

How many possibilities time presents, all of those futures. The shifting threads of the universe, the pulls they exhibit on Their machines of reading. They found out how to read the strands of time, and of the worlds that extended from Their known one. Too many to think about, and far too many to see. Times where Altair failed to stop the Old Man of the Mountain from using the Apple for his own will, times where the Auditore were hunted to extinction. Times where there was never a President of the United States, but only a King.

But these worlds all extend from the same origin point.

The Knights count their years from the birth of Christ. They are meticulous bookkeepers, and in the heart of Ashfeld's citadel it is said that there are three thousand years of records marching along bookcases twenty-five feet high and over a hundred long, and that there are enough of these shelves that even old scholars who have trod them their whole lives have not uncovered the true extent of their haunts. The books that were written before the time of the cataclysm largely collect dust; after all, no one has need of knowing of times of peace. The attention of the scholars is turned towards the new books, telling of past battles and mostly forgotten supply lines, of valleys that can be used to route the enemy and reclaim lands stolen from them in a surge from the north or the east.

Within the forgotten books that no one has laid eyes on in a hundred years lies a recording of an event so strange that for lack of a better word, it has been called a vision. The vision was female, and called herself a goddess. To who she appeared for has been, like the book, long forgotten. Disaster would come to the world and wipe everything from existence as had happened before.

Of course there are rumours of this event, and that is why Marian has been sent. She hugs the bookshelf as one of the old scholars shuffles past, a lantern held high as he squints into the dark. She snorts and continues on her way, silent as a cat through the stacks. There aren't many who venture this far. The Brotherhood have sent Marian to the stacks for her gift of Sense, a rare and beautiful thing that Constantine has said gives her Knowledge of what's around her. Marian is looking for records, and she searches with her Sense. It's the late witching hours of the night, but as Marian has already seen, it means little for the scholars. She slips between the aisles, searching, until she Senses something on the edge of her awareness.

The tome she picks out has little to distinguish itself from those on either side, embossed and stamped as they all are. It's high up the shelf, and Marian tests her weight on a lower shelf before climbing up to the tome, fifteen feet above the ground. She takes the book from its place on the shelves and blows the dust from it. "Hello, pretty," she murmurs. She drops back to the ground, settling herself. No sooner than she has she Senses something malevolent. She whips around, tucking the book into her bag as another, more sinister figure steps into the low light cast from the moon outside the high windows. Marian lowers her weight and pulls her hood further over her face.

"Hand it over," the stranger, a man with a rasp of a voice, says.

"It's not your concern what's in here," Marian says.

"Not mine, I agree," the man says, "but the Grand Master's concern? Yes, yes."

"He'll never read it. This book of prophecy will save us, and your Order is the very last thing that the world needs to save it."

"And your methods of peace have worked so well, haven't they, Assassin?" The man gestures to the north. "The Blackstone Legion is invading Valkenheimr as we so speak. If the world is so indeed in danger, then having the cure in the hands of pacifists is the last thing we need."

Marian moves in a flash, bounding towards the man and leaping at the last moment. There's a *click* as a blade slides from her sleeve, but the man moves out of the way of her strike, quick as a snake. Marian lands in a crouch, reaching for her sword and dagger. Before the Brotherhood, she had been a Peacekeeper, and she dances with her blades, slashing and

stabbing towards the man who rolls and dodges out of the way of her every strike. Marian clicks her teeth.

“Are you going to fight me?”

“I don’t need to.” The man moves so quickly that if not for the Sense Marian would have been sliced across the side, but she feels the weight of her bag slip as the strap is cut. The man snatches the bag and flees. Marian darts after him, and although the man is quick with a blade, Marian is faster on her feet. She throws the smoke bomb before he can get too far, and the man cries out as he’s blinded. Marian closes her eyes and reaches out with the Sense, locating him quickly and pushing her hidden blade alongside his spine. He’s dead before she slides to the floor. Marian retrieves the book and flips through the pages. Her heart hammers from the rush of the fight, and it’s only highlighted the desperate need for the Brotherhood to know what is in this book. Then it must burn; the Order knows about it.

The pages crackle between her fingers with age, and her eyes widen at the illustrations within the pages. Spidery writing surrounds pictures of a woman in flowing robes and a crown unlike she has ever seen on her head. *Minerva* is the name beneath these images. *Let my words preserve the message and make a record of our loss. But let my words also bring hope*

And a date, over and over again. December 21st, 2012. The end. Marian burns the book in a brazier outside of the citadel, and hurries back to Constantine with her discovery.

Ultimately they cannot stop the beast that brings herald with the date. On December 21st, in the Year of Our Lord 2012, the Blackstone Legion reaches the gates of Svengård and razes it to the ground. And so the Warlord Apollyon, Harbinger of the End, brings the world to its knees with its never ending thirst for blood.