

Baker Anita**"The Splendour Of A Thousand Swords Gleaming"**

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(Beneath The Blazon Of The Hyperborean Empire)

ALTARUS:

Gaze deep into the mists with your spirit-eyes, Xerxes...
Look far, and tell me what you see.

XERXES:

I see a land far to the north...
A vast empire of dark endless moors and snow-
crowned mountains...
A land of brooding citadels and warrior-kings who hail
to grim gods.

ALTARUS:

Look well, Xerxes, for enlightenment hides
Within the fog-swathed vales of Hyperborea...

THE KING'S DREAM:

By the onyx sceptre of my forefathers,
The air is churning with auguries of dethronement...
Impending dread thus prophesized!
In a dream I was bade ride
The argent-eyed unicorn to the Ring of Stones...
There a torrent of viscid slime assailed me,
As pipes and horns sang the clarion of my dissolution...
And the usurpation of my ancient azure throne.
Assassins stalk the nighted halls of my palace...
Poisoned blades and chalices surround me.
I thirsted for a balm, but my thirst
Was slaked by an envenomed draught.
My swordarm shackled by tendrils of sloth...
Enthralled by the chasmed gloom...
Borne upon wings of labyrinthine dread...
I awaken!
I shall seek the counsel of the sorcerer,
Keeper of the ancient scrolls of wisdom,
And the Crystals of Power...

THE WORDS OF THE SORCERER:

My liege, great and regal king...
The mists disclose their secrets...

You are destined to wield a great dark power.
Drink deep of the potions of the apothecary,
For upon thee now I bestow a shard
Of the mystic Crystal of Mera...
Sacred artefact of the Atlantean mages,
Won in battle by our legions.
My liege, the Crystal of Mera shall unveil the truth
Lurking hidden in thy most fever-haunted dreams...

THE VOICE OF THE HARBINGER:

The land awash with spilled blood,
And viscera torn forth from the sundered dead...
Gorge the earth with flesh
Darkened with the claw and fang of war...
Rent open the ravenous maws of worms...

THE KING:

The Crystal illumines dark secrets, the truth is known...
A dire and ancient threat is ranged against me.
Hearken, the clarion is upon the winds,
Now the call to arms is upon us all,
Grim warriors, take up thy spears and hone thy
gleaming swords.
Archers, string thy bows, brave knights, saddle the
steeds of war,
The glory of battle is nigh at last,
Our banner shall fly this day in victory!

My warriors, a legacy shall this day be wrought
By our blades, decreed by the gods,
Blessed by the blood of vanquished foes.
Our destiny beckons...

LORD ANGSAAR, DARK LIEGE OF CHAOS:

Come, great king of Hyperboria, march against me
With your splendid legions and shimmering swords.
I, the Bane of the Atlantean Kings, the Scourge of
Lemuria,
Archfoe of the Immortals of Ultima Thule, shall Crush
you!
I shall visit a thousand plagues upon your realm,
And wreak untold havoc and bloody carnage
Until I have your throne... and your soul!

ALTARUS:

And thus, flanked by the splendour of azure banners,
A vast army marched forth from the great walls
Of the Imperial City of Hyperborea,
And at the forefront of the mighty legions,
Astride an ebon war-stallion, rode the king,
Sunlight glinting up on his splendid armour...

Compelled by dreams, and guided by the Crystal of
Mera...

XERXES:

Where? Where did the king's path take him?

ALTARUS:

???

XERXES:

But master, what powers did this blade possess?
What secrets did it hold?

ALTARUS:

???

XERXES:

Then there looms such a cataclysmic battle!

ALTARUS:

And so, from his Black Citadel, the Chaos-liege did
send
Forth his Horde of Wraiths to engage the army of the
king...

THE KING:

Behold, a legion of undead fiends meets us upon the
field of war.
Face me, Scourge of Lemuria, I wield thy bane, the
Shadow-Sword...
(and darksome sorceries now empower me with
thunderous might!)
Hearken, the clarion is upon the winds,
Now the call to arms is upon us all,
The glory of battle is nigh at last, into the fray we ride!

XERXES:

The outcome, master...
Who left the field victorious?
Did the king prevail?

ALTARUS:

The mists begin to disperse... for now, the images
fade.
That tale shall have to wait 'til another day...

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