

Variations

Coire Riabhaich, ONA. 110yf



The Abbess sat silent, vaguely focussing upon the wheeling-scythe symbol that blazed above her place of worship. She wore a red robe in the old esoteric style, which bore the seven pointed-star of her predecessors. In wearing this robe - as opposed to the black cosmic mantle of the Religion - she had hoped to hear once more the sinister songs that had guided her through youth and the long years that followed. Even the wordless chant she had just performed could only bring echoes of the Desire that had moved her people through the ages. Her time had come and gone - or so she felt in that moment, for she was trapped then in the cage of her flesh. The destruction wreaked by The System had lessened her strength, and all she felt was a terrible weariness, and an urge to pass away through the veil of sleep. On this April night of 168 year of fire, the horizon was orange with flame, and it was only a matter of time before the forces of tyranny came to destroy all she had built up. Once, there was hope as a spirit began to break the chains that bound - once, a flourishing of glory as there had been long before, when Nature blew life into dying embers. But again, the same jealousy, pettiness and greed took root amongst the proud. The Religion had unleashed a force that she believed was unstoppable, but as always, honour was torn down by the dishonourable means of others. She sighed then, and chose not to listen to the faith that could not be bred out of her Being. Vron was one of the few survivors. The rest of the Legion had finally been cut down during the heroic and prolonged

assault on the State's military bases. Those left had scattered in different directions after first vowing to join forces again one day, knowing secretly that they would never live to do so. Vron and his comrades had fought in the honourable ways of combat against a foe who outnumbered them with weapons of abhorrent and detached destruction. Not one comrade held back from meeting a glorious death, for their spirit of honour was the greater cosmic force. Each warrior knew that someone, somewhere, some time, would remember their deeds, and thus from the seed of remembering the gift to act would be passed on. A part of him was anguished at not having joined his brothers in death, but Vron felt that Fortune had perhaps spared him for an important task. Thus he staggered, wounded, to the Abbey that stood in a moorland valley, in an enclosure where yellow flowers bloomed and the slate remains of a school from ancient times still cast uneasy presences. His wounds were cared for by the Sisters there, and within a few hours of his arrival, the vigour of his spirit had returned. The Abbey seemed darker than when he remembered it as a child, and that once luminous silence was no longer suffused with reverence, but with a waiting for death. He was disturbed, for in the one place that always embodied belief, there now seemed loss. Imbued still with the purification of war, was he, Vron of the Legion of 18, the only shining beacon of Faith in this holy place? The night was clear and frosty, and he walked into the grounds beyond the gardens that provided the food for the Abbey. Here, by the river that flowed from the hill some miles away, Vron could commune with the forces he venerated. Presently, he was joined by the Abbess - unexpectedly, since she had long since abandoned walking beyond the earth that she had fashioned with her Sisters. But they both refrained from comment, since the days they now found themselves in were dark and extraordinary, and pregnant with Change. The Abbess broke their silence: "The commitment to our Way is waning, despite our slow and patient nurturing - and our prayers." She did not seem to notice, as Vron did, the uncanny bark of a fox somewhere in the distant hills. "Despite my years, wisdom still seems elusive. Is it only the fervour of youth that keeps your faith alive?" Vron, battle-scarred, felt both embarrassed and annoyed that the woman who had been for so long the sacred keeper of the flame should be seeking answers from him - should be oppressing him with her doubts. In that moment, the torch of Faith had been passed into his hands, and he did not know how to respond. He stood, avoiding her gaze, watching instead the changing contours of the river and seeking strength and truth from the flow. Vron began to relate the events of the 29th assault, as though reporting to a senior officer. A part of him was secretly relieved that, in relating the details in his detached and dignified manner, no such doubts stole into his spirit. His was a tale of inspiration, of the very essence of all that he and others had created, fought and died for. There was nothing but purity in his words. When he finished, the Abbess looked down into the water, and remained silent. Vron assumed then that his tale of new warrior gods must have moved her towards the answers she sought. "Such sacrifice ... " the Abbess eventually said, her voice strained by emotion. "And all for nothing. Perhaps it is time for those left to re-consider their tactics ..." Vron was genuinely shocked. Suddenly, he stood alone with the realisation that, despite all the words and deeds and comradeship, the so-called best of his race still did not understand. From that moment, he knew what he had to do. It was not hard for him to turn and walk away into the night, away from what he now detested most. The Abbess felt her

emotion break as she allowed the young man to turn his back on her, and disappear. The pain of his wounds increased as he stumbled over heather and marshy clumps of grass. Vron was following the river upstream, allowing the reflection of stars in the water to pull him towards his destination. Occasionally, his boots would crush the rancid bones of sheep who had staggered to the river to drink their last. Dawn was still over an hour away, as were the advancing army who came to destroy in the name of money. He had to press on; he would not allow them to prevent him from fulfilling his Destiny. Eventually, he reached the old stone track, and travelled onwards, swifter and easier. On the horizon, the inky silent hills marked by barrows watched his fevered endeavour. The track rose then dipped, then rose: he was very near now, but could not relax until the location was reached. Breathing became painful, and he grew angry at how, despite the years of training, the shell of his body could never match up to the desire of his spirit. He took the small track off to his right, and ascended the hill. For a time, he felt lost, but trusted his instinct to guide him: he began to run, in and over the heather, throat constricting as he desperately sought a glimpse of the pool. And there he found it, the cosmos reflected in its stillness. Vron sat for a short time by the reeds, and allowed himself a quick scan of the night sky. As his heart-rate returned to normal, he walked to where the river undramatically emerged from the earth, in wet patches, to gradually form itself over the slate of the wilderness slopes. Here, Vron knelt, and waited, on this night the battle had spared him for. Unable to sleep, the Abbess had retreated to her study and shut out the now evident disintegration of Abbey life. She could no longer soothe the concerns of her Sisters; drained of feeling, she surveyed the uselessness of the books that surrounded her. Her gaze came to settle on the land beyond the window, and then locked, with apparent renewed purpose, upon the constellations. She felt a music shape within her, a life-flow she had not felt - or not listened to - for many years. She was suddenly filled with the desire to compose; not the ponderous and expected "Stellar Cantatas" that were becoming her trademark, but a new, wordless form: a liquid, changing movement of bell-like notes - a weaving, joyous cosmic tapestry ... The genius of creativity moved her in a frantic search for blank manuscript. She found some amongst the notes for a proposed book on religious observances. Days before, this project was to be her great legacy to the world, but now it fell scattered across the room. The Abbess likewise thrust all other irrelevancies off her scriptorium, and sat down to give form to her revelation. The first few notes leapt onto the paper. She debated, then altered the rhythm. She paused and looked down at the flat paper and the scribbles of lifeless pencil. It briefly occurred to her then, that her attempt was like the building of her Abbey: to house that which could not be contained ... This insight did not remain, but disappeared beneath a heavy wave of futility. The Abbess sighed, blew out the candle on her table, and returned to gaze abstractedly at the cold and impossibly distant stars. The pain had become dulled by the cold of water that seeped about Vron's knees. A strong wind was now blowing, but the sky remained clear. Behind him, spotlights began to invade the small valleys. There were no more words in his mind, no longer any elation, or outrage. He listened only to the wind, its message needing no interpretation. Around him was all that ever was and all that would ever continue to be, and the follies of the unwise that moved a youth such as he to act, would fade and be forgotten. He held in cold hands the stagshorn of his Honour Knife. The cosmic wheel, printed over his heart, shone out

from the black of his uniform. It was in its centre that Vron positioned the blade. He looked up to the yearning stars, and pushed the Knife in. In this pre-dawn of April 30th, there were only the stars, the river, and the wind whose song needed no interpretation. - Order of Nine Angles -