,” he said. He was not sure how many people were listening or writing or doing both. He knew he had the attention of some scholars because they were vigorously recording every word he spoke. They were probably recording every action he did. He mused that if began to pick his nose, would they record that too for it to be immortalized in the annals of the new history he was writing today. “Now, as I remember it, Dhar and Ivoln were once two Gods. Dhar loved Ivoln very much and Ivoln reciprocated the love back. As such they gave each other gifts. I believe Dhar made it so none of Ivoln’s children would need to fear death and visit the Halls. They would instead rise again. And in return Ivoln’s children would bring death to all those across the land. So one gift was Undeath and the other was death. Ivoln was the Earthenlord and his children and followers became undead. Now, these two loved each other so much that one day they merged into one being. And please do not ask me how this is possible. Do not ask me if this is even true. This is how I remember it for this story is like your stories unwritten and passed down from generation to generation. Anyway, the two merged into one being called Dhaivol and gave birth to the Teradrim with Animation as Dhar had shown us and Terramancy as Ivoln had shown. I do not know how this is possible for I do not know the workings of Gods” Feichin felt a little guilty at how much of the story he was mixing up or completely omitting. But he continued along, “Do not ask me where mentis came from. As I said already I am not sure as none of what Virul said can be trusted and we’ll get to that in a moment. Now one day, during my age, I can not tell you the date, quite simply, Dhar and Ivoln had a falling out. I use to joke about the lovers having a spat but that was only to myself as the Gods had ears everywhere.” Feichin looked around him and wondered if she should have said that. He was not sure if Ivoln was still around and surely he would send a stalagmite right through him at that very instance if he had heard his comment. But it was true, Feichin thought. He continued, “And in this “de union”... That is a bad word. I do not know what to call it actually but it did remind me to also say that with the unionized, they taught the word the ritual of the union that was both a ritual to become undead or, for lack of a better turn, marry another person. Some of you may have undergone the ritual of the union yourselves.” Feichin looked around and saw some heads nod. He knew what he said was true and that union still existed. “But I digress. Anyway, when they broke up, well so did the Teradrim guild based on their teachings. Now I am not sure if this was when Virul was declared a traitor or not or if it was later but long story short something happened with him, he was branded a traitor, and then Gegrelash showed up out of nowhere.” It was true to Feichin after all. He really could not think of a better way to say it. “Actually, the Teradrim did not break up. Their skills changed somewhat drastically. They lost the ability to whisper like vampires and lost Terramancy as well though they did receive Earth and sand as new abilities.”

As quick as he had said the word “Sand,” Feichin raised his arms in a rush and lowered them. Seemingly out of nowhere Sand began to shower forth from the walls and crevices. No one in the crowd seemed to impress and Feichin reasoned they must retain some ability to control sand. Feichin continued on, “Our sand has changed over time. When we first had it we could control powerful swathes seemingly without thinking. We would use it without thinking in conjunction with the earth and animation. We required the use of a crozier and flail to make use of this. The crozier was the most annoying thing to use in all honesty as it prevented us from wielding a shield in our other hand. However, this is when “Shatter”, as you witnessed earlier in its pathetic glory became our main way to kill. Animation was mainly unchanged and still helped us here and there as before. Sand allowed us to attack individual limbs of opponents. We would damage these limbs and when they were broken and the opponent lay in a helpless heap upon the floor, we would attack them with our impaling stalagmite. While most could survive our impaling stalagmite, no one could survive having it happen three times to them. If the first two failed, the third one would most definitely kill them. It was a...” Feichin trailed off looking for the right way to explain this to them. He had his thoughts on old impale and shatter combination but did not want to pollute the story. Well, he did not want to pollute it with something he did not want to say at least. “It was a boring way to fight in all honesty.” The crowd seemed confused. Feichin went on to explain, “You see, anybody and their mother could impale a target and shatter them. Heck, I was doing it without even trying. Though I will say it was not because it was easy that I did not like to use it, it was simply because that is what everyone did.” Feichin smiled. He knew he was forgetting about something and he just remembered. With a wave of his hand multiple spikes burst forth from the earth all as huge and godly as the first one that Feichin had summoned. “You probably thought that we could only summon one, did not you,” Feichin mockingly asked. “We had the power of earthenmaw and could impale all our foes. When I tell you there was no escaping the wrath of a Teradrim, I do exaggerate. I do not lie.” Feichin moved his arms about in a motion unknown to Machello and the stalagmite all began to recede back in to the ground. And oh yeah, I almost forgot about cocoon.” Feichin had so much to say about the crying and whining he heard from his enemies, especially involving cocoon. When he would get challenged to duels and he would accept, the first thing he would hear from his defeated opponent was, “You only won because of cocoon.” It was funny to Feichin because he did not even use cocoon to its full power. He really did not even use it at all. People are often looking for an excuse, any excuse, to blame a defeat on the victor. Feichin was not one of them. He would take his losses like he took his wins; a lesson to be learned, though a harder lesson at that. “Cocoon was an ability we had that seemingly stopped an opponent dead in their tracks. There was naught they could do while cocooned. It was like if they were tied up in ropes from a sentinel trap and confound in webs from a web tattoo. With cocoon, a Teradrim utilized sand like the aforementioned ropes or webs, to wrap up his opponents. It was a great tactic to slow down the enemy though it was not a good one to fight with. You see while cocoon was great defensively, a Teradrim had to focus too much time into doing it. This left the window open for the opponents to cure themselves of many afflictions you had to struggle to put on them in the first place. It basically reset much of the fight for you. A true Teradrim. A true Teradrim fighter

would forgo such barbaric means, as I did.” The writing around the room continued on as Feichin continued on in almost perfect harmony, “I utilized every single bit of knowledge I had and effectively used curse from our Sand abilities to end lives. Curse was an affliction that prevented our victims from curing certain ailments that needed salves to be applied. This, in conjunction with limb damage, and crafty daggers, made for an interesting fight. You see, real fights are all about time and using what is available at that time. More so it is about knowing what you can do. I would use curse in conjunction with anorexic venoms to make it so curse could not be cured and anorexia would not be cured. Then I would follow up with golem attacks to make other curing routes unavailable. This led to the victim not being able to heal themselves and it was at this time that I heavily applied the damage. I did not rely on tactless wonders like cocoon and shatter. I used my head. I used my wit. I used my instincts to defeat my foes.”

The crowd had all stopped writing and handing papers over to Machello. They were all listening intently. Feichin’s knowledge of combat astounded them. They were like fish on a hook and Feichin knew he finally had their attention. Feichin continued on, “That is the first thing you must learn Bloodloch. You must learn to use your head, your wit, and your intelligence. For power is nothing without that. I knew there was no other way to stop the spread of this fire than to break the ground the fire stood on. If I would not have known I could do that, then the fire would have raged on while my futile efforts went for naught.” Feichin was pacing back and forth now. He needed these people to listen and hear his words. He needed his words to reach into the very depths of their soul, “In time, you will learn that too.” Feichin looked at the crowd and towards Machello and gave him a slight nod. He held up one finger to Machello indicating he would be ready for the next question coming soon but he still had more to say. “Teradrim, the Second, as I like to call it was weak too though. A lot of the strategy merely revolved around luck. Now do not get me wrong about luck. Luck will save your life here and there. But the problem with luck my fellow citizens, is that it is unreliable. If you rely on it to get you out of a situation or you rely on it to take down an opponent then you will die. There is no question about it. You will see the end of your days.” He knew he struck a chord with the audience. It was a hard pill to swallow and Feichin, in his begrudgingly opposed mindset, had to swallow it often in those days. “Now, having said that, I guess you could say I was luckier than most, but the truth is that there just was no competition. You see luck is unreliable but the longer you are fighting, the luckier you will get. I was definitely a survivor. No matter how hard the enemy battered me, I would not fall. I rose. Each and every time, I rose.” Feichin was proud of himself. He thought back to all the tough battles and how he gritted through them. How when even when he thought defeat was imminent he still persevered and pushed through the battle to victory. “And after that, after Teradrim the second, came Teradrim the third.”

“Now this is where Virul may have betrayed us or whatever he did. I am not sure and I promise you will not hear mention of his name every again from me.” Feichin held no ill will towards the man, in all honesty he is just not sure what happened. He just awoke one day and heard he was gone and that he was a betrayer. Feichin never knew if it was true or not. He never cared to find

out. “But anyway, with Teradrim the third, we Ivoln saw it fit to grant us the abilities of Terramancy back though in quite a new form as well as Desiccation.” These were the skills Feichin were most familiar with because he now wielded these powers. He did not believe how much he had already talked about the previous iterations of the Teradrim. He did not think he had had that much to say on the subject. He did not believe he could even remember so much. On this subject though he knew there was going to be a lot. He did not know how long it would take but he knew that he would not have much time left today to tell if these people wanted to get some sleep before the next session tomorrow. He asked the crowd, “Shall I go on, or should you retire for the night so we can continue in the morning?” Almost in unison the crowd shouted such encouragements as “go on” and “do not stop.” Feichin was a man of the people and continued on his tale. “I do not know where to start. You see Teradrim the third is currently where I am at now. These skills are as close to me as is my hand at my side.” Feichin raised his hand and the blue cracking skin stood for all to see. “There is so much to go over but I think the easiest way is to start at the death.”

“Hammer. That is what the skill is called. Hammer is my best friend. Hammer is my savior. Hammer is the bane of my enemies’ existence. Hammer is what makes me better than everyone else. There is no substitute for it,” Feichin began. He was talking about his skill that he used to kill more enemies than any other skill. He knew it well and he knew it better than anything else. “When an enemy had enough bruising on their limbs and head, we could hammer them and they would perish from this earth. That’s all it did quite simply. It’s the only way we can kill. Our damage is quite pathetic and Ivoln mocks us now as he took away our ability to shatter our enemies upon our stalagmites. The actual physical damage we do is pathetic. We will not kill any one that way. We need that wit and intelligence I mentioned earlier.” Feichin looked about the crowd and saw a few still writing. Some were handing papers to Machello who was mindlessly throwing them into a pile. He was too focused on Feichin to have any regard for what was going on around him. Feichin mused that if another fire broke out behind this crowd, they would not even notice. They were so enamored by his tale and experience that everything else seemed to fall by the way side. Feichin continued on, “In order for us to give this bruising we utilized our flails.” Feichin began to wield his flail from his weaponbelt. Machello gripped his flail as well in respect and mimicry of the figure in front of him. Feichin looked about the crowd and saw many flails being wielded as well like a great ritual was about to take place. Feichin was glad that some part of the Teradrim legacy he remembers remained. “We would slam our balls into the enemies’ legs, arms, torso, and head. This would cause bruising which in turn would cause them to bleed their previous life fluid. If our enemies had protective defenses then we would use sand as such.” Feichin moved his off hand and pointed to one of the piles of sand now littering the enormous cavern. Without warning sand shot up and towards Feichin. Feichin did not duck or dodge out the way but let the sand strike him. It covered him head to toe and then just as quickly moved away, floating back to the pool it had originated from. “We would strip them of that which held our flail away. Otherwise we could use the same sand to shred our enemies’ limbs or deliver hidden afflictions, much like we could do previously.” With that, Feichin raised his hands and

seemingly, all in one motion, the sand littering the cavern all raised up as well. The sand moved towards the ceiling and began circling above. “We can create storms with our sand as well. Our storms can grow more massive they longer they swirl. When we use our sand, as an instinct it is this storm that fuels its rage.” With that sand shot to a nearby wall. Onlookers could see how the storm grew a bit weaker with that short demonstration. “Yes, as we use the storm the storm gets used up. It refuels in time. However, it can also refuel if the Teradrim is skilled enough with his flail. You see, as we draw blood, it can sometimes feed the storm and make it stronger. Anyway, we give bruises but the same time we break limbs. This causes our victims to make decisions, tough decisions. Do they cure the bruising or should the restore the damage done to the limb. If they cure the bruising then the next attack may damage the limb very heavily, maybe breaking. If they protected against the limb breaking, then they would of course be susceptible to more bruising. It was a balance many were not prepared to handle. They lacked knowledge and forethought and such usually fell to my superior mind.” Feichin nodded his head as if more so to reaffirm he was speaking the truth to himself than to the crowd below. “Then there was animation.” Feichin pointed towards the golem. “Animation had changed a bit too. No longer were these golems mere puppets to our will but now they could make decisions as well. It was both good and bad. They could of course not compare to our mind but having them do stuff on their own gave us one less thing to think about in combat. Quite frankly though, it sucked. The golem never seemed to make the decisions you wanted at the times you wanted it. I would rather have the ability to control my golem on a more personal level then to be left with this nimrod, yet thinking golem. Hmmm, now that I think about it, I do not think I really talked that much about animation at all in the other iterations. I guess here is as good a place as any. Your golem was with you at all times. If he left your side you were susceptible to all types of malicious attacks. He made you remain steadfast in not only your position but also you goals to defeat the enemy. If anyone tried to move you, he would step in and grab you, denying the opposition. It was great. I was an ability I was always glad to have.” Feichin smirked as he wanted to go on about Animation but realizing there was not much worth going over. “Yea that pretty much sums it up for Animation. There is not much else to say. We can paint runes on our golems for different effects as we can paint runes on ourselves. Always remember, it is more than just another entity loyal to you in the mists of combat. It is an extension of your will.”

Feichin was finished but he felt unfinished. He felt like he was missing so much stuff about Teradrim. He felt as if he left it here there would be more questions and more confused faces than what he saw out in the crowd. He had covered all that he wanted to, or rather all that he could remember that he wanted to. He believed he even gave a thorough analysis of Teradrim combat abilities. Against his own reservations, he continued on, “But trust me, we are still weak. We require hundreds of inks to constantly paint and repaint runes in combat. This is very annoying and unwieldy. Our golems do not make good decisions as mentioned either. Also, our attacks are easy to avoid, very easy.” With that Feichin pointed to a man in the crowd and instructed him to come up to the platform Feichin stood upon. When the man was opposite Feichin, Feichin instructed him, “Dodge my next attacks as best you can.” With a swing of his

flail, Feichin lashed out at the man. The man ducked down, easily avoiding the swing. The next attack saw the man jump over an attack aimed at his head. The man smiled and was cheered on by the crowd. Feichin saw in his eyes that he was getting a bit cocky. Feichin swung with all his might and the man dodged again. The, now showboating, man twirled in a tactless fashion and SMACK... caught a flail across the head. The man fell motionless to the ground while blood poured from his head. What looked to be his brains could be seen through the disheveled mess of blood, bone, hair, and skin. Feichin knelt down to the man and the earth began to rumble. Sand poured in from all around the cavern and rushed to Feichin and the motionless man. The sand crept through the man's cracked open skull and laid there as motionless as the man. Feichin waved his hands over the man and sand combination and the sand was gone, the man healed from his almost fatal wound. "You see." Feichin stood up and looked about the crowd. They were silent now, having just cheered on the man that felt higher than the clouds. "You see, we are easily able to be dodged. It is not an easy task to fight as I am now. It takes the strongest of minds to stick with Teradrim miss after miss. This guy was not even parrying. You can only imagine the struggles I had to go through back in my day." Feichin shook his head at the crowd and looked downward. The words were not coming to him at this moment as he tried not to think of all the aggravating things he had to go through to get the job done. The battles that took way longer than they should when men were clearly not his equal. "But still I rise. I fought through all our downsides and still reigned supreme. Feichin the Unbreakable, the Even Handed, the Unaugmented is my name. I do not fall. I rise. DO YOU HEAR ME!!!?" He yelled through the crowd.

Machello was sure all of Bloodloch could hear him even through these caverns. Voices echoed like that and his voice would echo in an open field. He looked about and saw scraps of paper all about him. He forgot that he was supposed to be collecting questions for the great one before him and he forgot he was supposed to have one ready. He quickly tried to grab up every paper as if it were gold coins littered about the floor. They must all be asked. He wanted to know everything and he held on to the questions like he had written and thought of each one himself. He watched Feichin standing in the front pacing back and forth. He could tell he was passionate about what he was saying. He could tell that all he was saying meant so much to him. That he wanted everyone to soak up and absorb his words as if they were his last. Machello had so many more questions to ask. It was ironic that he was holding so many in his hands at the moment but forgot to write his own. He would go home tonight and think about it. He would truly consider those questions that he wanted to know... nay, he needed to know. He was not sure if Feichin was finished or not. He wanted to give a cheer. He wanted to scream "I hear you." His hero stood before him asking the question "Do you hear me" and letting it ring out and yet he could say nothing. He remained frozen in place like the many statues that adorn the Hall of Heroes. The same statue that he first laid eyes upon of Feichin. The same statue where he swore he would become great. The same statue that "I HEAR YOU. I RISE!" It took him by surprise. It was so surprising that he was not even sure it was him at first that screamed it out but he knew it was. It rang throughout the cavern like Feichin's rang before him. He glanced around and saw

everybody looking at him. He looked up at Feichin and saw him staring daggers into him. A stare that was surely used to slay foes in the past. A stare of the ages. Machello said, "I RISE!" And he meant it. He knew what Feichin meant and when he said it, he meant it too. He wanted everyone to know he meant it. He wanted the people in Delve to know he meant it. He wanted the people from before his time and after his time to know he meant it. He wanted it to ring true throughout the ages and for everyone to know that like Lord Feichin, "I Rise."

Feichin nodded solemnly in the direction of Machello. He began to think there was hope for this backwards Bloodloch yet. After a few moments of silence from Machello's declaration, Feichin could hear it about the crowd. "I RISE." It was one guy in front that said it and stood up. Then another in the back, "I RISE." Now whole groups were declaring they would not fall, "I RISE," and Feichin saw many stand up. "I RISE." Feichin could not even see who was saying it now. It just began to ring throughout the caverns. "I RISE" I was echoing and, as such, seemingly coming from all directions at once. "I RISE" nearly everyone stood up now. Feichin, the Heartless would have sworn he started to grow a heart in that instant for he felt something too deep down that was emerging with every person's declaration. "I RISE" Everybody was up now. They were all saying it in unison. "I RISE" Feichin smiled and nodded his head. Has he finally instilled some heart into these people? Has he finally triggered some sense of unity in these people? Were they finally feeling his words? His thoughts? His experiences? Did they finally hear him? He knew that he still had so much more to say to these people. He had so much more to bestow upon them but he knew now was as good a place as ever to stop. He wanted these people to be fresh for tomorrow. He knew not everyone could forgo necessities such as sleep and food. That is why they call it necessities, he thought.

Feichin began to talk and the chatter died down. "I am a Teradrim," he said. "I have been a Teradrim most of my life. I have been with the guild since the inception and have stuck to it when all others have departed. Sure, we have a lot of things wrong with our abilities that get us laughed at by enemies and allies alike. And sure we are not as strong as some of those same enemies and allies. But I have, and will forever, believe in the Teradrim. I believe and will continue to believe that we can do great things. I have never left any handicapped, real or imagined, stop me from slaying my foes or making my mark on history. You, will do the same from now on. You said "I RISE" well let me see it in your daily activities. Let me see you live it. Let me see you breathe it and let me see it become part of you in every way. No more of Bloodloch wallowing in the depths of irrelevance. No, we shall rise. We shall overcome what the Gods has decided is just enough for us for we are Teradrim and we rise."

Feichin let the words hang there for a moment. He wanted it to saturate the minds and bodies of those in the crowd. He would dismiss them soon enough but he just wanted to stand there and watch them. The Heartless could feel his heart beating but knew it to be false. He nodded to the crowd and said, "Let me see you back here tomorrow. There is still much to discuss. If you have more questions write them down and bring them in. Nothing is too foolish for knowledge is power. Machello." He looked over at Machello who seemed a little disturbed by being addressed.

“We will talk after this.” The crowd got out to leave but not before making detours at all the structures and piles of sand created by Feichin. Some people merely looked at the golem up close while others walked up to touch it. Feichin could see scholars taking measurements of it and running their hands across its hard, rocky surface. Other people were transfixed by the stalagmites created from the earth. The long conic shafts protruded from the earth, largely thick at the base, but pinpoint sharp at the tip. Feichin could see blood running down peoples hand and he knew which ones were brave, or foolish, enough to touch the tip. Still, other people just laid on their backs and glanced up at the storm. It was almost as if they were hypnotized looking at the sand swirling all around the ceiling of the immense cavern. Sand was trickling down from the storm and began to make large pools again, the same that originally formed the storm. A couple people were in them, feeling the sand with their own feet and grasping the sand with their own hands. Feichin wondered if they even realized how much raw power they held or if they merely thought of it like ordinary sand. Feichin had tried to instill the importance and power but along the old adage, you can lead a horse to water, but you can not force it to drink he thought. And still, there were even more clamoring to Lord Feichin, pesky and bothering. They were trying to get their questions answered before tomorrow but Feichin was not having any of it. He did not want to tell one person something and repeat it later and over and over again. He wanted everyone to know the knowledge he had to put forth. He had no time to be repeating himself. That was for the idle minded. Feichin dismissed the intruders with a wave of his hand. Those who still pushed through his simple gesture were met with waves of sand that pushed them away, and sometimes into walls. Feichin was not of those who could not follow directions. It was almost ironic because Feichin was never one to follow directions himself. He reasoned that he was always just too good for the directions anyway or that they did not specifically pertain to him. He had helped win many battles doing whatever he wanted and deemed necessary. It took some time for the cavern to clear out. Feichin was in no rush though. He wanted these people to study the things he had brought forth. Perhaps it would help them to remember the power. He was not sure what was going to help but he assured himself this could not harm. When the cavern was clear, except for a couple of people still studying the golem and sand, he saw familiar face approach. It was Machello, the man he beckoned earlier. “What took you so long to come and find me,” he wondered. Machello had obviously been fielding more questions in the time. The people quickly figured out that he was the only person authorized to approach the great one.

“There were many more questions to be ask, Lord. I did not want to miss any. Many of the people thought only I could approach you and wanted me to ask you specific things.” It was as Feichin had guessed. Feichin was smart. He knew what the people wanted and how people thought. Though it may not be reflected in the annals of history, his intelligence had never failed him.

Feichin spoke, “Do you know why I called you before me?” Feichin asked. Machello had no clue and shook his head in response. Feichin knew he had no clue but wanted to see if this man was smart enough to figure it out. It was an unfair question Feichin reasoned. Feichin had lost a little

hope for the city for the past couple weeks he was here. He had seen enough lethargy and weakness to last him a million lifetimes. But what he saw today impressed him a little and he wanted to know a little more about the man who stood before him. "I did not think much of this city as you may know. I thought this city was doomed. I thought I should just go away and let it crumble under its own inadequacies. But you have revived my vigor. I rise. You made me stay and fight for the city. I almost forgot the perseverance necessary to prevail out there in the world. You will do great things. Tell me about yourself."

Machello was shocked. He did not know he made such an impression on Lord Feichin. He thought it was just a random chance encounter that he was picked from the crowd. He thought it was merely a coincidence that he was first to speak "I RISE." He thought about it and then began to think that maybe it was all predestined. Maybe there was a plan. Maybe that fire was meant to happen so it could bring Feichin back he thought. Maybe this was specifically for him. This moment. He had never really thought about a great plan before but it crossed his mind as the events of today and before unfolded. He had wanted to be a Teradrim for as long as he could remember and now he stood before "The Teradrim". The Teradrim that all he had read and learned about to this point was based on. His mind flooded with everything he had every learned. Every story he had ever heard, from his grandpa or otherwise. Every dream he had of wielding great power and wiping away civilizations with waves of sand. Not just wiping away civilizations, but doing it with ease. Doing it without thought or conscience, but as a reflex. Doing it as something that was so insignificant to him. He had not known how long he took silent. But he could tell from the quizzical look on Feichin's face that he was silent for a very long time. He was often caught up in his thoughts like that as he began, "As I've said, "My name is Machello. Son of Makello, son of Macallo, son of Makrelie. I come from a long line of warriors." Feichin had never heard any of the names before but decided to let the man continue without interruption. "We were not all Teradrim and in fact I am the first since my grandfather. All my cousins and uncles and aunts pursue different paths. I first saw your statues in the Hall of heroes when I was a young boy. My grandfather had taken me there as a child so that I could learn the ways of the Teradrim. I had not known I wanted to be one until I saw you holding that flail, forever encapsulated in the pose. They said you fought a powerful gorgon that day." Feichin would not let it be known that he was frozen to stone that day as a gorgon. Nor would he let this man know that the gorgon wielded such earthy powers that dwarfed his. "I've studied and worked hard. I've not gone on many adventures or even slain as many enemies as you so I apologize for my failure. I shall rise and do great things though. I know it. I believe it and I do not care who else does."

Feichin nodded softly at the fellow. He was satisfied with what he heard. He was not impressed with the story overtly though. He thought to himself that if this is the best Bloodloch has to offer, then there will be trouble. It is one thing wanting to be great and then there is another actually being great. He was not mad at the story though. He did see some hope in it. Machello, he thought, was a hard worker and he believed that even though he failed to do much before his

arrival, after the stories and tales he would be inspired to for greatness. Feichin said to the man, “Listen, and be great. That is what I always say. Do not try. There is no try. Do or not. And I am telling you to do. Do great things. Be great. Slay foes. Save women. Do not try at anything in your life and you will find yourself doing a whole lot more.” Feichin looked Machello up and down. Machello looked a bit weary as if the tales of the day had beaten him up as much as fatigue did. He noticed to slumped shoulders and the darkening under his eyes as well as the red within that betrayed Machello state he wanted to portray. “Be gone,” Feichin said. “You look weary as if you can not control your own eyes. I will not have you fall asleep in my presence as if I bore you. Psh, you are the best this city has? Act like it. Do what you need to do and get some rest.”

Machello was taken aback about how quickly he was dismissed. He thought he was having a decent conversation with the man in front of him. He reasoned that he must have said something to upset him or said something stupid. Machello was always saying something stupid. He gave Feichin a long, deep bow as he slowly backed away. As he was making his way towards the entrance he stopped at the towering colossal golem. He had not had a chance to inspect it earlier and now found himself completely amazed. Where he thought was hard rock or clay, he actually found black sand. The sand was compacted so heavily that it appeared like rock to anyone but the keenest observer. He was thoroughly impressed. Though to be honest everything Feichin did impressed him. He dreamt of the days when he would be able to create such objects. He could wield the power of the earth but not to this extent. He could merely fling rocks from one end of the room to the other end, and not even if it was a very large room. He almost broke down as he reckoned about where all the power had gone. It was not a question even Feichin could answer but nevertheless he still wanted to know. Why was this knowledge not passed down? Why was it forgotten? Why could not he stop the fire? Why could not he save his friend Kaleth, whom he heard ran into the fire...? Kaleth. Machello thought about him a lot since he did not return from death. He did not mention him to Lord Feichin or hold him responsible because he felt he was responsible. He felt he was not there for his friend. He felt he failed him in his time of need. He did not rise to the occasion.

Machello turned toward the exit, glancing at Feichin one more time. The Earthen Lord was sitting on a bulky stalagmite with its top rounded down and sanded to a smooth seat. He was meditating. Machello, wishing not to disturb Feichin, quietly gathered up a few remaining papers and headed towards the exit. Outside, Machello felt the cool air brush against his face once more followed by spurts of hot air from the various crevices throughout the caverns. It was a decent walk home by Machello did not mind. He had walked it many times. The stones beneath his feet felt cool and, after Feichin’s display, a little shaky. He imagined at any moment they would rise up and impale him or shake lose to reveal a crevice beneath. The earth was not the same. Machello thought it might be a good thing. He reasoned that change can not be made if you will not change your views. It was dead of night, well from what he could tell anyway. It was always hard to tell. However, he did see many more vampires about which gave him the clue that it was

time for feeding throughout the night outside the mountain. They would raid villages and unsuspecting people out way past their bed time. He had seen it done many times. He had seen the blood pulsating as a jugular was punctured and a couple of vampires jumping on the guy to feed off his blood. He did not want to be like that. It was disgusting and repulsive. But of course he could not let them know that. He would be disowned and probably thrown out of the city if he let his distaste for vampires be known. It was probably for the better anyway. He walked on towards his house. He was not hungry. Though he had not eaten anything all day he did not require and nourishment now. He did not know how this was possible as he was always hungry. No, this was a different type of hunger that plagued him. It was a hunger that could not be satiated by food or the blood of others. It was a hunger for power that overtook him. A hunger for knowledge and intelligence that he desired. He rushed home faster. He still had some books from his grandfather and wanted to read over them before the next day's sessions. He wanted to know more than he could know. He wanted to know the things he did not even know he wanted to know. When he got home he gathered up his books and the papers people had given him and began making a master list of things to ask. As he compiled the words into a readable and organized format. There were many duplicates and he began to understand why Feichin desired some type of organization for this. As Machello began to write and write slumber quickly overtook him. Before he knew it, he was splayed out on his bed, in the world of dreams.

Machello was flying through the air in much like the sand storm Feichin had created earlier. He could see every grain of sand that was swept up and swept out the massive cloud. He could see and feel the power of the sand. He watched the sand sweep over cities and villages. He watched the battles littered with body parts and blood and mixtures of sand everywhere. He saw what Feichin was talking about when he meant the blood fuels the sand. He watched an army of golems, seemingly without their masters, march into the Enorian's famous Nordau Street. He was seeing places he had never been. Places he had never imagined. Places he has never even heard of. Then something he knew for a fact had not happened appeared. He was floating in the sand, the sand that was part of him and he a part of it, above Bloodloch. It was not Bloodloch in the past though. It was Bloodloch now in the present day. Machello could walk outside and see an exact replica of what he was envisioning. There was a fire suddenly as well. It was just like the same fire as before. The same fire that seared time. He watched the fire overtake the city and burn it to ashes. When he tried to come down from the massive cloud and help, he awoke with a start. What was that he thought? He had not dreamed in years. He thought dreams were unavailable to him. A vision? Was he seeing the future? Or the past? Was it another Teradrim somewhere in the world he was following? He had no clue. He needed answers. He hungered and yearned for them. He would have to ask Feichin tomorrow privately. He does not dream. It must have been a vision he kept telling himself over and over and over. It was a vision. He repeated it like saying it over again would somehow make it true. Like the more he said it the more he believed it to be true. He would definitely have to consult Lord Feichin.

Feichin watched Machello leave through the eyes of his golem. Though his eyes were closed and he was meditating, he could still use the vision of his golem to see around him. Feichin was a little confused though. He told Machello to leave and yet he remained, instead investigating the structures and animation Feichin had brought forth. No one knew that he could feel them touch him when they stroked the golem. They were connected like that. It was not just a simple body bond but a mind bond as well. He could feel their clammy hands run through his skin and up his arm and on his torso and the scholars, Teradrim, and other acolytes investigated and explored the unfamiliar creature. He could feel people hand through his body as well. He was also connected to the sand. Where people ran their hands through and explored with their feet, he could feel their presence in the deep recesses of his soul. He would remain here. He liked it here. This crystal cavern was an ample and appropriate area for Machello to choose. The man had chosen wisely. He would remain here until he met the Teradrim again. He had nowhere to be and no one wanted him to be anywhere. All his friends had long since fallen into the great sleep and nothing remained of their legacies except the stories he were to tell and what statues remained in this “Hall of Heroes” that was mentioned earlier. He wondered what questions tomorrow would bring. He wondered if he would be up to answering them. He did not have anything to hide, though he would not know until the time came. He laid his head back on the wide stalagmite and looked upward. He was done meditating and merely marveled at the ceiling. The sand was swirling under a ceiling made from glowing crystals. He had not noticed the glow before and wondered if it was the grotto recognizing true power. The swirling sand made for an interesting show to those uninitiated but Feichin was merely amused, controlling the sand himself at a whim. He sat back and looked at his golem. This golem had been with him for a long time. Today he claimed that this was your best friend or that was your best friend but he knew who his only friend was. He had waited all these years for his master to return and like any loyal servant he was there on time, never faltering. Feichin talked to his golem, not saying much of anything. He knew the golem understood him and while many believe them to only be tools, he knew his to be sentient. He told him of things he does not tell anyone and the golem in turn told him of things he had heard through the earth over the years. Most of it was about rocks for the golem did not quite understand much, but Feichin took it in stride, just grateful to have his old friend back. They would work on his communication, well his mind link he shared. It was a little rusty but it was there. They talk all night and through until it was time for the next session. Feichin would not let on that his golem was watching. The astute would pick it up he thought. It was more so that people always act differently when they know they are being watched. With his sentry quietly watching and witnessing he would go on.

Machello made his way to the grotto. It was dark, as it always is in the city below the mountain. He always hated it because the city somehow thought that everybody could see in the dark as most of his citizens could. He remarked how the fire seemingly lit up the cavern and he like it that way. Of course it was too soon to even mention anything about the fire, and most definitely too soon to mention it in a positive manner. Would there ever be a time he could he wondered. The streets were near empty at this time, except for the few merchants going towards the market.

It must be morning. Vampires are not generally seen when they can not go out he reasoned. A beetle scuttle over his foot and he wondered where the younglings were that would take part in cleaning up their city. He was a youngling once after all and was taught from a young age that is what young boys do. Especially in Bloodloch. If you are found idle, he was taught, they will take you to the slaughter house. He never believed the stories but the screams that echoed throughout the caverns sometimes changed his mind. He saw a couple of other people he recognized from yesterday headed in the same direction. They were going where he was going. Back to learn more. To feed the hunger that was left unfulfilled last night. When he got to the cavern he was surprised at what he saw. There were many more people here. More people that had attended the first session. Word must have spread throughout the city of the great power that lied just beyond these walls. Suddenly it seemed like Machello was being mobbed by the crowd. One person had recognized him as the “Voice of the People” and headed straight for him with questions he must ask. Then another follow suit. Before he knew it there was too many people to count hammering him with questions and handing him scraps of paper. It was way too much to handle. Machello pushed his way through the crowd and made his way towards the cavern. It was not as easy as it seemed as when he pushed through one group another, more densely packed greeted him. When he made it to the cavern, he saw Feichin still meditating, quiet and solemn, where he was left. The cavern was full of people as well. It was way more people than was there yesterday just like outside the Grotto. There were even some vampires who normally rest during this time in attendance. It was much more orderly inside the cavern than the outside mob Machello has faced. In all honesty, he was impressed at the turnout.

Feichin was unimpressed to say the least. He watched through his golem’s eyes as people filtered in through the entrance. He saw some come down prisms of light and others emerge from the ground, Teradrim he thought. He was still upset at the poor turnout yesterday and had no patient for this disorderly cluster that was before him. He could speak and they would quiet down. He knew that but said nothing. He just watched them, waiting for them to hush on their own. It took quite some time. Feichin was annoying with how long it took and it did not do well to alleviate the poor impression the day started with. “Greetings,” he said. That is not what he wanted to say. He wanted to yell at them. He wanted to scorn them for the scorn he felt yesterday when not half this number showed up. He wanted them to feel the pain he felt as he looked upon his city failing quite impressively. He wanted to say so much but only managed, “I see there are more of you today. Good. Many of you went home or to whatever holes you crawl in and told your peers and fellow citizens about the knowledge of the old ways I bring forth. Many of you blabbered to your partners and buddies and allies. Good. Everyone needs to hear this story. If you do not know where you came from, you do not know where you will end up. None of you know where this city has come from. Where this city has come through. What this city has persevered through. But I do.” He reasoned there was no need to get mad. He needed to stay positive and of course keep the troops positive as well. As Lt Feichin, the Forever General, he was quite skilled in rallying troops. He knew how to keep morale. He knew how to inspire those before a battle. He knew what battles to fight and most importantly which ones to avoid. Scorning these people for

their ineptness was a battle to avoid. It would lead to hate which is derived from anger, which is derived from fear. He did not need these people to fear him. He needed them to love him and love this city as he loved this city. He continued, "If you will take your seats we shall get started. Where is the one named Machello?" He looked about the room hoping a last sweep would find him before he spoke up. His instincts did not fail him as he saw a head emerge among the crowd. He spoke up before Machello could get a word in, "There he is, come, stand up here and let us know the second question these citizens have about the times before the times."

Machello made his way through the crowd. He had to step over a few people and squeeze in between others. They did not move out his way as polite people would do but merely forced Machello to alter his path reach the front. Maybe they did not see him, Machello thought. They must be too engrossed in Lord Feichin to take head to the "Voice" behind them. Machello stepped over the last of the obstacles of people and was standing in the front. He made his way over to a clearing to the left of the rise Feichin stood on. Machello could feel the hundreds of eyes staring at him. It was almost as if they were waiting for him to mess up and he had not even gotten the first word out. Machello could feel the pressure of not just everyone in the room but the hundreds waiting outside the Grotto. He knew he could not mess this up. He did not even think of the consequences for messing this up. He laughed internally. What was there to mess up? He simply had to read what was already written. He looked up at Feichin and then at the crowd. As he surmised, all eyes were on him. They waited patiently for him to speak. He liked being in control as he was now. It was power, however false, that he adored at that moment. He spoke, "Lord Feichin," he said. The words seemed to roll off his tongue. "The Teradrim, and the scholars here, and all other in attendance wish to know more about you with their second question. They wish to know of your times before the Teradrim, more specifically, and your times with the Teradrim. They say there was not much written of your history before you joined the guild. Some say you just appeared out of thin air one day." Machello stopped. He wondered if he had said too much. The question was simple and yet he endlessly elaborated on context that was of little consequence. He looked at the crowd but the stern faces gave him no recompense for his actions. Whether he had done good or bad, he did not know. Should he just straight ask these questions or should he elaborate more with his knowledge? Well, for whatever it was worth, he thought, he could at least think about it during Lord's Feichin answer to this question. It was surely a question a simple story could not answer. It would surely take some thought and time to fully answer these questions as Lord Feichin said he would.

Feichin thought for a moment. Then he thought for another as his history flooded back to his mind. More correctly, it tried to flood back. He thought he mentioned to these people that going so far back was hard. Him trying to remember was like them trying to think what they did as children. Or maybe he thought it. He could not be quite sure these days of what he did. His old memory fails him even in the memories of yesterday. He had gathered a decent amount of information from his memories and looked about the crowd. Turning to Machello he said, "Thank you for the question." It was polite to say thank you. Feichin did not say it much and

could not remember saying it much even to his friends. He merely paid merchants their worth or nodded in the direction that gratitude was due. But times have changed and so Feichin, who did not care to change anyway, said "Thank You". "Times before the Teradrim," he began. Though he was still stalling. He was never really good at starting anything though he could finish. You should see him finish. They would be lucky to see him finish he thought. "I was a Kelki," he said. He surprised himself. He could not believe that he remembered that. Most of the important things about his former life were long forgotten, deemed unimportant. He continued, "I was a Kelki from Kelsys. These closed scars across my neck were gills once. They have long since dried up and become useless in my current undead form. I do not remember much of my mother or father. That is not true." He stopped himself. "The truth is, I do not remember anything about them." He had not thought of his parents in years and the thought that he could not remember the people who gave birth to him did not concern him at all. He was undead now. A Teradrim. He had a new father, Lord Ivohn, and his father was all he needed. He began again, "I do not know why I left. I do not know any "friends" I made have had but I can tell you I first stumbled upon the sentinels. Yes, believe it or not I was a sentinel at the onset of my life." It was hard for him to believe himself. No one in the crowd would have guessed such. Such a great wielder of Earthen Power, a forestal? It was preposterous. It was untrue. It had to be a fallacy. But it was not. Feichin glanced around the room and saw the wide eyed gaze of the many follow him around. He could almost feel the disappointment. The disdain was palpable. It was true. It was as true as anything he had told these people today. As much as he wished it was not so, he could not change the past or alter it anyway. As much as he wished it untrue, he had to bear this burden for the rest of his existence. After a brief pause, Feichin glanced about the crowd one last time and began again. "Yes it is true. If I could change it then I would want to change it but I can not. It is of little consequence though. Because if I never went to the Sentinels, I may not have ended it where I am. You can not take away the past for anything. That is something all of you must learn. The past is the past. You must just take what happened and learn from all those experiences, good or bad. It is like when you win a fight or a duel or, rather, when you lose one. You have to take those experiences and learn from them. That is the only way you can be strong. Enough of that now," Feichin said. The crowd was nodding cordially at the words the Earthen Lord was saying. Feichin thought they understood and continued on with his back story. "So in the Sentinels, and I can not tell you how long I was a member for, I can not even tell you who the Guildmaster was at the time. I do remember my mentor though. His name Was Colt Tae'something. I can not quite remember the last name. Yes, I was Feichin, Cub of Colt. That was my very first title. I wore it with pride. I was proud of what I was of what I could do, of what I meant. You could not tell me anything. Even then, I knew I was great. I was very cocky." Feichin knew what he meant. Sometimes he could rant on and get confused in what he was trying to say. In what message he was trying to deliver. He thought, back then, that he was untouchable. He thought no one could kill him or punish him for any of his crimes. He was a mischief make back then. He almost forgot this aspect. But as he continued to talk to the crowd and tell them about some of his adventures as a Sentinel the memories started to come flooding back. He wondered if this was the way it would go. He would only start talking about something and as he continued

on his memories would become clearer and clearer. He told more of his old mentor, "Colt was a decent man from what I could remember. He taught me the ways of the wild. He taught me of traps, how to set them, how to use them, and most of all how to avoid them. This was not just the traps we set physically, but also of mental traps and other types one my encounter out in the world. He was nice like that and tried to prepare me for anything I would encounter. I also learned of metamorphosis and transforming my body into different spirits of animals." Feichin could not quite remember how the process went or even if he was telling the truth. However, this is the only way he remembered it so he pushed on, "I could be a great wyvern one moment and breathe fire upon enemies or exterminate great swaths of land. The next moment I could be a gorilla like the ones you find deep in the forest pounding away. I could also be a fish, a sword fish if I remember correctly so that I could swim even faster and spear my enemies with my horn. Most other sentinels used it for an additional purpose of breathing underwater but I did not require such. Remember I was a Kelki and my people..." He stopped. His people? He knew better than to consider those water breathers his people. They had not been his people in a long time. Even at the peak of his days they had not been his people in a long time. He went on, "Not my people, my former people, the Kelki, had long since evolved to not need the air some of you breathe today. They could breathe underwater. Like one of the gifts of the Earthen Lord, they could stay underwater indefinitely like a fish, like me now, like some of you."

The cavern was heating up now. He was not sure of cause of the rise in temperature but he could definitely feel it. He saw crevices throughout the ground and thought the lava below must be heating this cavern. He was not quite sure though. Yesterday had not been so hot but today it was definitely a bit warmer. It must definitely be all the people here today he thought. The heat bothered him, it reminded him of the sun and fire and the power his enemies mostly wielded. Despite this, he continued on. "I was on track to become a great Sentinel. I will admit I was not as good as most in the guild yet." Feichin had said it so easily but deep down the words stung like a thousand bees on an intruder into their hive. He had a hard enough time taking losses, in deference to what he preached earlier to these people, but to actually admit that he was inferior was torture. He was not the best and he knew he was not the best. The sad thing about it was that at that time he did not even have a desire to be the best. He was satisfied with being satisfactory. He admitted to the crowd, "In all honesty, I may have been on track but I was not aiming for it. I had no desire to be the best. I just wanted to get by. I wanted to see the world. I had spent all my life in Kelsys and was eager to go about. That was foolish of me. You," he pointed out towards the crowd. His long blue, dry crackled fingers picked someone random in the crowd and moved across it in a wave. "You have to have a goal. You can not just want to get by. You can not be satisfied with satisfactory." Each time he said "you" he pointed to a different person. He hoped that each person would think he was personally talking to them, and though they might not have known it, he was. He was talking to each one personally, as if they were one on and one. As if no one else existed in that cavern. However, he was talking to all of them. "Like I said before, you must continually learn from all of your experiences. I do not know what changed me. I do not know what gave me a purpose but I was glad when it came." Feichin tried to remember a little

more. His memory had begun to fail him. He was tricked when he thought he would merely begin to recall everything. He should have known better. Events that far ago was not something he should have tried to even recall. He finished up, "I was with Colt one day though, when I heard the call."

"This I remember somewhat clearly as it was the end of one life and the beginning of another. I was with Colt when I heard the world shake. I not only felt it through the tremors but I heard it call. Hmm, I am getting a little ahead of myself. For weeks and months prior, the earth was experiences unusual tremors. The sentinels sent scouts all to the far corners of the world to discover the cause and report back any findings." Feichin thought the statement "far corners of the world" ironic. The known world was so small then. What was far then would somewhat be called near now. Maps and geography had grown so much. The world had expanded so much since Feichin was a Sentinel all those years ago. Caverns and caves got deeper. The sky seemed somewhat higher. The tallest mountain then was now the smallest of them now. New continents had been found and explored. Oceans have been traversed. The "far corners" were not as far at all. "They found nothing. Though at the time, they did not know exactly what they were looking for. No one did. Not even this great city of Bloodloch did and especially not the city of the forest, Duiran." Feichin had forgotten he was a member of that city as well. He continued on, "So back to where we were." Feichin had lost his place. He tried to remember where he last left off with these people and then it quickly came back to him. "I was with Colt when the tremor came. This tremor shook the world. If Varian himself," Feichin cut himself off. He was not even sure if these people knew who Varian was. He knew some history was lost but was unsure how far back. In all honesty, he wondered if some people in his own time knew who Varian was or would even recognize him if he slapped them in the face. Feichin went on, "If Varian himself was standing on earth, he would fall to his knees." Feichin looked out at the crowd. It did not seem like any of them quite understood the reference or the degree or nature of this tremor that Feichin had felt that day. He tried with another analogy, "Do you guys remember how I opened up the Earth and buried the library and the surrounding buildings" The crowd shook their head in unison. "Well imagine, that same quake. That same tremor. Except felt everywhere on the earth. From the farthest corners of Sapience to the deepest oceans. That was how the quake felt." Feichin knew they would understand. "Can you guys imagine something that powerful making the world tremble like that? Only Varian or Ivoln could move such mountains." Feichin silently cursed at himself right now. The details had escaped him. He could not remember what exactly happened next. He wanted to fill these people in on every detail about the beginnings of the Teradrim and the beginnings of his new life but he just could not remember. He went on, "I apologize. I can not remember the next part. I will have to skip ahead and you will have to use your imaginations to fill in the rest. I was now standing in Bloodloch. I was still a sentinel and before me stood Virul, the first Guild Tutor." Feichin sighed. He thought he would not have to mention that name again but alas he failed his promise made earlier. "I did not think ahead when I said I would not mention his name anymore. Alas, here he stood, speaking of the Teradrim. The calling I heard earlier with Colt was strong now. It was the strongest feeling I have ever felt in my life. I knew

the ways of the sentinel were no longer for me. As I heard him talk, I knew what I must do. I knew the path of power and earth and strength was the path for me. I knew I had to leave, forsake those I have called family and friends." Feichin thought back on the moment. It was a strong point in his life. Through faulty memories, he did not think he would ever forget that. The crowd sat silenced, in awe, respect, and admiration. "Do not think this was a trivial decision. For giving yourself to the Earth is not easy. However, do not think it was hard for me. It was my destiny. It is rare for a man to know what he is meant to do in his life. But I knew. I knew at that moment I had to forsake everything. It was not an easy decision but it was a decision I was prepared to make whether I knew it or not. So there I was ready to undergo the ritual of the union as Virul taught the world. I was ready to become a Teradrim. I would have liked to be the first of his chosen during this era but I will admit I was not." Feichin could not remember all of the names of the people who had undergone the ritual throughout the years. Heck, he could not remember even a worthy percentage. He did remember some of the first ones though. "Alaron, Desian, Mephistoles." Feichin was trying to think of more names. More names of the first of those to become Teradrim but he could not remember. There were many people who eagerly flocked to the new Guild and the new gifts but many of them were not of note. "There were more, many more but their names have been lost in time," he said. "But these were some of the first of the Teradrim. I was included in them as well. Lord Alaron, The First, as some of you know him was the first guild master. He was very strong and shaped many of the foundations of the guild. Hmmm, I believe he was the first Guildmaster of the Indorani as well but I can not be too sure." Feichin did not pay much heed to the history of the people back then. He did not care about much back then. "Lord Mephistoles was with the guild for a long time as well. Actually, him and Alaron never left. They stayed with the Teradrim, like me, for the entirety of its inception. Lord Meph though did not fall to slumber as fast as Lord Alaron. He was with us for almost the same amount of time as me. I can remember him falling to the deep sleep only years before me though of course I could be wrong." Feichin was just not sure. He still spoke though with the same vigor and conviction of anyone telling a true story as assuredly as they had heard it the day before. "Lord Mephistoles was a great combatant too. I fought alongside him many times and we vanquished many foes together. In actuality, he probably slew many more villages, towns, people, than I have." Feichin thought back to those. He was right. As far as he could remember, Mephistoles was always out hunting. He left nothing but blood in his wake and he slew the same people over and over again. There was no mercy in his wrath. "He was the most experienced in such that the Teradrim would ever see." This made the crowd gasp a little. Feichin knew they probably misunderstood what he meant and continued on, "I am not saying he was the best combatant. Not at all. I was of course, but in hunting creatures and people, he was very keen. For those worthy opponents. Those opponents that sought more thrill than slaying easy opponents, I was the man to face. Lord Desian, the Denominator though came before me." Feichin knew of Desian well. He was his second mentor of sorts. He was first to truly master the combat uniqueness of the Teradrim. "The first Lord of Golems, Desian Arcan. He was truly a spectacle. He showed many the true power of the Earth. Remember how I said the Teradrim were weak? Well it was Lord Desian that proved otherwise. It was from him that I first gained much of

my combat prowess. It was from him that I learned much of the ways." Feichin could go on for a long time about this man. He was not sure if the crowd wanted to hear it though. "There is much to be said about Desian. Shall I go on?" He asked the crowd. He, once again, found himself digressing from the conversation but he did not mind if the crowd did not mind. After all, this was supposed to be a history lesson for the masses and the things Desian accomplished was just as much history as anything Feichin did. With steadfast nods from the crowd he continued on.

"Desian was more than a Teradrim. He was a great leader as well. I am not sure if he was ever Guildmaster but I am sure the title of Emperor was his at one point." Feichin sucked his teeth, thinking. He tried to recall if Desian in fact bore the title of Emperor as he said but could not confirm what he just told the crowd. Not wanting the crowd to grow impatient, he continued his story. "Yes, I am not sure. But I am definitely sure he was the leader of the city at one point. I can not remember what that title or office was called. I do not know what you call it now but I am sure you know what I mean. He led this city and combatants through countless battles. He was one that continually inspired the population to do great things. He made it so it was not an option to fight to strengthen the city." Feichin thought back to the days of Desian ruling the Bloodloch. He knew back then if you refused to fight you would die. There were no questions asked to why you were not fighting or why you refused to help the city, Desian just came up to you and killed you. He let the city know, "There was no lethargy in the city. There was no helplessness. There was no "maybe later" or I am coming soon. There was no "I need rest or I am tired". There were no excuses with Lord Desian. If you did not fight for Bloodloch, you died. You died as quickly as if you were an enemy of the state. You died like you were scum that had to be disposed of." The crowd looked shocked. Feichin guessed they had not a leader as cruel, as vicious. He guessed they had not known any full authoritative rule as Desian's reign. Maybe that is what they needed he thought. Maybe they needed someone with the courage and veracity to slay the lethargic and make an example out of those who did not want to fight. That should not be an option. Not fighting. That is crazy. Feichin was getting a little heated at the discussion thought quickly realizing it was no discussion at all. He took a break a paced back in forth thinking about what he would say next. "No one would mourn you. No one would care you die. You would not be forgiven for your trespasses against the city. You could only hope to participate when next the city called you and make up for your crimes. I had to be taught this lesson once." Feichin remembered back to the time. The true memory was foggy and the actual events were not very clear but Feichin knew Desian had slain him. The feeling was bad. It was the worst feeling Feichin had every felt. He felt betrayed and that betrayal wanted to make Feichin seek revenge. He had not expected death that day. He did not think himself not participating would be punished so severely. As one of the Chosen, like Desian was, he though he would be lenient. He was wrong, dead wrong. However, despite his feelings of hate and revenge at the moment, Feichin learned a lesson. While revenge faded from his mind and hatred from his heart, he learned a lesson. His death would serve its purpose and he was glad of it. "Desian the Cruel they called him though he was not cruel. He loved this city, probably more than anyone, and expected nothing less from it. You must be like Desian citizens. You must always be willing to give your

life no matter the cause. You must make no excuses for not helping in every situation. If someone calls for help, you must always be there. If you are not, not only have you failed, but you have also failed the city. That is the worst. Do not fail those who rely on you and the ones you rely on will never fail you. Bloodloch will never fail you." Feichin stopped. His point had been made. The scholars were still scribing notes jotting down every word he said. They must be behind and starting to catch up as many of them were still writing but stopped a couple moments after Feichin had finished speaking. When he saw they were done he nodded to them in recognition and began. "Now, I do not know where I left off." Feichin paused and then started, "Ah yes, the Teradrim and Desian. Unfortunately, Desian did not stay with the Teradrim forever as I have. Once he saw I had come to power and mastered the skills even better than he had, he turned away. He believed his time with us was at its end. He thought he had to move on to other guilds and show them the true power of their gifts. He was a man like that. He stayed long enough to acquire as much power as he could. He would use his skills to the maximum of their potential and then he would move on when others arose. Before the Teradrim, he did this with the Magi. This was before they were split up between the multiple guilds. This was when they were only one but yes, he did it with them, and then he did it with the Teradrim. I was grateful for what I learned." Feichin stopped for a moment. He had not much else to say on the topic and wanted to move on.

"During my times with the Teradrim much happened. We have had our trials and tribulations but overall persevered through. The ones I have spoken of already helped to shape the early foundations and much of the structure later on. There are still many other great Teradrim I have not spoken of because I do not remember them much. I know of Emperor Macavity who was the last Guildmaster before I began my deep sleep. I know there was some internal strife between him and other members of the guild regarding political and other boring stuff but he held true to the teachings of the Earth. He did not falter or waiver in the laws of the Teradrim and for that I respected him. He too was a good man and should not be forgotten." Feichin glanced at the scholars again as to make sure they were writing that down as well. "Where I was good with combat, he was good for the guild and politics." Feichin thought for a moment about a lot of the arguments he had with Macavity. Many people wanted him to challenge the Guildmaster but he always refused. Macavity wanted him to be a secretary but he always refused. "Throughout the ages, I was constantly asked to be the Emperor or a Pillar, a secretary, by other Emperors. I always refused. As many of you should know I was Guildmaster once." Feichin shook his head, embarrassed. "Some would argue, I was the worst Guildmaster this guild had ever seen. I would not disagree with them. I wanted to be Emperor for the wrong reasons. I wanted the title and the status and I thought if I had that I would have power. I was wrong. It takes responsibility and hard work. Much more responsibility than I could provide. Much more work than I could put in. I could not focus my efforts on both running the guild and being the best combatant of the land. As such, I refused from that day forward, when I was voted out, to be in positions of political power. I did not desire the work that came with it. I wanted to focus all my energy and efforts on becoming stronger. I wanted to make those around me stronger as well, especially those who

wanted to learn." Feichin remembered some of his apprentices of the ages. "I've had many apprentices throughout the ages but I can only recall one. Lord Jurevicious. He was going to be the next best thing. He had the will and desire to learn from me, and taught him I did. Unfortunately, he fell into a deep slumber way before his time." Feichin missed Jurevicious. Even though it had been hundreds of year since they last met, Feichin missed him. He missed all the opportunities he had never had to fight alongside him. A person he taught. It would be the greatest thing. Master and apprentice. "Perhaps the disappointment that I never got to truly fight with my apprentice had forever scorned me. I never took another apprentice after that. I guess deep down I had hoped that one day he would return to me." Feichin knew none of the history books these people had read previously would mention Jurevicious. He was barely a footnote, if that. But to Feichin, he was more than that. He was to be the master someday. He would not let him go down like that. He would not let him be a footnote. He would be recorded as a great man. He would be recorded as Feichin wanted him to. Feichin was finished speaking. He really did not have much more to say on the subject. Feichin turned his back the crowd and stared at the wall for a moment. He did not know how long he was talking for. He did not know what time it was. He looked back at the gawking Machello seeking his next question without a word.

Machello looked down at his list of questions, almost forgetting he had them. He knew Feichin desired the next question but he was so engrossed in the story that he forgot what the next one he wanted to ask was. He was not going in any ordered list. He was merely asking the questions he wanted to know first before going back through the other unanswered questions. And so it went. Machello spoke and asked Feichin the next question and Feichin would answer with as much detail as he could. Feichin would use his hands to speak often trying to paint a picture for the people who sat below. He would flourish his flails every now and then to demonstrate different battles and different maneuvers. Scholars would write down his every move, every word, and every action as if this was the last important thing they would ever do in their life. Feichin would often pause to let the scholars catch up. Sometimes he talked very fast and it was obvious and very telling that he was excited about what he spoke of. Sometimes he would talk slowly and pause more often as to make sure to drive a point home. Most of his tales ended this way. Machello learned a lot and most of all he learned that everything Feichin had to say was to teach a lesson. Every word was important. Sometimes though Feichin did not have much to say on a subject at all. Even one time, Machello thought Feichin was quite obviously dodging a question. He looked uneasy as if he had so much to say on the subject but refused. The question regarded "chains" and Machello was not sure how many questions into the session this question was. He was not sure when it was asked. He was not sure why Feichin had responded the way he did. He recalled that it occurred when he first asked Feichin, "Lord Feichin, of the Earth. They call you Bane of Chains, Chain Albatross, and even Feichain. Where did this come from? I remember when I asked about your history and I mentioned there was very little, but of this subject, I can assure you that there have been absolutely no writings about. It is as if every copy has been destroyed or the event was insignificant. Please let share with us your knowledge."

Feichin twitched. He was not sure if anyone could visually see it or if it even occurred at all. "Chains" he thought. I hate chains. Feichin knew very well of the moniker. It haunted him for hundreds of years. He had gained it during the Year 400 MA festivities. He thought back on the time during the festivities. There were many events at Feichin genuinely had fun. It was not often that Feichin had fun with planned events but they were decent. His intelligence was unmatched and his wit led him to victories in many of the games. But the one game, Triptycha, was the bane of his enjoyment that year. Feichin shivered deep down. He hated that game. He wondered if they still played it or if it was even as popular as it was back then. Feichin had spent many nights reading the rules on the game. He had spent many blue and gold tickets and star-stamped tickets to acquire the thousands of Triptycha tiles he would use. He was ready to win the tournament so that all those across the land could call him the greatest. He watched countless people play before him in the tournament. The games were...boring to watch now that he thought about it. However, he never thought he could lose. His tiles were the best in the world. He had spent more gold and tickets to acquire the best. He would win by sheer hard work and intelligence. The rules of the game were so simple the smallest child could play and master it and Feichin knew no one could beat him. He remembered he received a bye his first round so luck was already on his side. One round down, he thought. His next round was against a female. Feichin had to admit after her defeat that it was tougher than he thought. Well, not tougher than he thought just more strategically involved then he had imagined. He thought he would just place a tile down, and according to the rules, win based on the sides and middle number. The rules had not failed him this first round as he took a victory. The next round is when it would all come to shambles he recalled. This round was against an enemy of Bloodloch, Dhagon. The place they were in called for zero violence. Otherwise, Feichin would have slain the man on the spot. He would have slew many that day in Delve for that is where this all took place. He remembered the rules and all he had studied when he faced Dhagon. He knew of everything that was possible within the context of the game. He thought he knew everything possible. In the first match of the three round set, Feichin would get a surprise. He thought he had won this game. He thought he had it all wrapped up nice and neat. He was leading the tile count and was sure that even if Dhagon took one of his tiles the next turn he would surely still win. On Dhagon's turn he placed a tile next to Feichin and Feichin saw something occur that pissed him off. Not only did he lose that tile, but he lost his tile next to the one that was taken and another next to the one that was taken. Dhagon had seemingly put together a moved that chained a bunch of tiles to Dhagon's color. How was this possible? There was no mention in the rules this could occur. There was no mention in any strategy book ever that this could occur. Feichin was fuming. He was sure that Dhagon had cheated. He was sure the scorekeepers were making a huge mistake but they were not. Feichin had been had. There was a conspiracy for him to lose and obviously he knew it. He took the next victory in the following round but his mind was still preoccupied with the "Chain" play that Dhagon just did. He was confused. He still did not know how it worked and was not sure if at any time he was being cheated or not. He was weary of it happening again. It had cost him a victory and now it threatened to cost him the game. Feichin went on to lose the final round against Dhagon. He now hated chains. He did not know the proper terminology but "chains" would do. All his friends and

peers at the time knew his hatred. They did not quite understand the concept as well. He wished to forget the whole event. Chains. He kept thinking about it and it made him madder and madder with every thought. Chains. Oh how he hated chains. He would never forget the wrong they did to him that day. He would never pick up another Triptycha tile again. Chains. It made him retire from the game. It made him not even want to figure out how they worked. He would have none of it. He would never be scorned by them again. Feichin did not know how long he stood in silence. He had been thinking this whole time, replaying the story in his head. Chains. He thought. He wanted to be honest with the people. He wanted "Chains" to be stricken from history. He did not want to think about it. He wanted to tell them to never use those monikers again. As he looked up to the crowd and began to talk, the words he wanted to speak seemed to fail him. All he could manage, and he meant this from the very bottom of his soul, with every ounce of his being, was, "Fuck chains." Looking at Machello he nodded his head ready for the next question.

Machello did not think to ask the Earthen Lord to elaborate. He knew better. He would never ask again. He would not mention it and was wondering if the scholars recorded it. Of course they did, he thought. Shrugging his shoulders ever so slightly Machello looked down at the list and began to ask Feichin another question. The next question Feichin encountered was of the time of "Great Exploration". Feichin forgot he was alive during those events as well. He forgot many things over the years and always struggled to remember the smallest of details. He looked out to the crowd trying to remember some of the details they sought. Each face he pondered seemingly reminded him of someone he knew from his time but they failed to remind him of the simple question posed before him. He kept staring and moving his eyes from one face to another as if the next face would suddenly help him remember. He looked at them as if the answer was hidden in their eyes and their faces. He knew he would find no such easy solution as he went on to explain to the crowd what he could remember. He wished he recalled more. "The "Time of Maps" and the "Age of Shortcuts"..." Feichin cut himself off and paused. He did not do it for any dramatic effect. He just forgot what he was going to say. He was old like that and excused himself. "The "Shortening of the World",” he continued. ”Was a time of many great revelations. You still benefit from some of those effects this day. I was merely a youngster when the age first fell upon us. Yes, can you believe that even I was young at one point? But a youngster I was and so at the time I did not quite understand all that was happening." Feichin saw some befuddled looks out into the crowd and paused for a moment. Perhaps he was getting off track and needed to explain something a little better. As such he went on, "Let me explain. Before the "Age of Maps", as it was also known, it would take someone from dusk til dawn to travel to the far parts of the land. If their journey was especially tumultuous, it could take a full day. Getting lost was quite the hazard and could you see exposed to the elements for days on end while you try to get your bearings. Have you ever gone to the Itzatl rainforest to the west?" Feichin stopped, expecting a low murmur of understanding and nods from the crowd. He was sure they knew what he was talking about. "Well I was out there once, and please do not ask me for what for I do not remember. Perhaps I was on my way to Saluria but I can not be sure. Anyway, I was there,

and as you know, it can be a very confusing place. And confused is exactly what I had gotten. I remember going in and then shortly looking around to see I was lost. I would look up at the trees, towering over me, and remarked how he one looked exactly the same. I was a sentinel then and even my skill could not help me navigate through the thickness of this jungle." Feichin paused, dismayed at himself for yet again bringing up his former life. "I climbed the tallest tree I could find, trying to locate just where I was or gain any sense of the direction I needed to head. All I found were taller trees to be climbed. The rainforest was thick and confusing like that. I traveled for days on end without food but managing to find plenty of water. I was a very poor example of a sentinel." Feichin chuckled realizing the irony of his situation. Another time, still a young Sentinel in the very desert outside these walls I was lost. I could feel the heat bearing down on me as the sun shone overhead. I swore it followed me wherever I went. The sand burned away the soles of my shoes before I came upon the oasis known as El'Jazira. During the time before, this is often how things went. People often got lost. I do not know what changed Bloodloch citizens and every person around the world but something did. Maybe they got frustrated with constantly being lost. Maybe they hated the slow travel. For once, I am not the only one that did not know for no one knows." Feichin gave a satisfied grin. He was happy for once that it was not his memory that failed him but just general knowledge of the time. "So came forth the new age. Where the people of the land, sick of the ways, set out to explore more. They made maps, complete with routes and shortcuts throughout the whole land. These maps were all encompassing. They provided people with faster travel throughout all the land. Where it would take me nearly a full day to reach the trees north of the Morgun Forest, I could now reach it if way shorter. In fact, if I left now, I could be there before nightfall. These great cartographers and their maps called made the land smaller. The far reaches of the world were now within anyone's grasp. The deepest seas and the highest mountains were now all nicely laid out in a map easy for anyone to read. Even secret passages and hints to the different quests many continually ask for were laid out upon the maps. They merely had to pay the right people for the right maps. Frankly, I do not know why some did not bother with them but it is not of my concern. It was a great time. I am sure you still use some of the shortcuts to this day. Ever since then, I can tell you that I have never been lost... well except for in snowstorms and the tundra to the north. I swear they put a maze in that thing to spite me though it is not that bad. But yea, the world became much smaller during that time. And it kind of connected people as never before." Feichin was still surprised how fast he could travel across the land on foot. The maps he bought during his time, he was sure, were surely outdated now but he still held a fondness for them. They were mostly memorized now and help no physical presence. He remembered how detailed the maps were. They contained information on shrines throughout the lands, places to avoid, and shortest routes from any location to any other location. However his fondness though, he did miss the time before they came about. The world was much bigger than. It was more mysterious and there were infinite possibilities to be explored. He wondered if the maps took this away when then revealed everything. He wondered, through all the advances the maps provides, if he secretly regret their arrival. As if he hated the ambition of those who went and explored every part of the world and documented it for profit. He remarked and finished with "They had many advantages

but they did not leave much to the imagination. While I was grateful, I do miss getting lost every now and then." Feichin was not sure if what he said was a contradiction. He thought it could be but would let it stand. He just let the words flow through him and even though, at times, it might not have made too much sense to everyone. He understood. Looking out at the crowd he could see some of them listening intently and some still scribing away. Yes, he thought it was important that they gather all of this down but sometimes he wished they would just put their quills away and listen to him. He decided to make a point. "Put your quills down for a moment," he commanded. Feichin received confused looks from the crowd, especially the scholars, those that were constantly writing at the time. There was dead silence except for a few grumblings of the earth that Feichin recognized as nothing to worry about. Feichin peered over the crowd and at Machello who he remarked was forever engrossed in whatever was coming out of his mouth. Feichin began again, "Imagination is a great thing. Wonder is a great thing. It is what drives innovation. The "Great Exploration" killed the wonder for me. Sure, it valued my time by saving it, but as you can see, I have lived for a very long time. Your imagination is what will fuel creativity. It is what will allow you to get out of situations when you seem lost. If you have failed to experience being truly lost, then you will not know what you can come up with when your life depends on it. This goes for anything out there, not just exploration. This goes for combat as well. Many times I have thought myself defeated and had no clue how to proceed only to come up with something remarkable at the last possible moment. This is how you must be Bloodloch. You must harness your creativity. You must think of things never before thought. You are in a rut and this will help you escape. You are lost, Bloodloch but do not fret because I have found you. So hear my words. Do not merely write them down. Let these words ring true to the very bowels of your soul. Make mistakes. Find answers yourself. Do not rely or count on anything else for even at your worst Bloodloch..." Feichin paused letting his words sink in. "Still, you shall rise."

The crowd stood in awed silence not sure if to expect more from the Earthen Lord. He had pierced their souls with what he told them. They originally thought it was a simple story about maps but soon fell victim to the lesson to be learned. Every story had a lesson. They did not mind. After a few moments of silence, Machello looked about the room preparing to ask his next question. He did not want to disturb the atmosphere just created by the Earthen Lord but he there was much to ask and he must press on. After a few minutes of lettings Feichin's word touch the soul of those in attendance, he looked up at Feichin, expecting permission as to whether it was alright to proceed on with the questions. After a simple nod of encouragement, Machello drew up the strength to carry on with the session saying, "Lord Feichin, we wish to know of the "Forever Fight." I have only heard bits of and pieces of it through stories and text but never the full context. Could you tell me more about it? I wish to know how it began, how it ended, and all between." Machello nodded slightly to himself happy with the question. It was not one he thought of but one he came across when studying the questions. He knew a little about it but simply wanted to learn more. He knew the forever fight involved Lord Feichin and another of his enemies but he was not quite sure of all the details. He looked out at the crowd seeking some kind of acknowledgement for a question well asked. He was not greeted by much except a low

murmur throughout the crowd. He wondered which one of the ones in attendance had initially written the question down on the paper to be asked by him. It was a good question. It was not something he thought many would even ask about though he thought he would probably have thought about it sooner or later. He looked up at Feichin, awaiting the answer but Feichin only gave him a slight nod indicating he understood the question and that an answer would soon present itself. Nothing was said for a moment and Machello could only assume that this was Feichin thinking about the answer. He remarked at how patient Feichin was with his answers. It was as if he did not want to misspeak any word. After a few short moments, Feichin began to speak. Machello immediately turned his attention back to his hero. He did not want to miss any word.

"The Forever Fight?" Feichin laughed. "I have not heard it called that name before but I do know of which one you speak. You speak of the "Fight of Many Suns" or, as I have also heard it and also my favorite, "Four Moons"" Feichin smiled. It was one of his fondest memories. He had many fights in his day and could not remember them all. He could not even remember this one in all its glory but he would try to give the people as much as he could remember. "I remember much of what happened but not all. I do not remember the month, or day. I do remember it took place outside the very city you stand in. To the east are the Shamtotas, and that is where blood spilled for nearly 4 moons. I do not remember what I was doing out there but it does not matter as I traveled out there many times. TO guess what I am doing out there at any one time is impossible. I wish could remember more details." Feichin paused for a moment trying to recollect the atmosphere of the battle that would soon take place. "It was cold. I remember that. Perhaps it was winter but one can never be sure. Anyway, that does not matter. What matters is there was an enemy there. I want to say it was S-something but I can not be sure. He was definitely a Luminary because I remember getting bashed with their shield and symbols many times. When I came upon him nothing was said at first. He was one of their great fighters of the time. We both just stared at each other. Deep down I knew what was about to happen and knew he what was about to occur. I stayed my hand waiting for him to make a first move but neither of us did. I watched him as he laid down countless rites. I would simply let him. I could destroy them if I wanted to but I wanted no excuse for him being defeated. Besides, I wanted to fight someone with everything they had. I wanted to feel their full power and I wanted them to know the Teradrim power was far superior." Feichin whipped his flail from his weapon belt, brandishing it. He stroked his flail in a smooth motion as if it was an extension of his soul. To Feichin, it was. "I do not know how long how long it took for each of his rites to be laid, but it seemed like forever. I remember asking him, "You done yet?" It was mocking of course. Teradrim needed no such help from Devotion or whatever they called it. With a nod he ushered me on. We both knew the rules. There would be no help. There would be no starbursts that would grant us a second life. There would be no running away. This was a fight to the death. For the winner, nothing would be gained. There would be no bragging for this fight was different. It was simply a test of power and winner and loser would both know who had won. That was enough. I nodded back at him and simply said, "Shall we begin?" I could feel his rites already attacking

me. They were weak. They were always weak. It did not bother me. Whatever advantage they needed. So yea, I asked him "Shall we begin?" and with a flash he was on me attacking." Feichin begin swinging his flail in broad strokes demonstrating to the crowd his techniques. He was ducking, dodging, and weaving to further drive this point. He would push out his arms every now and then to mimic a shield so the audience would learn exactly what he meant by "shield bash" or "shield strike". He continued, "We went back and forth constantly neither of us giving ground. I would strike out with my flail, breaking limbs. My sand would help and shred his limbs as well. This was during Teradrim the Second so not all the abilities gifted to me now were available then." And vice-versa Feichin thought. He definitely did miss some of his old skills. "The back and forth between us went on for a long time but during the battle it was as if everything was in slow motion. I could see the agony on his face. He could see the strain in mine as we both gave it our all. Both of us knew we were going to win." Feichin rubbed his head for a moment. He could still imagine the pain of the shield and mace hitting him over and over. "I remember the sound of his limbs breaking. I can still see my golem ripping his limbs from his body. I can remember my own arms failing me. Failing to lift up and strike back. Paralyzed. Broken. I remember the blackouts and concussions. The battle was fierce. My equal?" Feichin thought for a moment. He would be hard pressed to call anyone his equal. "At the time, yes. I will say he was a worth as worthy adversary. He was one of the hardest enemies I have fought. He was likely the best enemy I have fought. He was one that gave me a run. I was not as strong as I would become that day. Though I will say at the moment, no two greater forces have ever collided on this continent." Feichin took a moment. "Four days I would hear. Four nights they would shout across the caverns of Bloodloch. I had fought him for that long. It did not seem so at the time. To me, in the end, it was all just a blur of blood, herbs, blackouts, concussions and other afflictions. Who won?" Feichin smiled. The answer was unclear. "I am not sure. I do not remember losing and I do not remember winning. I think in the end we both fought until we could not cure anymore. As we stood on the battlefield and looked at each other, arms broken, disfigured, bloodied and bruised, we knew that neither one of us was equipped to go on any longer. I made the mistake of not bringing enough to cure myself and it appeared he made the same. As we looked at each other, neither one able to go on, we walked both walked away. We knew that day we would have a rematch. It did not need to be said. We would see each other again." Feichin almost looked sad at that moment as he continued on, "but we never did. We never fought again. I saw him at battles with his city and he saw me at mine, but the one on one would never occur. We both had lost our chance." Feichin looked through the crowd and spoke up, ""Four Moons" they would call it but to me it was more than just the time it took to fight. To me it was truly a fight of equals." Feichin thought for a moment before speaking out, "I never had a true fight like that again. Hundreds of years have gone by and I have yet to meet an equal like that. After such, I was always prepared. I always brought more than enough to fight anyone at any time. I would not be caught off guard again. I was sure my enemy did the same. The lesson to be learned from this today is to simply be prepared. This just does not mean battles this means in everyday life. If a fire were to break out, would you, Bloodloch be prepared? Get your act together city. Achieve greatness through preparation." Feichin had more to say but the point

had driven home already. He could tell by the vast nods in the crowd. The saddened Feichin wondered whatever happened to the Luminary he fought that day. After a few glimpses of him he had never really saw him again. He was a blip in time. An anomaly easily forgotten. The "Forever Fight" between him and such insignificance... Feichin laughed. It was these memories and battles that made him who he was today. That transformed him into this pillar of legend that stood before these people this day. Feichin reckoned that enough time had passed by to send these people to their homes for the night. He needed a break as well to gather his thoughts. He had talked way more than he intended to this day. With a slight bow, he informed the crowd, "That is all for today. We shall continue tomorrow as there is still much to discuss."

Machello had not realized the time as well. He was surprised when Feichin had called it quits for the day but understood as the time was growing late. He still had to ask Feichin his question though about his vision. What had it all meant he wondered? He waited for the crowd to leave before approaching Feichin, "Lord Feichin." He stopped. He did not quite know how to ask him about his dream, no vision. He kept saying dream but he meant vision because he knew he could not dream. He asked Feichin, "I had a vision..." he trailed off. He began to explain to Feichin all the intricate details of what he went through the night before. He explained about the floating sand and the fire. Oh the fire, he thought. His mind kept going back to the fire in his vision. It was as hot, if not hotter, than the fire that seared history. He explained this to Feichin. He explained the statues he had seen. He explained the storms and dust and everything he could think of. He wondered if he was remembering everything correctly, everything as it was or if he was making things up as he went along. Either way, he was doing the best he could. He looked for simple affirmations from Feichin that he understood what he was saying. The slight nods and gestures indicated that he should continue. When he was finished he felt like he removed a boulder from his chest. He had not realized he was holding so much in. He looked at Feichin and awaited his interpretation. It seemed like forever until Feichin answered him.

"Interesting. I have heard of some who have had visions before." Feichin stopped. He wanted to think about this vision before he gave this young confused boy the answer. "I do not know." It was not what Feichin wanted to say but in all honesty, he was not sure. Deciphering this type of thing was not something he was good at. Why could not this boy ask him something else, anything else. In trying to sound prolific he simply said, "The answer will come in time. It always does. Some things are not meant to be understood until the very moment an event happens. Until something triggers, it. I do not know where your vision came from or who gave it to you, but I am not meant to know. It is for you to decipher and you only. Go on with yourself. I can see you will do great things and you should not dwell on such things anyway. Trust me." Feichin was satisfied with his answer. He was unsure if Machello would be satisfied but he could not give him more. That was all the information he had. With a wave, he dismissed Machello. "Come back tomorrow and learn more. Perhaps something I say or do will help you figure it out." Feichin knew it was a lie but he needed to give Machello some type of insurance. It was not good to let someone confuse wonder and wander about. It often led to unpredictable things.

When Machello left the cavern he followed behind but not too close as to give Machello an indication he still wanted to talk. He had nothing else to say for the night. He had more questions to answer tomorrow. Feichin stepped out of the crevice in the Grotto and looked about Bloodloch. He had not explored much of the city yet and now took an opportune moment to look around. He traveled to the barracks first since it was closer. He had spent many days here preparing the troops to fight in the perpetual wars of old. He missed being called Lieutenant. He hoped someone would bring up the wars the next day and then merely said he would talk about it anyway if no one did. He traveled to the Alcazar, which had moved. He was still roaming and running things when the mountain had originally shifted and the Alcazar rebuilt nearer the center of the city. He remembered the old for that was uncovered deep in the mountain. The old fort that housed much of the city's old offices. He smirked as he remembered it was seemingly overnight that the quakes happened and much of the city was buried causing much to be rebuilt like the aforementioned Alcazar. Was it overnight that this all happened? Feichin could not quite remember. The important details were there but time, he assumed as he could not recall, must have not been that important. The East Gate was still intact. It had not changed much through the hundreds of years. The quality of construction during his time was unmatched. His premise was supported by the still standing prison. He had not spent much time in that place during his time and did not want to go in there now. He knew the screams at night still came from this place. He could sense torture was still a big part of the way of Bloodloch. He had never liked it. He did not like the screams of helpless victims echoing throughout the caverns. If he had his choice, the victims would all be mercifully killed and the prison done away with. Feichin was like that. He liked battle. He liked even forces fighting against other even forces. He did not quite get to witness it often as his mere presence unbalanced any fight. Feichin, the Eight-Fisted they called him after all. He could not remember much else he wanted to see. While he walked he saw shrines to Gods he never heard of and statues of people who did not exist during his time. He wondered about these people and Gods as well. He wondered what their stories were as he mourned the one place that would hold such insight. Feichin was done for the night and needed to prepare his mind for the morrow. It was easy enough to talk for ages the citizens required but nevertheless, preparation was key. When he got back to the grotto he entered the cavern and found his spot on the slight rise above where the crowd would sit in the morning. He squatted on the ground before fully sat and crossed his legs. He believed he had done much today. He believed that Bloodloch was in a better position today than he imagined of which were hundreds of years. He had done well. Tomorrow would be better.

When Machello left, he pondered the words Feichin had told him. He did not quite understand at the time but figured they would make a lot more sense as the day night drew on and tomorrow when he could think more clearly. He was on his way back to his house and he was noticing Bloodloch in a brand new fashion. He seemed to pick up on things he had missed before. There was nothing of special he noted, but it was just that the whole city felt a little more special to him at that moment. It seemed more alive and more real. He could hear the howl of the drafts that wound its way through the various buildings and off the walls of the caverns. He welcomed the

sound and thought only of one word, "Home." He began to ponder whether or not he was taking advantage of this place. Whether or not he took for granted all that Bloodloch had given him before. His dream, he came to realize took place in the city after all. He was floating above it like the storm. As he looked down it was all clear in his eyes. He was not proud. He would have to change that. Machello made it home and sat at his desk. It was carved of stone with sanded marble for a flat surface. Machello had made this desk himself. He sat down and began writing more questions. He did not expect what he learned to lead to more question but alas that is what happened. It was as if the more Lord Feichin spoke and the more questions he answered, he left the door open for a lot more. He wanted to learn more about the "Forever Battle" and more about other battles he fought. He wanted to hear the stories of Desian, the Denominator and how he received his name. He wanted to know why Feichin chose the Sentinels first of all guilds. Machello had a special hatred for them and Shamans. They stood against everything he believed in. While he had never fought one in the world, he had seen them in passing. They would look at him as if he was something to be gawked at. He did not like it. They would glare as if he was nothing. As if he was next to nothing. He would tolerate it no more when he met the next one. He could feel something inside himself awakening. He would not be sure what it was but it was a deep desire to slay thy enemies. Too many had trespassed upon Machello for him to let it go any longer. He could tell the words of Lord Feichin began to heal him. To mend him. He did not realize he was broken. He did not realize Bloodloch was broken until Lord Feichin had spoken. But now, he realized and could see the furor form back into his mind. He closed his eyes and began meditating as Feichin had done. He was not sure what he was doing, but the Earthen Lord did it and that was good enough for him. He would mimic him and follow his ways for now on. He would be calm and patient. He would be intelligent and prepared. He would never be cause by surprise and he would never lose. He would win for Bloodloch. That was the mindset that befell him as he sat there. He did not know how long he was there but he soon became weary. He was getting ahead of himself and knew that he needed rest before tomorrow. He headed to his bedroom and laid his head down. He hoped he would not receive any more visions. He hoped he would have a peaceful rest so that he could fully absorb all that would be told tomorrow. He closed his eyes.

Machello awoke refreshed and feeling ready to tackle the day. He was grateful no more visions of sand and fire befell him. He stood up from his bed and walked to the mirror, gazing at it, through it. He was not one for personal looks. His short hair was cut almost to his scalp. His skin, dry and untreated, would win no contests of beauty. But he was not looking in the mirror to see himself. He had a desire to gaze into his own eyes and that is what he did. For what could be considered millennia, he stood there gazing into his own eyes not sure about what he was looking for. He just had a feeling and something told him he must. It did not quite happen at first. Well, Machello was not quite sure but he began to have another vision. This one was more unique though as he could only see it through the eyes staring back at him in the mirror. The vision was just like before except it took place where the last one left off or at least where Machello thought so. He was not sure as the two now seemed to blur into one. He was still

floating above the city and now began to fall. Every bit of sand, every bit of him, was falling as well. It was a fall that took ages. It was as if it was traveling through a never ending abyss except the end could be seen. It was as if the ground was falling as well, slower than he was, but falling nevertheless. When the sand reached the flames, Machello gasped and looked away from the mirror. What had he just seen? What had he just imagined? He could see sweat break out on his brow and he wiped it off with one motion. It was almost time to get back to the grotto and the Crystal Cavern for the next stories. The next lessons. He thought about telling Feichin about these but then he determined that it was unnecessary. He was sure the Earthen Lord would merely say the same thing he had said last. The visions were for him to figure out. He could elicit no help in their deciphering. When it was the proper time, Machello would know. But, until then, it did not stop his mind from wondering about all the possibilities. Was there going to be another fire he wondered? Of course not he laughed off. That was silly. But then he began to wonder what caused the last one and he had no answer. If they did not know the cause of the last one, how could they prepare for any other? Machello became worried. What if another did break out? Would Feichin merely save them again? No. Machello realized he could rely on anyone but himself. He must become stronger. As Machello wandered towards the Grotto, his mind stood steadfast on the visions and their interpretation. When he arrived though, that all quickly changed. Even more people now waited outside. He could not believe the turnout. All of Bloodloch must be here he thought. He swore more people were here than were at the West Gate the night Feichin had called attendance to everyone. He knew people to be here than the night the "Searing of History" and the "Great Falling" occurred. He was glad. All of Bloodloch should hear what this man had to say. He wished he could recall his Guildmaster from Delve so he could witness what was happening but he knew it to be impossible. As the second day, the mob enveloped Machello with questions and papers and thoughts and comments and concerns. They wanted him to do too much. He pushed through as he had before. The maneuvers were familiar now though the path very different. When reaching the front he could see inside the cavern. It was packed. There were more people here than he thought could possibly fit. There were people hanging on the walls, flying above, and sitting below. There were even people on the raised platform Feichin usually talked from. If the cavern were to collapse now, Machello was sure eighty percent of Bloodloch would fall, to their enemies delight. He looked around for the master but of course did not see him in his normal location since it was already occupied. After a few moments of gazing, Feichin spotted him atop his golem. He was sitting solemnly on what Machello would call the head... or was it the shoulder? He was not quite sure but was sure enough to determine that it was still his golem he sat atop of. The golem seemed bigger than what Machello remembered from the previous day. Perhaps it was because of all the people that it now towered above. Or maybe it really did grow a few feet under the will of the Earthen Lord now sitting on it. Machello pushed his way through the crowd. Surprisingly it was lot easier to move through now even though it was more densely packed. Maybe they recognized him as the speaker for the citizens. He could not be sure. Feichin looked down at him moving through the crowd and when Machello was close enough he spoke to the great man, "Lord Feichin. Your next question." Feichin nodded. Machello had been waiting for that before he dared speak any further.

"My Lord. First I would like to thank you for all you have done for us and me personally. Your time is precious and we value every moment and every word you utter. As for the next question, please tell us about the "Scribing of the Ages". It is ironic that it seems we are doing that now in all actuality but I believe this even refers to a contest."

Feichin looked down at Machello and then around at the waiting crowd. "First I would like to say that I am not impressed with this turnout. This is what is expected of Bloodloch. Let it be known that tomorrow we shall reconvene at the West Gate. That is a more appropriate place for this kind of crowd. That is the most appropriate place for the city of Bloodloch." At the sound of the revered city name, Feichin could hear some cheering throughout the crowd. Spirit. He had missed that. "Hail Bloodloch," he screamed and the crowd responded in kindness. This was a vast improvement from yesterday. He had brought the city unity back. He was proud at that moment but he dare not let up. He had the city by the ears and heart. He must continue on. "Now," he said. The crowd quieted down. "The question is of the "Scribing of Ages." You are correct in that it was a contest. It was not just any contest though but one held by...hmmm I can not remember who. But it was simply a writing contest. I do not know why it gained such a title but I do remember it involved a lot of people. You see the contest was on the best story that could be written. There were many enchants. There were former Bardic winners and people who scribed many of the old books no longer found in the library here that is no longer found." Feichin secretly remarked about his chosen words. He liked how he said that and reminisced about his old days as a writer. His old day as a writer he remembered correctly. He moved along, "The contest was held over a month in length. I remember I entered myself but do not ask me what I wrote about. No, wait, I do remember a little bit. It was of a great warrior, like myself. He was old and was merely scribing his stories down for his final memoirs. It is kind of ironic now that you think about it." And Feichin thought about it. The situation he was in now was exactly what he wrote about all those years ago. Had this been predestined? Had this already been planned out for him? The coincidence was just too unbelievable for Feichin to chalk up to anything but fate. "Besides that, I am unsure what more was written. I can tell you though that the words flowed through my hand like sand flows through yours. It was almost majestic. My hand was the ultimate instrument to convert what I was thinking to words on parchment. It was a seamless transition." Feichin very much enjoyed the competition. It was a different challenge than he was used to. "I had many friends and allies that wrote too. They created great stories and great tales. I am sure if some of them were here now they would surely rival me in what they have to tell. I can not claim they were all as good as me though." Feichin thought back to his friend Mazzion. He could not believe he had not mentioned the great warrior until now but he would say his peace and move on. "Like my friend Mazzion, The Mage of Quills. It was said he was a great writer as well but he did not compare to me. He entered the contest as well and we had a bit of a competition to see who could write the most. Needless to say who won that." Feichin smirked. He knew who the best writer was and did not even need to finish tell the crowd below the ending to end. "However, none of us won. Ha-ha. I do not even know who did. Frankly, I do not think I ever knew who won. I finished my story, submitted it, and simply did

not place. But I was fine with that. They say the pen is mightier than the sword. Try saying that with my flails through your head is what I say. So went the "Scribing of Ages", great works of literature was written. Great works of art created. I'm sure my story is out there somewhere, but I doubt it would be worth reading. Machello thought to himself that he must find this story. He would check every library in the land for the opportunity to read what Feichin had written. He had to know everything. Feichin glanced about the crowd and then looked down at Machello who supplied him with the next question.

"You said Mazzion, Lord Feichin. Is this the same Mazzion the Mazzness the Last Ankyrean?" Machello had not heard Feichin mention Mazzion by name up until this point. He was almost afraid to ask about him because Feichin took so long to bring him up. He was involved in so many of Feichin's stories almost assisting him or calling for help. Machello went on, "The same Mazzion of the Elements? There are many stories of him. Just about as many stories of you Lord Feichin. I, and I am sure the rest of the crowd would love to hear stories about him as well as all the other notable figures of your time including Ezalor, Lyl, Ison and any others you can possibly think of. Those whose names have echoed through eternity as well as those who did not quite make a great impact but who you remember from the time."

Feichin was a little disturbed at the question. He almost regretted talking about Mazzion. He did not hold any hostility towards the man or any of the other people mentioned, but he had not planned on talking about them. He would rather reconstruct his own greatness to the crowd. He would rather speak of his adventures, triumphs, masterpieces, and victories. He was very self-centered in this regard. He did not care. He knew how great he was and everyone should know it as well. "Very well. If this is truly what you want me to speak on I guess I have little choice. I was hoping you would want to know a little more about me and my history but I am not overtly disappointed. I guess we can start with Lord Mazzion." Feichin thought about all the times with Mazzion and the battles he fought alongside. He did not quite know where to begin. He was not sure exactly what they wanted to know. Ironically, he pondered, he was not exactly sure what he remembered. "Lord Mazzion the Last Ankyrean was a good friend to me. I am sure his accomplishments have echoed throughout eternity as mine have. Mazzion the Mazzness. Mazzion the Holocaust. Mazzion of the Elements. Mazzion the Augmented. Mazzion the Artifact. Mazzion the Boom. Mazzion the Young Minded. Mazzion of Shadows. Mazzion the cold. Mazzion the Archmage. Mazpyre. These are all names and titles he has gone by through the ages. Like myself there is a story for everyone. The exact story I can not be sure. I do not know when I first met the man. I think he may have been a member of Spinesreach. I can definitely be sure that he was a mage. The best of mages. It was said he could craft great bombs of fire to destroy entire villages and towns. It was said he failed to even realize a lot of his potential, most of it being wasted." Feichin had tried to teach Mazzion the ways of combat many times. However, he was very old and thick-headed. He often refused to listen to anyone but himself. Feichin found this sad. He knew Mazzion was very strong but he lacked the knowledge that Feichin had. "We pretty much were unstoppable together," Feichin continued. "There were none

in all the land that could defeat us together. There were none who could challenge our might. I do not remember how Mazzion became an Ankyrean either. I do know he was not born that way. I paid little attention to such things. I think he may have been designated by the people of this city but I am not sure and do not wish to reveal false information. Whatever happened, I do know in my time it was only him and a man called Qweddyn who wielded the race of the Ankyreans." Though wielding the power was of course a different thing, Feichin knew. He let the crowd into his insights. "He was called the Augmented because he also wielded much power from the Ankyreans. I am not sure if many of their artifacts exist now but I do know, during my time, these artifacts granted many people immense powers. The more of these artifacts you had, in general the stronger you were. Do not be confused though. These artifacts were not everything. While many people throughout my times wielded vast amounts of these artifacts to artificially increase their strength, like Mazzion the Artifact, they still fell to me in battle because of my superior curing, knowledge, intelligence, wit, and preparation. There were many who were upset about this. There were many who would consider themselves among the top fighters of the land simply because of the amount of gold they spent to acquire these artifacts from Qweddyn. I always laughed at them. You see, I required nothing to defeat my enemies." Feichin began to ponder about the potential he lost during his time. He did not wield many artifacts and often wondered how much stronger he would have been if he simply parted with some gold. How much faster he would have beaten his enemies if he had the same amount of artifacts as them. "I chose not adorn myself with such powers. The Earth was enough. If you asked me, they were crutches, these artifacts. They would artificially make someone better or make someone perceive better than they truly were. Now they did make some guilds way stronger than other guilds. Sometimes the gods themselves would come from the places they dwell and remove artifacts from this continent. It was rumored they were too powerful and they chose to use them for themselves for their godly purposes. Like I have said before, I try not to dwell in the business of gods." Feichin had not realized how far he got off the topic. He remembered he was talking about Mazzion, and Ankyreans and somehow went off into a rant about artifacts. He took a breath obviously not needing it. He needed to cool himself down and focus. It was hard for him to wrestle his mind free of the artifact situation as to him it seemed just yesterday he was constantly fighting against the power of one of the most powerful races. He'd see them all destroyed if it was his choice. He got back on topic, "But Mazzion, the General. He was especially brutal in team combat. You rarely saw him fighting alone towards the end of his days. In fact, I can not remember us ever fighting. As I said, I would constantly ask him to let me teach him the ways within the arena but he refused. I think he always believed he was truly better with his artifacts and such and had no need. It was almost pathetic watching him come up with excuses. But pity him, you should not for he'd kill every last one of you. He would drop a cold infused bomb in this room and destroy the whole city." Feichin had not meant to make Mazzion sound weak. He was not. The words just came out wrong at times. He continued, "I remember one battle. It was me, Lord Ezalor, and Lord Mazzion going against three others; a sentinel, a luminary, and a shaman I believe. In fact, we were all Teradrim at the time." Feichin never mentioned that there came a time when others of different guilds could acquire powers between

any class. "Well, they were not within the guild but they had our powers." Feichin saw no confusion from the crowd so he reckoned they understood what he meant. "And this battle would be easy because no one can go against three Teradrim like us and live. However, the battle was almost lost because Mazzion, the Chasm just wanted to sit in the rear and open chasms for the enemies to fall through. I was almost caught in one myself. I do not even know what Ezalor was doing but it was not helping. For most of the battle it was me vs. three others. Ha-ha." Feichin laughed. The memory was easy to recall because it was one of the last ones before his slumber. He could remember every detail but concluded, "We won...eventually. I think Mazzion may have killed someone with his chasm that seemingly took forever but the other was slain by me and the last turned to light and ran away like the coward the Enorians are." Feichin realized he was not painting a very good picture of the General Mazzion was with that one. He still enjoyed that memory though and did not mind sharing it despite his goal. "Perhaps that was a bad example of the leadership this man portrayed." Feichin hopped down off his golem and walked about. He needed to stretch his legs after not moving them for what seemed like a long time atop the golem. He continued.

"I am sure you have heard of the perpetual wars that plagued this continent from the years 300 to 400." The crowd nodded. "This was a very important time in the history of Bloodloch. You see, every city was against us. I do not know how they are now but I can tell you that back then everyone wanted to see us fall, Spinesreach, Duiran, and Enorian. I do not recall if Ashtan did too but I think Ashtan had long fallen to the Drekathi army beforehand. I guess I should explain about that first though it had little bearing the "Perpetual war". Feichin went on to explain to the crowd about the Drekathi and the Marzpaws who floated above Sapience and brought their armies to dry and conquer what they could. He explained the importance of Scidve Cove and the strategic advantage it held. He explained the great fall of Ashtan and the dragons that followed. He gave insight into the hunt for these dragons and all that came after. He wished he remembered more. Many details were skipped over but as is Feichin, he only had an eye for combat. If the events did not involve people dying he really was not interested all that much. The writing contest and chains, "Fuck chains" he thought, were of few times he had done anything other than kill. If he had known that one day his history would save this city, maybe he would have listened more and participated in much of the events of the land. Maybe he would have cared more about distant lands and the quests and the people. Maybe he would not have killed so much. As Feichin thought he realized the only truth. It did not matter. All that he had done before and all that he would do from this day forward did not matter. He just had to work with what he had and give these citizens his knowledge. When he was finished explaining Delve, and the invasion and everything, he went back to his original story. "Now, the "Perpetual Wars". Despite the invasion and the looming threat, everyone still hated Bloodloch. We were the strongest and no city could rival us. As such, no city did rival us... alone anyway. Enorian declared war on us and got utterly decimated. Next would be Duiran's turn and they too would fall victim to the might of Bloodloch. When Enorian and Duiran would both regain their strength, they would try to team up against us. **THEY WOULD TRY TO TAKE DOWN YOUR CITY!**" Feichin raised his voice

louder. He needed to instill the greatness that was Bloodloch and the means others would try to go through to destroy it. "They would try to destroy us." Feichin knew the next part. He did not quite like remembering this but alas it happened. It was history as he remembered it and it must be told. "I may have misspoken at first. Not every city wanted to see us fall. I guess you could consider Spinesreach an ally." Feichin scoffed. He knew the truth and soon enough the crowd would know as well. "When we were at war with Enorian and Duiran, our "ally" would fail us. They would succumb to mere pressure from Duiran to stay out of it. Our ally complied. They betrayed us" He let his words hang in the air. He refused to say they were defeated not because it was not true but because he was not quite sure how it ended. "I wanted to kill Spinesreach. I wanted to burn their city to the ground. I did not want anything to do with them. I did not even care about the war with Duiran and Enorian or whoever it was with. The wars of the time were all blurs. I wanted Spinesreach to feel the wrath." Feichin forgot his hatred about the Spires to the North. He would eventually reconcile his difference but he would never forget their betrayal. "Alas, that is how it went. One side would win a war and as soon as they were strong enough again, they would declare another war. Sometimes, it a victorious city would not even wait for the opposing city was ready and recovered to declare war. They would just do it as soon as they could. It did not all involve Bloodloch, believe it or not but most of it was." Feichin pondered for a moment and got back to the subject of why he brought up these wars. "General Mazzion. He was the one that led us through these wars. Tralendar, the Betrayer was there as well, leading troops. I had my hand in it too. In fact, I too could have been called a general if I wanted it but I did not feel myself worthy. I was not one to lead troops. I just fought. I may have helped in some of the strategic capturing but, mainly, I just fought. Alas, that is how my wars went. I truly believed that I could win most of them by making my enemies die more. I truly believed that if I won enough individual and team battles I could win the war single handedly. I did not think the troops should be necessary for me to march into a city and claim it for Bloodloch. But they were necessary. They served a purpose. They were vital to maintaining a siege and holding ground. Anyway. Mazzion was a good commander. He was a great combatant as well and though he never listened, he was a great friend."

"As for the others... Let us start with Lord Ezalor the Statue. That is what I call him. He was a Bloodborn... mostly. Though he did choose to dabble with other skills as I have already mentioned. However, he was strongest in Bloodborn. He was way stronger in Bloodborn. Maybe it was because he knew all the intricacies of that class in and out. Maybe it was because of the artifacts he wielded. Maybe his class was just favored by the gods and overly powerful." Feichin nodded. He knew the answer was the last one, and some of the second one as well. "Yea, it was because of his class. In fact, I do not think any Bloodborn I met during the time was weak. Every single Bloodborn that was walking around during the time was enormously and unfairly strong. They could drain your mental facilities while draining your physical health at the same time. There was no way to combat this and often led to quite a quick battle, not in your favor. Their scythes hit so hard, for no apparent reason for there was nothing overtly conspicuous about them. And on top of that, they would make you bleed. Oh how they would make you bleed. If you

think the bleeding I did as Feichin the Red was bad, you have never seen the bleeding Bloodborn do. It would make you rethink ever calling me that." Feichin could feel himself getting upset as he went on. He remember Bloodborn to be very strong during his day and it pained him both emotionally, mentally, and physically to fight them. In fact, out of anybody, he strictly avoided fighting them...and Templars and venom classes in general. He could not let them know that though. He was Feichin, the Unaugmented, he could not let them think he was not great. He was upset that this went on for what he deemed eons. He was upset that the gods themselves would not strike down the Bloodborn and remake them in a new imagine. "But yes, Ezalor the statue. I call him that because there were times when anyone could come up to him and kick him or spit on him or do anything to him and he would not respond. He would merely stand their staring off into nothing. I always wondered what he was thinking about and what he was contemplating but I never asked. No one ever asked. I often thought about what would happen to that one youngster who dared step up to him and kick him and in that very instant, Ezalor awaken from his trance, and seeing it. I could only imagine the blood that would be spread across the West Gate." A fond memory, Feichin thought. He went on, "And Lyl and Cariv, of the Cardinalis clan. I think they may have been husband or wife or maybe son and daughter. I can not remember. Maybe they were nothing at all but they were Cardinalis. Mazzion was too. Do not think I mentioned that. This is not important though. The Cardinalis really had nothing going for them except their name. They had a lot of combatants, none to my level though. Anyway, Lyl the Syssin. She was forever "Phased" as she called it. Long story short, it has something to do with Severn and another dimension or something like that. I do not remember. What I do know is that she could never be found but she would always seemingly pop out of nowhere during combat and drag people to phase with her and do 'syssinly' things to them. Or she would be off afar, and you would only see arrows flying in. You really did not have to know who they were coming from, they were always from Lyl. Cariv was many classes as well. He was a Teradrim at one point too. I think he may have started off in our guild but eventually he would go over to the mages with Mazzion. He was a great fighter as well. I remember him mostly as a monk though constantly using his kai and other skills to vanquish foes." Feichin tried to think of others he was forgetting. He remembered a few names and would talk about them or just mention them if he could not think of anything to say. Others he just remembered their faces. "Tralendar, the Betrayer, betrayed Ashtan as their General and commander of armies. He..." Feichin tried to recall but only managed, "did something with Ashtan that caused them to lose a war and a lot more at that. Afterwards he joined Bloodloch where at first he was not trusted but grew to become a respected citizen and commander. Ison was another combatant of the time. He fought alongside many battles with me. He was not weak but strong and crafty. Draiman too. Well, I can not remember that much about him." Feichin wondered for a moment if he was just making the name up or if the person Draiman really existed. He could not remember anything significantly accomplished by him. Only thing he could think of, and he told the crowd, "Vampire. Sorry I can not give you more. There was also Alexina. It was said her artifacts rivaled the gods and the Ankyreans themselves. She supposedly had an island all to herself the east somewhere. I never visited and wonder if the ravages of time have left it intact." Feichin talked about plenty more people.

"Ellenia, Conner, Clouser, Ilyon and many more", he mentioned and elaborated to the crowd. "Xarian the Unmentioned, was probably the best combatant Feichin had ever seen, excluding himself. He was also very statue-like, like Ezalor but when he swung whatever weapon he was wielding at the time, the world ducked. It was said he could defeat whole armies as if it was just a reflex." Darliea was next that Feichin talked about. She was another city leader and he explained how she led the city through some of the worst of times. Feichin was angry with himself he could not recall more. People so important to him back then were but fleeting memories now.

The golem bent its long rocky arms downward toward Feichin, opening his hand. Feichin walked towards the golem, seeming unimpressed with the golem's movement. He stepped into the cupped hand and the golem raised him upward. Feichin stepped off onto the golem's soldier and addressed the crowd. "They created what you stand in this day. They created what you guys have failed to fight for. Do not fail them. Do not let their memories go forgotten. Remember what they did for you and fight for this city." Feichin ushered towards Machello and Machello gave him another question. Feichin continued to answers back and forth with Machello in what he would assume was an endless duel. It seemed like Machello was just asking him questions to see if he could run out of answers. Unafraid, Feichin pushed forward. He would get through this. He would let this great city know of its greatness. He would let this city know of all that he did. He would let the city know of the world. Feichin answered questions about his enemies too. He determined that he could not establish his greatness if he did not have opponents to fight. Though he did not mention them by name, he talked about them as much as he could. He mentioned the one he called "The Starburster" because it would take forever to kill her. She would seemingly come back to life again and again and would get slain repeatedly for no reason. He mentioned "The Infuriating" who got kicked out of Enorian and could not be worked with. He was a formidable foe who relied too much on cheap tactics than actual skill to secure a victory. He mentioned the "Master of Artifacts" who thought just because he owned many, he could win. He could not except against weaklings; people Feichin could beat without even thinking. When he got to the Templars of the time, Feichin paused. He hated Templars with every ounce of his being. He understood from what Machello was saying that they were still around today but not as strong. From what Feichin remembered. They were absolutely brutal. He had a hard time getting this out but he told the crowd his thoughts on them as well beginning with, "Fuck Templars."

"They were once the Paladins and I believe they were related to the Sentinels and the Infernals of the world as well through the Seluno brothers or something like that. Like I have mentioned, I am not one for history and do not care much for things outside Bloodloch or outside combat. Anyway, the Paladins shared the skills of Luminaries and could call upon weak rites in their area. The Templars took this skill to the next level. They now possessed the ability to call upon auras they would surround themselves with. If you asked me, they were like moving rites but it did not matter. Now, they could use virtually any weapon and they did. Like how we can give bruising and damage limbs. They could do it better and faster. Where we can meagerly capitalize off said

bruises and damaged limbs, they could do it better and more punishing. It was difficult times fighting a Templar." Feichin had not even reached the precipice of what he was trying to say. His mind was going too fast for him to focus. He took a moment and calmed down before he began again. He wanted to iterate how strong these people were. "The funny thing is, this was not even their main way to slay a foe. They quite a handful. The main way they used though was through their use of venoms and swords. You know how Syssin can deliver two venoms at once with a double slash, well Templars can do the same thing, except faster. You know how Syssin pinpricks were barely felt? Well Templars, were felt harder. They could be more damaging than 3 Teradrim pounding on someone." Feichin remembered the slashes across his body. It seemed like a blur now but he knew the capabilities of the Templars. "So yes, they were faster than the fastest and stronger than the strongest but that was not all. Ha-ha," Feichin feigned a laugh. He was starting to get a bit hysterical in his explanation of the capabilities. "No citizens. They could still do more. And this is to a point about the Syssin as well but that is a whole other rant. But they would first hit you with paralysis and follow up with clumsiness venoms. So you are stuck there unable to attack back. When you could cure paralysis you had to of course or you could not do anything. But then you could not cure clumsiness so as you tried to attack, it would fail. They would do this over and over and over again and then they'd hit you with what I have heard called "vorpal". Now "vorpal" could be used for many effects but the Templars at the time only used it for one thing and that was to deliver another venom affliction. So while you are sitting there, and especially me, as a Teradrim trying to fight through their parry, rebounding defense, and incredible dodging abilities, they are afflicting you faster than lightning. There was nothing you could do. Bout time you figured out what was going on, you had anorexia, paralysis, limp veins, and slickness all upon your person. You could not cure then. There was nothing you could do about it. But wait. There is more." Feichin could go on with this forever. "As if that was not enough. The gods saw fit to gift these Templars with an ability or reflex or whatever to stab back at opponents after they were attacked. It was almost as if it was a reflex done unconsciously. I have tried to master this technique many times and failed. I can only assume it was a unique ability of theirs. Now the stabbing back was not a problem though. It was the subsequent curare they would dab their daggers in beforehand. Fighting a Templar is like having permanent paralysis. It is like standing there and letting someone inflict you with venoms over and over without any reasonable way to fight back. It was annoying. I hated it. I do not often say this about anything during my time but it was unfair. It was unfair the gods favored them. It was unfair." Feichin almost cried but he managed to hold it in. He knew talking about this would make him upset but the people must know. "Though still, I rise." Feichin let loose his signature line. "Though every single Templar was walking death even if they just acquired the skills they would never be as great as me. Like the Bloodborn of the time, they were ridiculously unfair. None of them had any real skill. None of them would survive a day without these handicaps the gods saw fit to bestow on them" Feichin did not think they were getting the point. He stood gazing about the crowd and did not see the angry faces he expected. They did not gauge the depth of his anger as he expected. "I remember a fight I had with one of them. His name was Kaeus. Actually, he was a traitor if I remember correctly. Originally fighting for the side of the

righteous before moving on to fight for Enorian. The battle was not a fierce one. The battle was mostly one sided throughout. We were outside the Vashnars in the hills to the east. I do not remember their name but I am sure you are aware of them as there is a river to the north and the desert to the east." Feichin had been to this place countless times and cursed silently to himself because he could not properly recall the name. We approached each other, both ready to end the life of the one they were looking at. I drew back my flail and before I knew it he striking out at me with his swords. Paralysis was the first affliction I felt. It was the only affliction I felt as the next one and next one were laid upon me. The fight lasted no longer than the time it took for me to tell you about the fight. That is how quick and deadly they are. Death in moments. Unstoppable." Feichin stopped, having no more to say on the subject. He looked towards Machello.

"Landmarks and Leylines," Feichin heard Machello say and subsequently repeated. "That's a good one," Feichin thought. He had never mentioned them together nor heard of them in the same sentence, as they were two totally different things. However, he thought, they did bring people of the lands together. He let the crowd in on what he was thinking, "I have not heard that in so very long. You must understand though, they were two completely separate things. Actually, if my memory does not fail me, they were hundreds of years apart. Landmarks, I will admit, I did not participate in very often so I can not tell you too much about them. All I do remember is that there were seven of them I believe. And they were scattered across the lands. I think one was located in the Sirrocian Mountains but I am not so sure. It was some type of shrine I think. Anyway, the purpose of these landmarks was more for Necromancers and Devotionists, luminaries and such. I believe if the landmarks were..." Feichin searched for the word. He was not sure quite what he wanted to say but he kept going anyway, ""tuned" in the favor of one or the other, necromancy or devotion, it would give the people who those skills greater power or improve the use of them." Feichin glanced to the crowd for any Necromancy users. He was not quite sure what one would look like, he mused. They could come in all shapes and sizes and since people were no longer restricted to the abilities of their particular guild, he could be looking at one right now and not even know it. "As you may or may not be aware, I also possess necromancy and the abilities of the Indorani." Feichin paused for a moment and put away his flail. He reached into his bag searching for something and emerging a few moments later with a deck of tarot cards. He pulled one out and said, "Now, I have not seen these in a while." Smiling, he put them back into his bag. He realized as he was pulling them out that they would be more appropriate for a discussion on Indorani. He was not equipped or prepared for such at all. Instead, he asked for a volunteer. As a random man was chosen from the audience, Machello grimaced remember what happened to the last volunteer. Feichin laid his hands on the volunteer and seemingly crippled the poor man on the spot. The audience gasped but Machello half expected something gruesome like this to occur. When Feichin was finished he helped the man heal his injuries and turned to the crowd, "Necromancy. Very powerful stuff. I'm not sure of the capabilities of the current masters of death but I can tell you back during my time they were stronger than what I showed just now. And if you travel back further, to the time of Landmarks,

they were even stronger then. Imagine if I could do this infinitely to you, and faster. Imagine if I could cheat death over and over again, without worrying about my necromantic essence failing me. Alas, this is what the landmarks did. It made powerful necromancers more powerful. However, as I said, it also aided Devotionists as well. Do you remember the rites I always talk about and how utterly pathetic they usually are. Well imagine if they could go on for a long time and they were stronger. That would affect my fight against them. So in essence, it was not just a conflict between Necromancers and others, it concerned the whole world. If my enemies are stronger they will be harder to defeat. If our necromancers have slightly more power, we will be hard to stop. Do you understand?" The crowd nodded in unification. Feichin went on, "Now Leylines, they are completely different. Where in Landmarks you would fight over specific swathes of land at specific times of the year of the purpose of helping necromancy or devotion, leylines were a lot more random and served just one purpose to every city; increase the amount of ylem. Now, as I am sure you still use and benefit from the research of ylem, I do not need to go into more detail on that." But Feichin did anyway. He explained what it was used for and the benefits the city gained because of them. He was not going to at first but it did not appear as if the city was very responsive. He knew they still knew of Delve and ylem but figured they must just have been lazy and forgotten the gifts bestowed to them and how to maintain them all those years ago. He continued, "But to continue on, they were random. You could not predict when they would appear, these leylines. When they did, the object was to draw upon them to withdraw ylem for the city. There three types and they were indiscriminate about where they appeared though very rarely if at all within a city. They had minor ones that did not contain much ylem but appeared most often. You could not even detect where they were until you were right on top of them but you could generally sense if one was in the area. The highest step were lessers than appeared. They contained the second most amounts of the three and could be detected very far away. A lot of the conflict between Bloodloch and other cities occurred at these. In fact, most of the combat in the preceding years of 400 MA and the years that followed were centered on them. When one was "tapped" as we like to say, it was impossible for the world not to know. They could feel it and since the immense power and ylem being disturbed. I remember countless fights at these places." Feichin sucked his teeth as he remembered back to his days. He drew his flail and once again demonstrated different tactics and maneuvers he commanded. He spoke of how effortlessly groups of citizens would come together, from all cities, to fight at these locations for the chance to procure more ylem. He spoke of the spillage of combat to other areas and the conflicts that arose through the times. "Finally, the last type, as you may have guessed, were what we deemed major. These rattled the realm when they appeared." Feichin could only remember one though. He corrected himself and excused his over excitement, "In truth, I had only experienced one in my lifetime. It occurred on the Prealatorian Highway one day on the back end of the century 300. Great fighters from all the land traveled very far and conversed on the Highway, specifically on the road north of trees of which was the Morgun Forest. It was Bloodloch vs. Enorian vs. Spinesreach vs. Duiran. It was a free for all for the ages. I can not say who won that day for winning and losing is not the goal here. It is all about acquiring ylem. I do know Bloodloch procured way more than any other city and killed more of our enemies than we

that fell." Feichin had a satisfied grin on his face. He always smirked when he remembered battles he had won. He tried to show a little humility by not saying who won but it did not work. He did not think he needed to constantly mention every battle he won because he had won so many and they already knew that. They knew Bloodloch of old was great already. "Sadly though, another never did grace our lands since the one and only. Maybe there was only ever meant to be one. Maybe the sheer force and numbers each city brought someone broke the mechanism to create such because so much ylem was extracted. Unless there was ever another one for our scientists and scholars to properly diagnose and study, no one will ever know. It is of little consequence though. I crave the battle and blood the major one provided but I was satiated with what I found in lesser ylem pockets." Feichin was finished but he was not ready to give Machello another question to ask. He rubbed the back of his head, scratching as if it would give him an idea of what else he wanted to say. He wondered how many more questions there were left. He wondered how many questions he had asked already. He did not keep count and had no clue. It did not matter to him though because he would stand here and talk all night if the city needed him to. If many of the people before him did not require rest and sustenance he would talk for days on end. Alas, he realized, that was not his current situation. He looked towards Machello who seemed eager to give him another question and go on. With a wave of his hand and a slight nod, he gave Machello the all clear to fire off his next question.

Machello looked through his list and found the next question. It was on the "Time of Many Deaths". He knew many people died around this time and wanted some clarification from Feichin. Feichin responded, "The "Time of Many Deaths" or the "Time of Endless Hunt" was a sad or glorious time depending on who you ask. See during this time, many citizens, such as you and your enemies were only concerned with one thing; power. Now, I am not saying it was a bad thing but the only way they knew to acquire this power was to kill. Kill a whole lot." Feichin raised his arms and a pillar rose into the room beside him. He whipped his flail out quicker than he ever had and crushed the pillar all in one blow. He was unflinching in his movements even though he was talking while it occurred. He continued, "So during this time, everyone set out to gain as much experience and power as they could." Feichin put his flail away and dusted off his hands on his cloak. He did not quite know how to convey the despair that shadowed over this period. "Many villages and towns fell victim to the unreasonable wrath of the many. You know of places like Moghedu, and various other towns and villages across the land? Well they were the main feeding ground. People would slaughter the citizens over and over again. Lord Mephistoles, as I mentioned was one of the culprits during this time. Lord Mazzion the Endless Death and Ezalor the Murderer did not get their names for nothing. And if you thought they needed it breaks in between villages, think again. They would simply move from one village to the next like a plague. They could not be stopped. Their hunger for blood was unfeedable." Feichin shook his head. He knew the true key to power and it was not going out hunting such weaklings that could easily be killed. "I did not partake. I refused. I fought those worthy of fighting. In the end, through all their hard work and dedication to slaughter, what did they gain?" He let the crowd think about this for a moment. It was a rhetorical question he knew no one would answer but still

he wanted them to have time to process. Holding them in suspense for what seemed like forever, he finally let his answer through, "Nothing. They had nothing to show for it. So this is what I tell you Bloodloch. Do not waste away on things that are weak. Seek the strong and fight the strong. That is the only way to truly grow. You need only look at me for the truth. I instead chose to spend my time studying combat. I chose to spend my time preparing for combat. I chose to spend my time contemplating the enemy and fighting worthy opponents and look where I am. I am the greatest. Feichin the Unequaled." His name rang out across the room echoing against the large crystal walls and high ceilings. He was sure this traveled throughout the entire Grotto and he was sure this reached all the ears in Bloodloch. He continued, "I have no ill will. Some people do what they think is best for them to get stronger. Some kill those that are helpless and some buy artifacts that increase their strength but there is only one true path."

The next question Feichin would encounter from Machello's list involved the Gods during the time Feichin reigned supreme. Feichin tried to formulate his thoughts before he spoke but found it was quite difficult, as Feichin did not remember too much about them. This question was likely the hardest he would answer on the day. He thought back, "I can tell you about Ivoln all you like. He is the Father and it is through him I gain the power of the Earth. It is through him the power of Undeath comes to us as well. This is his original form whence once, as I have mentioned, he was Dhaivol. Dhar, the Underking I can not say much on either except his realms lie with those who have perished. We are fortunate, and by we, I mean undead, in that we shall never visit his realms." Feichin saw this as an opportunity to mention some of the chaos within Bloodloch. "Speaking of which, I have noticed many citizens who still see the Underking and receive dreams from Omei. This is not acceptable. I am willing to live with this for now because I understand the times have changed and I understand the God structure may not be what it once was but I can tell you this, if you were not Undead during my time, you would soon be visiting Dhar." Feichin hoped he instilled some fear into those who had forsaken the gift of the earth. "Let's see, there were other Gods as well of course. There was Khepri, God of Mischief though one day she changed her stance became that of Seething Chaos. I do not remember that too well. There were Chakrasul as well. She was the Goddess of Corruption. She was worshipped by the Indorani and all those corrupt for the longest of times. The two, Khepri and Chakrasul would one day form to become Ysmali, The Sanguine. It was much akin to the union Ivoln and Dhar shared at one point. There was also Damariel, Haern, Auresae, and Arion. I can not tell you anything at all about them except Auresae. I remember there being a God of Fire, Rahn once, but other than that nothing. I know it was now Auresae who commanded the flames Rahn had once. Lanos, God of Truth was one of the older gods, and in fact," Feichin thought to himself for a minute trying to determine whether the information he was about to reveal was correct. "He might be what they called Damariel. I fought a lot of wars against those four orders. They were mostly consisted of those who worshipped all things bright and trees. They would destroy shrines to our fathers and take down monuments and statues in his name. Those acts, of course, were unforgivable and the wrath of not only Teradrim but all those in his order befell them. The last war we were in, I believe, was with Haern or Damariel. Not sure. They had far superior numbers

and began destroying shrines to our Lord all throughout Sapience. They thought us too weak to defend those things that help generate our Lord power. I can tell you this, when the war was over, they thought twice about that." Feichin remembered the countless days and months he and others of his order spent praying at shrines. He was not one to stand idle for so long and loathe doing so. For each day he stood praying he would kill tens more of the enemy. They would pay for his time here. He made sure of that. "Severn was an old god, one of the oldest. His brothers were Lanos, God of Truth, and Hearn the Hunter. Hearn had something going on with the "rhythm" or something but Severn was more about artifice. I wish I could tell you more about the Grand Artifice and all that but I just do not know. There was also Slyphe. I can not remember much of him except the fact I swore she was a lady at one point and now he took the form of a man. Omei is the God of Dreams. Again, it's a realm all of you should fail to visit," Feichin looked over at Machello. He remembered his vision that he said he got when he was sleeping. It sounded much like a dream but he paid it no mind. Machello gulped at the mention. A vision he kept telling himself. Feichin continued on "She claims she was of "nightmares" but this nightmarish wrath or spooky dreams I never saw." Feichin cackled, thinking himself funny. "Now there was Galleus too. I'll just call him the God of Wind because I know he had something to do with that. He was the patron the Magi for as long as I can remember though. Niuri was another great goddess of the time. She even matroned the Teradrim guild for a stint. Her realm is of mystery and knowledge. During my time, you could almost certainly find a cabalist worshipping her somewhere. I do remember her voice, Neoma. She was a great lady as well. She was not as skilled in combat as many others but when the time came for her to fight, she did not hesitate to jump in. I believe she was a cabalist for the longest of times." Feichin sucked on his teeth trying to remember any other goods or goddesses he forgot. "There are many I am forgetting that have been lost to time. Hopefully manuscripts or something can be found that clearly states their impact on the world. I know if this was during my time, I would probably be struck dead for some of the blasphemous things I have uttered today. Ivoln himself would throw me in a chasm for simply not giving him the proper glory he deserves. The gods and goddesses were quick to do that. As I've said though, I was never a quick study on such things relating to gods. I was all about fighting during my time."

Machello looked down at his list to see what was left. He was surprised to find they had covered so much ground already. So much ground that there were hardly any questions left. He read through them quickly, trying to find the next best thing to ask Lord Feichin. He did not have a chance to sort many of these questions at the back end of the list so he feared some of them might have been duplicates. He addressed the crowd and Lord Feichin at the same time, "Lord Feichin and citizens. I fear there is not much left to discuss. Before I go on, I ask of you for any more questions that you may have. I have seen many of you writing during this time, as you should be and I only request that you now pass some of those questions forward so that I may press the same questions to Lord Feichin." There was not much movement at first. Machello feared he had made a fool of himself. He thought the crowd would definitely have more to ask the Earthen Lord. After all, each of Feichin's answers merely opened up more questions and

more to be answered. Machello saw a few scraps of paper being passed throughout the crowd. It was slow at first as they were navigating to the front. One guy would tap another on the shoulder to pass the paper forwards and that guy would do the same in turn. Machello guessed there were at least 100 additional questions to be asked. He knew the hour getting late by the tickling in of more vampires during Feichin's speech. He could feel the effects of slumber on himself now that he thought about it. As he looked up at Feichin, standing on top of his human formed colossal golem of black sand, he spoke "I will need a moment to organize all of this. Though, the hour grows late. Perhaps it would be best if we continued this tomorrow at the West Gate like you planned. That way all of the city can hear your history. That way everyone can be as inspired as those who had the opportunity to be here today. It will additionally give me time to organize all the questions for tomorrow." Feichin looked down at the scraps of paper he now held and the remaining questions that have yet to be asked. He continued, "You have answered hundreds of our queries today Lord Feichin. Let us finish these last couple hundred tomorrow." With a nod, Feichin seemingly agreed. He waved his hand and the crowd began to stir. It seemed like a cloud of dust appeared out of nowhere as people gathered their belongings, quills and parchments, and exited the Grotto. Machello was one of the last to leave. He contemplated once again going up to his hero and asking him about the visions but once again decided against it. When he left Feichin he was at the feet of his golem sitting against it with his eyes closed. Meditating again, he thought. He was doubly assured that he should not disturb the Earthen Lord.

Machello left, just as he did the previous days, full of wonder and excitement. He felt like this session was the best one yet. His mind was hazy to his surroundings as he made his way toward his home yet again. He could only focus on everything Lord Feichin had said. At that moment he wanted nothing but to be better as Feichin had commanded. He wanted to do better in not only the name of Bloodloch but of himself as well. He wanted to show his father and the fathers before him and all in his line that he was not weak, but strong. He wanted Bloodloch to be strong. He could see other people walking around him as well. Their eyes seemed fixed as if their minds too were not wholly on what was in front of them. Good, Machello thought. Everyone needed to think. Everyone needed to focus on rising from the depths of insignificance the city currently dwelled. On his walk, he noticed the streets were unusually silent. The normal screams Machello knew came from the prison complex were absent. Everyone, even the torturers must have been at the last meeting. Machello could not argue with the logic as he deemed as something not to be missed. What Feichin had to say could not merely be retold to other citizens around the city who had missed it. You had to experience much of it for yourself. You had to be there. Even the sound of the drafts and wind was gone. It was like nature itself decided to take a break today and partake in the discussion. He did not even crush one carrion beetle beneath his step on the way home, which was particularly unusual. Machello made it back to his house without event. He lit a candle to illuminate the room. While he could generally make his way around the city he could not navigate his own home in complete darkness. He could sense heat signatures from various fissures and other things that allowed him somewhat vision in the dark but it held no dominion in his own home where everything was the same temperature. Feichin

pulled out his flail and began swinging it to and fro as Feichin had. He wanted to be like him so he swung his flail to and fro as Feichin had. He was not sure if he was actually learning anything. He proposed he was merely making a joke out of his antics, that if anyone were to see him, surely they would have a good chuckle but he continued. He pulled out old books he had to study them. His grandfather had used these same books and he was strong. He thought if he reread them, for he had already read them hundreds of times, he would glimpse something he had missed before. It was as if Feichin's teachings were giving him an all new outlook on everything he thought to be true. They were. As he read on and continued to increase his knowledge he could feel he was able to do things he was not able to before. He was able to tell that his knowledge was growing exponentially. He felt, at last he may be becoming a true Teradrim. However, despite all this, he did not quite find himself where he wanted to be, where he needed to be. He knew he was still far off. He knew that still he needed more and no matter than training and exercises he would do that day, it would not be enough...yet. Feichin did not know what time it was when he decided to rest his eyes in his best. He could feel his body giving out and his mind was not far behind. Fatigue was almost at his doorstep and he thought it would come knocking any moment with promises to take him away to land a sleep, and hopefully dreamless nights. He felt closer to the Earth than he ever did that day. He was closer than he felt when Feichin was talking in the Crystal Caverns in the Grotto. Despite carpet and wood being beneath his feet, he felt he could hear the Earth talking to him, longing to regain one of its own into its fold. He did not know how to heed the call. He did not know what it all meant but tired eyes and draining energy soon overpowered any task he deemed worthy of taking part in or thinking about.

Machello awoke the next morning fresher than he ever felt in his life. He did not feel changed or much different at all. He just had a lot of energy he could not explain. Something was in the back of his mind though. He felt, for some reason, as if today would be a special day. He knew it was the last day of the questions but today he felt like there would be more of it. Like it was the beginning of something. He looked over his notes he scribbled last night and read some more of the books he found lying around. His hunger for knowledge, he realized, was insatiable. It did not seem it could be fulfilled. His power for hunger dwarfed anything else he desired. It was as if the more he learned something that day and mastered it in his house, the greater the desire to master more and grow stronger. He knew he did not have much time before he needed to head out to the West Gate so he practiced for just a brief movement before he headed out. The streets were packed. Crowds were moving all in one direction, west. He knew where they were headed and was eager to join them. He did not realize Bloodloch had so many citizens. He thought he recognized everyone in the city but as he made eye contact with people and bumped into others he quickly realized that his knowledge was flawed. He wondered if he even knew half the citizens or even half of that. Where had all these people come from he wondered? There were not this many people at the fire, and there definitely were not this many people the last time Lord Feichin called a meeting at the West Gate. He saw all types of races, clothing, and hairstyles. Some he suspected were from Delve and other continents. He had never been there himself but

he saw merchants and peddlers with items from that unexplored landmass. He surmised that maybe citizens of Bloodloch abroad were returning home. This must be it, he thought. Word had finally reached all of Bloodloch's citizens across the land they were returning home to learn their roots. To learn of their failures. This filled Machello with a sense of city pride he never felt before. He always loved Bloodloch and always tried to do right by it but he did not feel the sense of unity as he felt it now. Sure, everyone may converge on a fire and try to help but it just was not the same. It was not the same feeling as Machello felt now. He felt as if Bloodloch could stand against anyone and anything. Still I rise, he thought. He made his way along with the crowd towards the West Gate. The crowd was moving slower than he would have desired but he was just glad it was moving in the right direction. He deemed himself fortunate that he would not have to push through and make way against a wave of people traversing a path opposite to his own. He noticed he got some looks from the crowd as he walked along with them but he did not pay them any mind. He reconciled that they must not recognize him and what he does. He could tell not everyone knew who he was though as the people who gave him funny looks were receiving funny looks of their own from others. As if the others were missing a joke or something notable they did not understand. When Machello finally arrived at the West Gate he was flabbergasted. Technically, he could not even consider himself at the West Gate because he was so far back. The amount of people here was extraordinary. Whereas he thought Bloodloch was big before, he quickly removed any idea of how big he thought it was now. He wondered how many people have yet to show. He wondered of still all the people that would not, or could not, be in attendance. He could barely make out the gate in the distance because he was so far back. Making his way through this crowd would be a tough if not impossible endeavor. At times like these he often thought of his friend Kaleth, now passed. Kaleth knew how to move in a crowd. In fact, he knew how to move in a crowd unseen and leaving it undisturbed. He had the grace of gods and dexterity to rival any juggler or performer. He was also very limber, knowing the proper times to contort limbs and be loose with his movements. Machello missed Kaleth, but he gathered himself as he thought this was no time to think old memories of dead friends. It would not help him with his current task and he needed to focus. Machello moved through the crowd with the grace of a boulder. Unlike Kaleth, he bumped into everyone, seemingly intentional is the way it appeared. The crowds had not parted for him like he expected or come to know. He surmised there were just too many unfamiliar faces within. He struggled trying to move along. It seemed like it took him way too long to reach the front when he finally got there. Besides the fact no one wanted to part ways, it seemed like more people were being added as he went along, as if the crowd was getting bigger and bigger. Surely he misinterpreted just how far back he was he thought. He was surprised when he got to the front and saw... nothing. Lord Feichin was not there. He assumed he would be there but guess there still must be a lot of time left before the Earthen Lord took his position. Machello could feel the heat of the crowd all around him. He noticed it was hotter than usual but just blamed it on that. This would be the last day of the sessions, Machello thought. He hoped the visions he saw would not reappear later and hope what Feichin had to say lastly would give him some more clues, though he doubted it. Machello wondered what was taking Feichin so long. He was sure now that it was time to begin

and did not take the Earthen Lord for one to be late or one to even accept tardiness within his own domain. Machello looked behind him in the crowd but saw nothing but rows and rows of heads. Some still had their hoods up, vampires he thought, trying to conceal themselves this morning. Though Bloodloch was dark, they seemed like they wanted to take no chance of a crevice or crack opening within the ceiling and letting the light, the bane of their existence, shine through. Time passed on and Machello was not sure what to do. The crowd started to become unsettled. Machello thought this many people being upset at once would not bode well for the city. Despite all the progress Lord Feichin had done, it seemed it could turn into a riot any moment for his failure to appear as promised. The crowd was getting louder with every passing moment, their voices echoing from the high ceiling to the walls and back. Machello thought he could make out figures moving away from the West Gate, fed up with the no show. Lord Feichin would lose the city at any moment... The ground shook.

It was weak. Barely felt. It was the kind of tremor that would have you question whether or not anything had occurred. Machello was unsure if anything had occurred but he felt it. It was not enough to get the crowd to calm down or even momentarily pause to consider what happened. As Machello thought about it though, there was definitely a shake. He tried to tell the crowd hush but his voice was drowned out by all those around him. He shouted at the top of his lungs but even that was not enough. There was another quake. This time Machello was absolutely sure the ground moved. There was no mistaking it. The crowd realized as well as the loud noises and arguing that was carrying forth began to subside. It did not completely stopped which amazed Machello. Too many people caught up in their own thoughts to notice their surroundings. He shook his head in disgust. Feichin had warned them about being aware of their surroundings. He told them about being prepared for anything. Looking at all the people still talking he could tell his words had fallen on deaf ears. There was another tremor and this one was longer and stronger than the ones preceding it. Machello knew it was Lord Feichin creating them. It had to be. There was no stronger being in all the land and definitely not one in Bloodloch. Machello tried to brace himself as the tremor started but he was unable. He fell to the ground and was accompanied by the row behind him. Looking at the crowd behind, Machello could see row falling as if a massive wave has swept through and knocked them all down. However, he could not see far. A massive cloud of sand began to rise. It started near the back, where Machello had first arrived and swept forward in defiance of the invisible wave sweeping opposite. Machello could hear the sand being whisked up into a fury. Soon, he could not see at all. What was Feichin doing? Why was he doing this in the city? Machello tried to stand and fight through it all but could not. The tremors were too powerful and the sand was way too thick to do anything. Machello could not figure out what was going on. Maybe it was not Feichin he thought. After all, the Earthen Lord had been late and that was unlike him. Maybe it was someone else coming to attack the city under the guise of a Teradrim. The sand and tremors continued on for a few moments, feeling like lifetimes to all those caught within. Then it stopped. The tremors paused and the sand dispersed not falling to the ground, but merely ceasing to exist. There was no sign anything had happened. Machello was looking back at the crowd as he rose to his feet and dusted his sandy person off. He could

see all around doing the same, looking confused at the same time. It was not him that noticed it at first. He gradually saw the crowd point to something him. As more and more people dusted themselves off, they began to stare fixated. Machello slowly turned around and stood bewildered at what he saw. There was a large pillar dwarfing anything that stood in Bloodloch. If there was a sun down here in the city under the mountain, he was sure that pillar would have cast a shadow upon everything. He was sure that pillar would have cast a shadow on the mountain itself. His eyes moved slowly upward toward the top. He noticed the pillar was of the same type of sand that had just magically disappeared. Had all that sand been summoned just to create this colossal monolith? Machello's eyes continued to race upward and when it reached the top, he could see a figure, standing. Lord Feichin. His eyes seemed to reach Lord Feichin at the same time as all those around me. He heard cheers for the great one that now stood way above them. Machello could feel something was off but he did not let it stop him from giving praise to his hero. There were slight rumblings again and Machello began to see the pillar move. It was sinking down into the ground. As the pillar moved closer and closer to the ground, Machello could distinctively make out Feichin. Whereas he was just a figure in a cloak a moment ago, Feichin could see everything about him now. He had a full complement of weaponry; shield, dagger, and flail. He could see the armor he was wearing as well. Dragonscales. Machello had only heard of them in books and legends. He did not believe them to truly exist and yet here was Feichin. Feichin made a movement with his arms and his cloak fell off. Machello could see his huge muscular arms and other exposed parts of the skin. He was blue and covered in various scars throughout. He had fought many battles, Machello thought. The pillar continued to move down but slowed to a stop about three times a man's height above the ground. Feichin could still be seen above the crowd from where ever any one person was looking. It was still a few moments before Feichin would betray the now silently stunned crowd.

"Power," he resounded. The caverns shook with just the mere sound of his voice. "Let us talk about that... Power." Machello was intrigued though he wondered about the old format and where that had gone. He enjoyed asking Feichin questions and he still had a few unanswered questions. Nevertheless, he would listen to all the Master had to say. He quieted his thoughts as Feichin went on. "Knowledge is power, I have said. Wit is power, I have said. Preparedness and awareness and unity and all those other things I have mentioned is power, I said." Machello had remembered well the lessons. He did not need to write them down to truly remember. They were with him from the day he mentioned. Feichin went on. "That is not all. There is something else I did not mention." Feichin raised his arms in one swoop and the ground shook like never before. Machello was sure the entire cavern would cave in and kill everyone. Like before everyone fell to their knees as Feichin continually held his arms raised. Machello looked into Feichin's eyes and could see them beginning to turn black, opaque. He was using immense strength to accomplish this feat. Machello looked into the distance and saw pillars arise throughout the whole city. Such power, he thought. He stood a little confused though. He was sure one pillar rose up squarely in the marketplace and another in the prison. They would have destroyed both if Feichin was not careful, he thought. Feichin stopped and the tremors subsequently died down as

well. He looked above the crowd, eyes still black as he resounded purposefully, "My fellow citizens of Bloodloch. I have taught you much but today I come to teach you another lesson to not forget. If you never remember anything I have said the past days then remember what I tell you this day." Feichin paused and closed his eyes. He reopened them in flash and intoned for all the world to hear, "POWER IS POWER." Feichin spread his arms wide and suddenly cracks began to form. Machello could see these cracks beginning to spread throughout the crowd. They emitted heat and Machello could see lava flowing beneath as they opened wider. Some people began to fall, plunging to their doom. Machello stood confused as he looked up at his hero.

Feichin thought back to earlier that day. He had let the crowd go early seemingly under the guise of being prepared for tomorrow. He stayed in the cavern for a while, thinking. He talked with the golem, as he often did but could not help but feel dread. He left the cavern and wandered the streets. As he looked upon the buildings and the walls and the caverns and passageways all around, he remembered how much he loved this city. He remember the countless battles he fought within these very caverns, physical and not. He walked over to a wall and reached out to touch it. As his hand rubbed the surface, memories flooded back to his actions at that location. It was as if the mere physical contact and brought him back in time to this place many years ago. He remembered he was talking with his friend Mazzion. They were discussing Bloodloch what this city meant to them. After Mazzion gave his dialogue, Feichin responded, "I do not remember anything but Bloodloch. I do not remember my time in Kelsys and I do not remember my time in Duiran. All I know is this city. We have built this city upon our backs. There is not a battle I can think of that did not have you or me. We are the power that is Bloodloch, my friend. History will show as such." Feichin was satisfied with what he said and he meant every word of it. He thought some more and continued on, "If there was ever a time the city needed us my friend, I would be there. I would do anything." Feichin removed his hand from the wall. He knew what came next but did not want to remember it in the flashback. Feichin continued walking along the streets of Bloodloch, stopping ever so often to gauge his memories. It was as if every stone placed upon this city, he placed himself. It was as if every law written, he had written himself. This was his city and he was this city. Inseparable they were. He had seen the city crumble from within, change many times. He had seen armies march through the streets, leaving nothing but a path of destruction and devastation in their wake. The city had seen him fall many times within, defending every statue, every piece of art, every animal, every carrion beetle, and every citizen. Everything within these walls was a piece of Bloodloch and Feichin refused to let anything disturb it. Feichin walked along for a long time ending up at the inn where he stayed the first night he let himself be known.

He had not intended to come here but he had been going nowhere so this place was as good as any. Feichin stepped inside and greeted the innkeeper. He was glad she was still up as he wanted more than a room. He sat down at one of the tables adorning the common room and beckoned her over. When she approached, he ordered some alcohol. He was always curious about alcohol. Regular plants and grains did nothing to him. He was undead and they had no effect on him.

However, when he drank mead or other alcohol he could still feel the effects as if he was a youngster. He always blamed it on the workings of the gods and thought no more about it. When the waitress brought his drink out he was delighted. He was not a heavy drinker but he felt he needed it. He knew he had a long day tomorrow. He asked the innkeeper to sit down with him and she complied. They talked and he would out her name was Zina. She had attended his last session and so she knew exactly who he was. Feichin could tell she was very flirty. He wondered if she offered more services than just a room. But no, he was not here for that. He wanted to get drunk. He wanted to forget about tomorrow. He did not want to be burdened by what he knew he had to do. Excusing himself, he departed for his room that he had ordered during their conversation. He was not tired, for he did not get tired, but he needed somewhere to wait out this alcohol that was magically affecting his system. He could sense someone following him to his room, Zina, he thought. She was probably just making sure he got there ok. He was very drunk after all. When he reached his room, he noticed he had the exact same one as when he first stayed. It looked undisturbed as if it had not been rented out since he last departed. The lamp was on and Feichin quickly put it out and laid his head back on the bed. He knew that after tomorrow he would not be remembered as a hero. He knew after tomorrow he would never be forgiven. They would not understand. No one would. Mazzion would he thought. Feichin could fear a tear roll down his cheek but he knew it was not so. He does not cry. He had not cried since he was of the living and he would not start now. His love for the city, no one would understand. He hated how the alcohol made his emotions surface. He loved how the alcohol made his emotions surface. Too long he stood hidden, Heart of Stone, they called him. He closed his eyes and thought he heard the door creak open...

Feichin awoke in a start not believing he had just gone asleep. He could not figure out how long he was out but it must have only been moments. He stretched out his limbs. The alcoholic effects and stupor seemed to have been purged away in the few short moments of rest. Feichin knew what today held. He knew the consequences of his action would ring through eternity. He thought his past self would even fill a chill when today's antics were through. Feichin bowed his head and summoned forth his artifacts of the past. He could feel his armor of old strapping itself to his body and his mater work flail hanging from his belt. He missed this armor. It had saved his life more times than he could count. He still believed though and held true that artifacts were not everything. As much as he loved what he now wielded, he knew the true power lay within himself and the earth. Feichin continued to channel his thoughts and could feel his trusty shield strap itself to his arm. The last piece of his battle-wear he thought. He looked the shield up and down remarking at the quality of the work. He thumbed the inscription on the inside of the shield that read "Bloodloch. That is All". It was lighter than he remembered but paid little heed to such thoughts. He thought about the final trial of the day and decided to leave his shield. He would not need it. Smirking to himself, he thought it would be quite unfair if he wielded that as well. Leaving the room he headed downstairs and towards the door of the inn. He was greeted by a smile from Zina on his way out. She seemed extra flushed and disheveled and he could have sworn she was walking a bit funny. He made his way out of the inn and towards the West Gate.

He knew had ample time to get there but decided to take one last detour around Bloodloch. Equipped with a black cloak, to hide his features and armor, he revisited once again many of the places he loved. He went to outside where he used to live and saw an old shrine of Ivoln, decrepit and nearly in shambles. Summoning the earth he rebuilt it and then prayed to sanctify it. He did not know if it worked or if Ivoln was even around to hear him anymore but he uttered, "Still, I rise." He got up and headed towards the West Gate. He was late and he knew that but he saw no reason to hurry the apocalypse Bloodloch was about to bear.

The ground had opened up. Fire could be seen below, lava. Feichin, eyes black as night, looked out through the crowd and repeated, "Power is power." He went on, "You Bloodloch, are weak. You do not hear me when I only seek to remake you. Now, this whole city shall crumble. I shall remake it into the image of its former glory." Feichin looked down at Machello. Machello was looking around trying to help all those around him. More and more people were falling into the crevice and being burned alive. Feichin continued, "None of you are worthy. None of you were every worthy. Knowledge is not power. Wit is not power. All that I have said is not power. This is true power, weaklings. Power. Power is power." He was yelling it across the caverns. More pillars began to arise all around the city. Fires could be seen breaking out all around as lava erupted from the ground and spilled into the city. Machello looked back at Feichin and saw him staring at him. Feichin continued on, "And look at you now. Nothing but sheep being culled. You run around afraid, scared of what's to come. You do nothing to avert your own fates. You give up. No," Feichin paused. With a burst of energy he resounded again. "NO. THIS IS NOT MY BLOODLOCH." A massive earthquake shot through the room. Any left standing immediately succumbed to the massive tremor. Feichin continued on, whirling his arms to and fro, commanding the earth at a whim. The sandstorm began to build again encompassing what Machello imagined to be all of Bloodloch. Without warning Machello suddenly felt a sharp pain wrack his head and fell to the ground. He opened his eyes to see Feichin's golem, the same golem that was inanimate and docile this entire time in the Grotto, rolling his way through the crowd. It was throwing people into the newly created chasm and merely stepping on others. There were thousands of cries for help and blood seemed to be as prevalent as the darkness. Feichin did not let up his assault. Through the screams and cries for help, Machello could hear Feichin muttering words in a language he did not understand. Feichin spoke again, "Come on Bloodloch. Do something. Fight for your city. Show me how weak you really are." The sand Feichin had summoned began to whirl into a cloud. The cloud moved upwards towards the ceiling of Bloodloch just like it did in the Grotto. Just like it did in his vision Machello realized.

As Machello lay there on the ground, bleeding profusely he remembered the vision he had. He remembered floating up in the air on a cloud of sand, the same cloud of sand that now floated above the city. He remembered great fires all around, the same great fires that now plagued and threaten to destroy all of Bloodloch. Why though. Why had his vision come to him he wondered. He shook off his momentary daze. He got to his feet and began to think. He had no time to wonder why this vision had come to him. He needed to do something. He needed to stop this

madness and defend the city. Even though Feichin now stood as the enemy to the city, Machello realized he was completely right. They needed to stand together and defend it with their lives. Machello got to his feet and called out to the citizens, yelling with every ounce of strength he had, "WE FIGHT. WE RISE" Machello heard nothing in reply. Then from the distance he heard a faint "WE RISE" echo across the land. Then another "WE RISE". Then another and another. The city had heard him. He could feel them being in unison now. Machello looked back at the crowd and said "WE RISE TOGETHER" and heard the same in reply. Suddenly, a massive army of Bloodloch citizens rushed forward. No other words needed to be spoken at the time. They knew they had to destroy Feichin. As they would learn though, Feichin would not easily go down. They charged the golem first trying to take it down. It was the easiest threat to dispose of they reasoned. No word needed to be said between the citizens. They were acting in unison as if they already knew what to do. The golem was dispensed of without a fair number of casualties. Citizens rushed it in waves and whole numbers of them were disposed with a simple wave of the golems massive tree sized arms. It took the might and sacrifice of 100 citizens to finally wrestle the golem into the crevice of Feichin's making. With the golem disposed of, the city now focused on Feichin. Machello, at the head of the impromptu militia, headed for Feichin. He stopped suddenly when he could sense the Earth rumbling in front of him. He was lucky. Where he would have been a few feet in front if he had not stopped, now stood a massive stalagmite protruding from the ground. Unfortunately, other citizens did not detect the early warning signs of and now stood impaled all throughout the West Gate. Machello could feel Feichin's eyes on him, staring daggers as if he could kill him with his mere stare. Machello looked back, unafraid and commanded everybody, "PUSH FORWARD." Scores of men, woman, and children were getting impaled left and right. Anyone trying to fire arrows at Feichin merely had them fired back at them by a giant wall of sand that appeared out of nowhere and quickly disappearing as if that was its only job. Machello thought back to the vision and how he was floating above the city. He did not have much time and chose to close his eyes, seeing if he could summon the power he seemingly commanded in the dream. He thought of his friend Kaleth, who he had missed. He thought of the citizens who had died today and previously. He thought of all the citizens who perished in defense of this great city. He thought of the ultimate sacrifice he was willing to make to this city. If Machello was asked what happened next, he would not remember. To the other citizens, and to his surprise, Feichin, Machello seemingly disappeared. His body, to the outside observer, became sand that was whisked away with the breeze. The sand was indiscriminate from all the other sand now falling from the sky and encompassing the city. He was gone.

Feichin continued his ransack of the city. He had lost count of the citizens he had dispersed of. Despite what the citizenry below thought, Feichin would mourn their losses. Despite all he had said, he was doing what he believed to be the best for Bloodloch. He continued to think this as he impaled citizens left and right. A citizen got close enough to stab him at one point but was met with a quick stalagmite impaling them. Feichin could see the last looks on this guy's face. He could see the utter and complete agony of defeat sketched across his features. He must continue on. He continued on, "Has any of you learned anything?" Death all around him, and blood now

dripping at his feet from the impaled Bloodlochian, Feichin felt a tear drop again. He knew it was not real but it felt so. In the background he could see many of the citizens turning course and heading for him. He saw his golem fight many of them off, and attempted to help where he could, but alas saw his friend as well. He felt as if a part of him had fallen into the shaft along with his animation. He pushed onward amping up his attacks and taunting his victims. "Perhaps the fire is not gone from you yet Bloodloch," he said. With that he raised his arms and he could feel the chasms throughout the city opening wider, letting more lava pour through to wreak havoc. He saw the citizenry coming at him now in full force. Deep down, he was becoming happy, satisfied, but he was not there yet. He saw the one named Machello leading the fray and stop before he became impale. Impressive, Feichin thought. He did not think the man would manage to dodge. He was sure he would become like all the others, a bleeding corpse upon his stalagmite. What Feichin saw next simply stunned him. Machello had simply stopped and turned to sand, whisked away by the wind. Feichin lost focus for a moment and was thrown from his pillar by a tackle from a large man. He fell to the ground staring upward at the cloud. He could feel it changing as if it was not his anymore but he had other pressing concerns, mainly the pressing man on top of him. Feichin freed his hand and made for his flail lying within arms reach. He grasped his flail and immediately two stalagmites shot out of the ground on both sides of Feichin impaling the man where he lay, sprawled. Feichin shimmied from under him and found himself face to face with still thousands of Bloodlochians. He took a deep breath and charged into battle. They were weak, like he thought. They still lacked power. One. Two. Three. Fourteen. Seventy. Feichin was killing everyone indiscriminately. He could not be stopped. It amazed him they kept coming to their deaths. He did not expect a fight at all, but he did not expect a slaughter either. As Feichin moved his flail to crack into another skull, he felt something...odd.

Half way through his swing he felt his arm grasped by sand. He looked at the sand and followed the trail skyward. It came from the massive cloud above. His massive cloud, only not anymore. He could feel it did not belong to him. He could feel none of his sand in the area. The earth was still his to command but he seemed to have lost his connection. The trail of sand left the massive cloud above and floated downward, still holding on to Feichin's weapon. As Feichin watched the sand float down to the ground in front of him, he tried to wrestle his weapon free, to no avail. It was not budging. It was as if it was stuck in stone he was not worthy of commanding. Feichin watched the sand take form. It started from the bottom up first forming to leg like pillars. They moved together and formed a torso and Feichin could tell a body was forming. The sand that held onto the flail soon shown as an arm and hand gripping Feichin's weapon. Next, the face formed and Feichin could tell who it was, Machello, only he looked different. Feichin could since he was different and not just because of the sand. It was as if he had transcended his old mortal being and become this new one, fused with the Earth. The crowd, upon seeing the sand come from above subsided their attack and backed away. They formed a large circle around the two beings now. Feichin jerked his flail back and regained control. He was thrown off balance a little as if the flail was merely let go rather than taken by force. The two beings stood there

staring at each other, not saying a word. Feichin smiled. He knew what this was, he had been here before. A fight between equals he thought. A fight he had not had in a long time. He would enjoy this but not for his own pleasure. He knew this is what Bloodloch needed. They needed a being this powerful. They had lost all their power and now their hopes lay with this one fellow. Feichin polished off his flail, seemingly rubbing the blood it contained all around it. His armor glinted a little off the fires in the distance. Machello stood there quietly profound, not saying a word. It was a while before either spoke but it was Machello who spoke first, "Shall we begin?" he said. Feichin blinked at hearing his own words before him. A fire erupted within him, hotter than the fires that now burned the city. The fight began.

In a flash Feichin lashed out at Machello. He swung his flail directly at Machello's head. He connected with a stunning blow but Machello's head merely turned to sand to absorb it. Feichin followed up with another strike to Machello's torso but found the same thing occurring. Machello just stood there taking blow after blow and not moving. Eventually Feichin stopped and backed away. He said, "You have become one with the sand I see." Smiling Feichin stepped back and dropped his flail. "You know, only special people can do this. Only those of my bloodline, my son." Smirking, Feichin's body turned to sand as well and reformulated in front of Machello and the crowd. The crowd gasped but Machello stood fast, holding his ground unimpressed. "Who do you think came up with that ability. I knew there was something about you Machello and now I know. Power is power. You have the power. Use it with me and we can make this city anew." Machello shook his head in defiance. Feichin lashed out at him again and this time Machello attacked back. They began attacking each other with sand, each one seemingly reshaping their bodies as the fight wore on. The crowd could barely keep up with what was going on. They could only see blurs of sand. The battle lasted days, each one forcing the other to unsolidify countless times. The crowd has long since dispersed, using their newfound sense of unity and pride to stop the lava and other effects of Feichin's wrath. Feichin and Machello grew tired and Feichin knew Machello would not be able to use the technique for much longer. Machello sensed the same in his opponent. They continued the assault relentlessly, either one refusing to give up. It was on the fifth day when the fight would draw to a close. Feichin backed away from Machello and used his powers to summon stalagmites from the ground. Machello dodged them in uncharacteristic fashion. Machello had seen Feichin do this many times and notice a flaw in his technique. He noticed a slight opening whenever his former hero would summon one. Waiting until Feichin summoned another stalagmite, Machello moved in for the kill. He dashed in and casually placed his hand on Feichin's side. What happened next was not casual. A sword of sand shot through Machello's arm and into Feichin's torso. He knew Feichin would not be able to dodge the attack. He knew his energy was way too low. Feichin writhed in pain, falling to the earth. Machello was the first to speak, asking one simple question. The question always asked to validate chaos, "Why?"

Looking up at Machello, Feichin smiled. He knew the reason. This was all his doing after all. He looked at Machello and said, "I love Bloodloch...." Feichin coughed, spitting up some blood.

"Probably more than you. I am the villain this city needed to bring it back. It was nothing but chaos and weakness in this city before I came. I unified you all. I brought Bloodloch back to power." Feichin coughed again. He knew his time was near. "Bloodloch needed a villain like me and now I feel it's my turn to give my life for this city. I feel this may be my final death. I know I shall not return from this one. Well done, my son. You have risen to greatness. Lead this city to greatness..." Feichin sputtered out a lot more blood this time. Barely able to get his final words out he whispered, "Bloodloch is Power. It has risen." And with that Feichin perished. His body laid there on the ground for a while before a draft picked up his sandy ashes and carried them away. Machello looked towards the sky and outwards towards his devastated city. He looked at all the bodies still lying about. He loved Bloodloch too and dared not see it fall in disgrace as it once had.

With great feeling of regret and hurt, Machello resounded through the city of Bloodloch like Feichin had once, "Still we rise."

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