Dealings in the Dark

Summary: Loras Selebron, the leader of a fledgling city of Dawners, has just lost his last Stormcast Eternal to the terrors of the realm of Ulgu. In desperation, the new leader must choose between working with an unlikely ally or watch his foundling colony perish in the hostile land.

Writing Sample:

 Loras rolled a small scroll back and forth between his fingers, the message within demanding far more of his interest than the man seated across from him. Hanz Fischer, the colony’s self-styled priest of Sigmar, began this expedition as a simple freeguild soldier. That was before the caravan was set upon by the demons of Slaanesh, before the crags swallowed an entire unit of Dawners, before they settled in this blighted valley and were beset anew by even more grievous threats. Having outlived the Stormcast Eternals that were sent alongside them, he sat, clad in numerous Sigmarite scripture, prattling about some new proclamation he wanted installed.

 Loras was sick of it. Every day had this man come to him preaching his prattle. Every day had Loras been forced to listen to his non-solutions and mad theories. This man had no concept of the straits they were in. No idea that they weren’t going to be receiving any more Stormcast reinforcements. No idea that Sigmar could not give a blighted pig to help even if he tried. They were alone on the edges of this realm, swallowed by the eternal shadow of the plane itself.

 Azyrite crops would not grow here, where the light of Hysh could not pierce the eternal gloom. Even the Aqualith did little to cleanse the land, its waters only yielding sparse foliage. With each passing day the colony crept further to starvation, bringing more and more desperate Dawners under the wing of Hanz and his promises. Loras knew his days were numbered unless he could find-

 “By Sigmar’s grace! You will be the death of us Selebron!” Hanz snapped, slamming his fists down on the crate that served as Loras’ desk. The blow scattered ledgers and baubles but it was when the scroll case was disturbed that Loras truly broke from his thoughts to address the priest.

 “You forget your station Lieutenant Fischer!” Loras locked eyes with the priest and stood, towering a head above the man in front of him. Loras could see the priest’s mouth twist in disdain as he was reminded of his humbler origins, a trait that Loras would bring up as often as he could if just to annoy the man. “I am still the head of this crusade and I will be addressed as such! Now leave!” Loras sat, defiant in the face of the fuming priest.

 “I pray for your sake that you come to your senses Selebron. Only through faith will Sigmar’s light reach to banish this shadow. We shall prosper under his light while those who doubt shall be burned away.” Hanz turned and left, leaving his threat hanging in the air.

 Loras laid back in his chair, letting the stillness of Ulgu dispel any lingering tension he felt. He felt oddly at peace here under the endless gloom though it seemed he was alone in this respect. He looked at the scroll in hand once again, written in a scratchily thin script of green incandescent ink.

Writing Sample 2:

 Loras slammed the door to his apartments before scanning the room, his gun leading his lantern as he searched the shadows for movement.

 “Happy-content now, yes-yes?” a familiar whisper alighted on the still air.

 Loras turned toward the sound, hastily aiming his gun for any sign of movement. The weak light of the lantern in his hand sought to illuminate the darkened room to little avail. The shadows only lilted and curled as his light lazily pushed the dark around a hideously murky gloom that swallowed all peripheral light. Such was not a strange occurrence in the realm of Ulgu, where shadow reigned and light was a rare resource.

 “Does the man-thing regret-hate his deal?” the whisper said, from the opposite direction. Loras pivoted, nearly tripping upon the floor. He caught himself before raising his lantern to face the voice. A figure stood before him. It was shorter but had the vague form of hunched man. The clothes of the creature appeared to be made of writhing shadow, flowing over its form like an inky smoke, and roughly formed into a flowing cloak, a billowing hood obscuring the creature’s face. Loras caught the brief glint of small red eyes peering at him from the deep darkness within.

 Loras raised his gun, but the creature did not waver. It did not even move. Fear stayed Loras’ hand. Knowing what this creature was capable of, what was even the point?

 “What have you done, beast?” Loras questioned the shadow.

 “All that you ask-asked,” the shadow whispered back. A clawed hand reached into the folds of the shadow it wore. With a flick, it threw a dark mass onto the floor. The mass thumped and rolled closer to Loras. The captain nearly wretched at the sight of it.

 The head of Hanz Fischer stared back at him. A thick, milky film had formed over the priest’s lifeless eyes. Hanz’ face was locked in an enduring scream, the muscles in his face unnaturally contorted into a silent plea for Sigmar’s mercy.

 “By Sigmar’s grace,” Loras muttered into his hand. He turned his head, attempting to shield himself from the sight. “I didn’t ask for this. I only did what I had to. He would have ruined everything!”

 The creature did not respond. It only stood and waited as if expecting another devil’s deal. Loras aimed and fired, the flash of the gun briefly piercing the creature’s shadowy cloak to reveal hideous visage. A black furred creature with the appearance of a rat wore a toothy grin of wickedly carved teeth. A facsimile of a smile was etched on its face as its red eyes locked with Loras’.

 The shot fired, the flash quickly faded. The room plunged back into an abyssal black. Loras shone his lantern to where the creature had stood, searching for a body to prove it wasn’t just some nightmare. He found no body, no trace of the creature. Instead, he only found the judging gaze of Hanz.