

The Journal of Anna Lang  
(Entries that concern Rosemarie)

16 Kaldezeit

I've had a longer day than normal counting the day's tally from the temple's donation boxes. Seventeen crowns, one hundred and ten shillings, just over three hundred pence along with fifty pieces of wood, a dozen scraps of shoe leather, and enough torn patches of cloth to sew a new cloak. Just who exactly do these people think they are fooling? Shallya knows which of them truly have mercy in their hearts and which just want to be seen with their hands hovering above the box.

On top of that, Herr Geisel was once again directed into my office claiming that he wished to make a sizable donation. That part, at least, was true. The part he neglected to mention to any of the sisters was that this donation was to be provided in the form of several promissory notes from a brothel. While this oddity could have been borne, as many a sister will spend time in such places administering to the women there and thus could easily collect on the notes, Herr Geisel had the gall to tell me that he only wished to donate a small part of the value of the notes and that a sister could come by at any time to return to him the remaining balance. Chance to fill the donation box or no, I immediately sent him packing with a blistering lecture on just what sorts of maladies he could expect to suffer on frequenting such an establishment. Goddess forefend I should allow him to use the temple to launder his ill-gotten gains!

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18 Kaldezeit

Finally! After more than a year of searching and casting my nets wide about the city, I have located a man who will take gold in exchange for an introduction into one of the cells of the city's cult of the Fly Lord. My plan to infiltrate them and destroy them from within already has the blessings of the Most Holy Mother and She has been gracious enough to set aside some funds, which should be easy enough to keep off the normal records since I keep most of the accounts anyway. Her only condition is that the details of this endeavor remain between the two of us in order to avoid betrayal or marring the reputation of the Temple.

I am happy to be doing Shallya's work, but I won't deny that I am also looking forward to the chance to study the cult from the inside for a change. I want to know how they work, gain some insight on how they are structured, and also attempt to puzzle out why in the world an otherwise normal person should embrace the very thing robbing them of their life. It almost seems that the wasting powers of disease drive as many people into their waiting arms as into the Temple, as strange as that is to contemplate. But once I've been inside we should be better prepared to guide the ill into Shallya's comfort and away from these dirty little cults.

\*

22 Kaldezeit

Hate hate hate hate Hate Hate HATE! Even in a society of people all brought low and crippled by disease they still cling to their notions of the "weaker sex". That I should be presenting myself as a fallen Shallyan grasping for more power they take as ordinary. Then I should attempt to give advice to a man and he goes all to pieces, shutting me out and finally turning me away without even offering me back all the gold I paid.

I fear Shallya may have some cause to be angry with me. She certainly felt to make Her displeasure known as I

summoned Her light to see to it the wretch wouldn't spread his prejudice to the rest of his cult. I've managed to get a name from him, at least, so I can begin again without losing a whole year's work.

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### 30 Kaldezeit

A week in penance has given me some divine inspiration. If it's a man's leadership the Fly Lord demands, and I can call upon no man to assist me, then I shall simply have to invent one. Their cults organize themselves into small cells, their leaders unknown to the rank-and-file. So a powerful magus then, who oversees the cult of an entire city. Marienburg, maybe, or Middenheim. A few trinkets and geegaws taken from the Fly Lord's followers, stripped of most of their power, could be taken out of the vault and used to show my legitimacy as this man's agent. A fallen sister, seduced away from the temple with promises of power. It makes for a compelling story. I can only hope they will believe it.

\*

### 2 Ulriczeit

Surely now there can be no doubt that Shallya's own hands are guiding me in my mission. Not only have I made contact with several of the cells now, not only do I have them eating from the palm of my hand so that I lead them in all but name, but that which I never dared hope would be granted to me has fallen into my hands. This cells of the cult within the walls of Altdorf are in possession of the Hand of Saint Augustine, or a part of it at least. The hand has been broken apart and distributed among the cults for some dark purpose I have thus far been unable to divine since I intimated that "Anthony" is masterminding the plan. Among those cultists now under my power, I have reassembled what I believe is the thumb of the hand.

After countless years of searching with no signs to be had, after centuries lost, to be found here and to fall so completely into my grasp can be nothing short of a true miracle. My family's legacy restored to me, the temple in Ferlangen repaired of any damage taken during the Storm and resanctified... I barely dare to dream.

\*

### 16 Ulriczeit

The most curious thing happened at temple today. A poor farmgirl, wandered in off the road, disappeared while praying at the altar and returned in a beam of light, much to the astonishment of the assembly. She left almost straight away, doubtless to do Shallya's work, and I can't help but wonder what this means in light of my own miracle. Has the Goddess decided to show her hand more fully in the world? I should spend some time praying upon this.

I have also secured for myself lodgings amongst my new lackeys. The dwelling itself is as abominable as you would expect from people who are both peasants -and- diseased. Filth covering the floor, walls, and somehow despite all rational sense the ceiling as well. You would think that any reasonable human being would make an attempt at living somewhere above the level of common swine, but it took me several hours to get it into their small little minds that they should make sure that my space, at least, was free of their filth. Even if it wasn't for Shallya herself guiding us in our struggle against the Fly Lord, I should be certain of our victory over them due to their ill-bred and simple followers. The smell alone is enough cause for anyone passing buy to nail a plague notice to the door and set fire to the whole block.

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## 9 Vorhexen

I have developed a plan which will, I hope, set me on the path to reclaiming my birthright. "Anthony" has decided that the master plan shall now take place in the city of Ferlangen. His reasoning is that the city is underpopulated, undefended, and lies upon a nexus of lines of power. A map, hastily sketched out in my study from several half-remembered tomes, served to convince them of Anthony's grand design. The word is being disseminated amongst the cells that they should gather together their people and prepare to travel. As I understand it, it will take some weeks to dismantle the altars and other paraphernalia and pack them for travel. I'll use the time to continue my observations from the inside.

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## 25 Vorhexen

Of all the bloody nerve! The peasant rat Shallya saw fit to show her favor to some weeks ago has returned to the city. This "Sister Rosemarie" is the toast of the temple, the Holy Mother's golden child. The worst of it is she's going about saying that she's questing for the relic of my family's temple! She's been poking her nose into all of the research I've gathered in the temple over the last decade. And, of course, it's not like I can interfere without revealing my own plans.

While I wouldn't presume to question Shallya's wisdom in this matter, one would assume that Her will would be better served by someone who actually studied Her will in the temple rather than some ignorant farm girl plucked off the street. She has no concept of the Goddess's mercy or love and if she is capable of any emotion besides rage I've yet to see any sign of it.

I can only pray for guidance and suppose that even a goddess as delicate and caring as Shallya can find occasion to require a blunt instrument from time to time.

\*

## 30 Vorhexen

The word has spread to all the local cults, I now have a reasonably accurate tally of those under my influence, not to mention a better count of how many pieces of Saint Augustine's Hand are in their hands. Though I'm loath to vouch for any of these miscreants' grasp of anatomy, it would appear the entire relic is distributed amongst the cults here in the city. It takes the entirety of my willpower each day to keep from demanding that all the pieces be brought to me. It could too-easily reveal me to these people and curtail my efforts to chronicle their habits.

I've been asked, in light of the preparations for Anthony's master plan, if the acolytes may continue "giving alms", which is apparently how they refer to the practice of spreading their various diseases amongst the populace, oftentimes via depositing plagued coins in beggars' bowls. I couldn't forbid it, obviously, without being suspicious. I did curtail the practice somewhat, saying that we couldn't afford to draw too much attention to ourselves before the master plan was complete, and directed them into particular areas of the city. They shouldn't do too much damage in the poorer districts, and I can direct the temple to those areas. Perhaps I can even set "Sister" Rosemarie to the task. She might even learn something from having to tend to the sick and wounded.

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#### 4 Nachexen

So the temple's golden child has been burning her way through the city. Not in any figurative way, either, but like a deranged bright wizard that ate some bad mushrooms. At this rate, come summer all that will be left of the city will be a smoking ruin. I suppose a smoking ruin is technically free of plague, though, so her simpleton's solution will work as long as she continues to not care about the thousands of innocent lives in the city.

She's burning her way through my cultists as well. Again, not in any figurative way. I can't think of any worse way to go out than burning. Even the slow wasting of disease can't compare with a fire eating away your body from the outside in. I've seen some of the bodies, twisted up in positions of extreme agony. I'll take the noose myself, given the choice.

The chosen one's also managed to lay hands to at least one of Saint Augustine's bones. Annoying, of course, but it doesn't concern me overmuch. Unless she turns cultist herself (Shallya forefend that the Skull Lord discover her, lest she build a pile of skulls all the way to the sky!) she can hardly make worse use of the relic than those human vermin under my control. She'll bring them to me, safe and sound, in the end.

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#### 8 Nachexen

That's it then. The cells are all packed up, those that are still breathing anyway, and they've started moving north, taking the road for Middenheim. They'll leave in staggered waves and I've grouped the ones with various pieces of the Hand together. They'll be easier for me to track that way, and easier for the chosen one to follow as well. Can't have her getting sidetracked and deciding to burn down Laurelorne for a grin. This business is messy enough without every elf from here to Ulthuan coming down on us as well. I've left all of my records intact and in my office with no wards or traps or any more indication that I'm taking anything more than a simple holiday. One can only hope she doesn't tear my replacement limb from limb in her hurry to get at them.

They're calling her the Ripper now. A most fitting appellation. ~~Rosemarie the Ripper, Shallya's Chosen Murderess.~~ Gods, I can't believe I just wrote that. I'll do penance for it later. It seems to be true, though. It sure has kept my cultists in line, though. Every time they want to go out to spread their diseases I only have to tell them that if they go out that the Ripper will get them. They've seen the corpses, they've picked through the ashes of their former temples. Plus, I may have embellished a few details of the stories. Shallyan torture chambers where the surgeons practice keeping people alive while they cut them open. Using Shallya's grace to keep people alive while they burn. The Ripper overseeing it all, stalking the halls like death incarnate. They're terrified of her, more so than any bogey or daemon or vengeful god.

I'll be taking a boat up the river to Talabheim in the morning. By myself, of course. It's been bad enough sharing quarters with these people for so long. I won't suffer their presence during the voyage, or in Talabheim. I plan to visit the temple while I'm in the city, which should be quite a bit easier without the rot brigade dogging my heels.

\*

#### 11 Nachexen

River travel seems to agree with me, certainly more so than the road I had to take north to set my false trail to Middenheim. Private cabins on each barge give me a quiet place for prayer and study. Being among the first to leave Altdorf, I can keep a leisurely pace and stop in the cities and towns along the way.

Something is happening with the pieces of the Hand. During my evening meal, they began to rattle against the table and blue lines of light began to radiate outward from each piece. It's never done anything of the sort before. I've gone over my research into the Hand, and the only thing I can figure is the Ripper is trying to exploit that property of divided holy relics that seeks pieces of itself to locate the parts she doesn't have.

I've shrouded the pieces for now. I don't want her to be able to find me. She's coming, though, I can feel it. She was never planning to return the relic to its proper place. She wants it for herself. She must have deceived everyone in the Altdorf Temple with some kind of disappearing act.

I won't let her have it. I won't let her steal my birthright from me and further profane Shallya's great works.

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## 26 Nachexen

A most disturbing rumor has caught up to me about a Shallyan in Altdorf standing trial for murder. I knew it was the Ripper even before hearing the descriptions of the other people on trial. The story varies from a single person torn apart in an alleyway to a group of war veterans defending themselves on a bridge.

The rumors stopped flowing once I revealed myself to those in the inn. I won't have the Altdorf Temple smeared so flagrantly for the actions of one wayward sister.

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## 29 Nachexen

Talabheim is such a wonderful city. Such wonderful sensibilities. Of course, the Taalbastion Guard would never think to hassle a Priestess of Shallya. Walking through the mob of the unwashed masses and through the High Watch, leaving them all behind, is like stepping out from the shadows and into the sunlight.

The Temple here is quite magnificent. Beautiful frescoes showing the Mother of Mothers adorn every wall above such an abundant garden of flowers it is a riot of colors. No one can help but look upon it all and be filled with Shallya's love and mercy. It's good to have such a constant reminder of that so the general populace doesn't forget.

I wonder if, should I ever return to Altdorf, I can persuade the temple there to adopt a similar attitude. Certainly once I've restored the temple in Ferlangen I shall try to attract some artists and artisans to the city to adorn the temple walls and make the temple into a true monument to Shallya's grace that inspires and uplifts everyone who looks upon it.

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## 8 Jahrdrung

I've spent most of the day fasting and praying in front of the fragment of Heiligerberg, where Shallya herself appeared to Priestess Pergunda, hoping that she would grant the same to me. However it wasn't until the very

end of the day, after unhooding Saint Augustine's thumb and placing it on the altar. I could almost feel it humming, as if it could recognize the presence of another relic.

While she didn't decide to speak to me herself, Shallya did grant me a vision. She showed me the true nature of my adversary. I saw the Ripper, standing in the trees with her cult gathered around her as she summoned the Blood God by name and called his servants into being. My worst fears have come to pass: the Blood God has turned the Ripper and made her his own. I can only imagine that the bloody trail she carved through Altdorf drew his attention and he offered her something she couldn't refuse. The rest of the Hand, perhaps, and the freedom to use it with impunity, perverting Shallya's light by using it to murder innocents and turn the Empire into a giant pile of skulls.

My leisurely travel is at an end. In the morning, I must quit the city and travel with all due haste north to Ferlangen and the temple there.

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### 32 Jahrdrung

Even having steeled myself for it, seeing my family's temple for the first time was still quite a shock. The desecration is quite advanced as I wasn't the first to arrive. The acolytes all bore tales of the Ripper massacring their comrades to claim pieces of the hand. She'll slaughter half the Empire to make her way here. We'll be ready for her, though.

The structure and building are still fully intact. That's got to count for something. Once my minions have dealt with the Ripper, I can dispose of them and see about putting things to rights. I've claimed an office for myself and made sure it's scrubbed clean, at least.

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### 18 Sommerzeit

A woman arrived in town today with two small children in tow, looking as haggard and weary as I've ever seen anyone. They'd been on the road for weeks, barely stopping to eat and sleep, racing away from Middenheim as if the Blood God himself were on their heels. Which I suppose in a way, he has.

Her story chilled me to the bone. The Ripper continues her rampage in Middenheim, where she laid a trap for the family after stalking the two children to learn their plans. She and her followers crippled both the parents so they could go after the children and leave no witnesses. The woman told me how it was the mother's last wish that they get the children out of the city and away from the Ripper, right before she ran headlong into the fray to give them all time to escape.

The mother was herself the leader of one of the outlying cells, but not one that I had previously met. I talked to both children at length, trying to be somewhat circumspect. Neither of them appear to have any of the typical afflictions of the Fly Lord's followers, nor do they seem to have any knowledge of their parents' activities. I didn't think these people had any aversions to using children in their plots. Perhaps a mother's love is enough to override the need to spread their suffering.

I've sent the children's protector away, some urgent mission back to Altdorf that requires someone who can survive on the road for a long time. It should put her out of the picture for a month or two. It was much easier than I'd expected. It seems my reputation from Altdorf was enough that the parents believed I was worthy of a

good measure of respect, and said as much to their followers.

In any case, I've removed the children from the temple. Few enough people have arrived, so I'm the only one who knows they were ever here. I've placed them with a local family of tradesmen and provided them enough money to see them apprenticed and housed. The children seem smart enough, certainly able to adapt quickly, and nobody's going to ask too many questions of a Shallyan sister placing a couple of orphans in a new home. Especially when there's money involved.

I'm making sure I'm the only one that knows where they are. I'm terrified that when the Ripper gets here, she's going to want to finish what she started. I'm afraid that I'm going to have to find a way to deal with her. Is she still one of Shallya's disciples anymore? Even if she does follow the Blood God now, does that really give me any recourse? Is this the sacrifice Shallya demands of me?

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### 32 Sommerzeit

After weeks of work, I believe I finally have found a solution to my Ripper problem. A poison, carefully formulated, infused with elements of Chaos to resist Shallya's mercy. Ironically enough, some of the accouterments held by my cultists provided the raw material for the concoction, as well as the test subjects to make sure it works.

All I had to do to make them willing participants was to tell them the truth: I'm creating a weapon specifically designed to work against Shallyans. That, and I had to promise that I wouldn't take away any of their "Grandfather's" gifts while I was trying to cure them of the poison.

Now all I have to do is wait for her to come to me. She will, eventually. Once she's done with the followers of the Fly Lord, she's going to tear down all of Shallya's good works. I'm ready to make this sacrifice on her behalf and reclaim my birthright. The Hand of Saint Augustine will be restored to its proper place, the Temple of Shallya will be cleansed and re-consecrated, and Anna von Ferlangen (though she stepped out of Shallya's light) may yet someday raise a daughter worthy of the Goddess to continue the family tradition of service in Her name.