Dark Times

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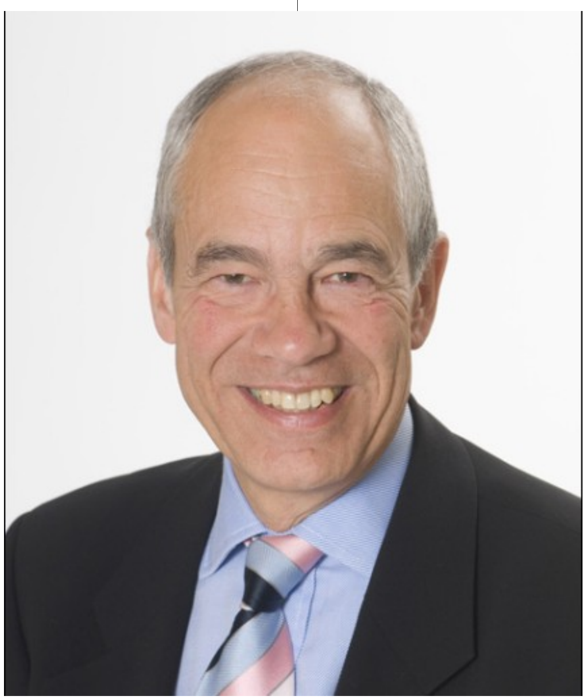
NHS corruption

Dark Times staff writers

Yesterday saw Dr Clive Hamilton MBE handing in his notice of resignation from the NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde board admist alligations of misconduct and corruption. Dr Hamilton, a retired GP, had been on the board since its creation in 2006 and had previously been on the board of NHS Argyll and Clyde. He was recently reappointed for another 4 year period scheduled to end on April 1st 2014.



Dr Hamilton, who is also a board member on the Glasgow City Mission, cited personal reasons for his decision to step down from the board ignoring the persistant allegations of misconduct and corruption entirely. With his resignation any internal investigation will be concluded.

Dr Hamilton is just the latest in a series of high profile corruption cases with the NHS in Scotland and public confidence in the body are at an all time low. Alan Gordon, the commissioner of the board said in a press statement that the NHS is dedicated to providing the best possible health service for everyone in Scotland and reminded that none of the allegations were proven. He continued that whilst the internal investigations might have ended that those who accuse Dr Hamilton can always bring criminal charges again him.

Boons, a double edged sword

Julius Montgomery
Baron of the South of Glasgow

"Favours make the world go round" is an old yet irrefutable saying. In our circles, favours are the universal currency. They are bought and sold, given and repaid and sometimes change the entire political landscape of a domain. Some believe favours or boons as they are more commonly called to be simple. You perform a service for me and in return at a later stage you can call upon me to perform a service of similar magnitude for you, simple right? It can be, and often is, but there are some pitfalls and nuances that are sometimes overlooked.

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Before I delve deeper I feel I need to go over some basics. The worth of a boon is directly linked to two things, magnitude and the subject. Firstly the magnitude of the boon which commonly falls into one of three categories.

Minor or small boon
This allows you to call upon the person whose debt you hold and have him perform a simple and safe service for you. It will need to be something which does not majorly inconvenience the person whose debt you are calling in. Common examples might include the person's support in a political undertaking (in which he is not otherwise involved), the use of one of his ghouls, unreleased childer, controlled mortals or similar for a short period of time or an item or amount of money that he can replace himself with a little effort. There are of course countless other ways it can be repaid.

Major or large boon
This allows you to call in a large, lengthy or potentially dangerous service. It can be something that seriously inconveniences the person whose debt you are holding, damages his position or political prospects. Major boons are much more rarely traded and are prized possessions. Repaying a major boon can often be complicated and protracted and require years of effort and expenditure of countless minor boons along the way. Common examples which have been used to settle a debt of this magnitude are permanent transfer of ghouls, unreleased childer, controlled mortals etc to the person holding your debt, self imposed exile from a domain for a number of years or decades, dedicating one's political prowess to achieving someone else's goals, retrieving something from a dangerous location (such as a rival's ghoul) or similar.

Life boon
A life boon is owed when you owe your life to another of our kind. It is exceedingly rare and most often it is earned by saving another kindred from certain death. Sometimes it is earned by sparing someone who you had in a position where you could have legally affected their death. With a life boon you own the person, their belongings, actions and the like. Repaying a life boon is all but impossible unless somehow you in turn can save your domitor's life or you can provide him sufficient payment to relinquish the debt he holds over you. Life boons are almost never traded and are the most dangerous boon to own as your destruction is one of few ways to end the debt.

The second component that determines the worth of the boon is the person who's boon you are holding, their station in our society, their capabilities and powers and often overlooked, their other debts.
Taking an extreme example lets compare debts held over say a prince of the domain R, the sheriff of said domain A and about a reasonably well established kindred who holds some minor influences in the domain N.

A minor boon over N would allow you to call on his influences, maybe gain his support in extending your feeding territory into a previously unassigned territory. A minor boon over A might gain you information about who he is investigating an early heads up about trouble in the domain so you can safeguard your interests or even get A to investigate a rival based on information you supply him. A minor boon over R might have him deny your rival's request for more feeding territory. It might have him order a full investigation on your rival's activities or maybe even allow you to create a childe. It might also be a letter of recommendation or introduction if you are planning on moving domain.

A major boon over N would allow you to obtain his influences for yourself. He could be made to work towards your own appointment of baron or he could be pitted against your rival with his debt being repaid once your rival is crushed or removed from the domain. A major boon over A would allow you learn everything he knows about the domain, including the secret missions the prince send him onto. You could force him to present false evidence to the prince and have him implicate your rival. Alternatively you could have him torpor your rival and deliver him to you. A major boon over the prince might force him to abdicate his position, have him make you his Seneshal to determine his politics towards another domain for years to come. You could have him destroy your rival by calling on the rite of destruction or have him declare loyalty to Queen Anne.

So now that we understand the powers boons have and have seen the value they might hold to us we have to use that knowledge in context. People might easily believe that owning boons is good and owing boons to others is bad. This is an extremely simplistic view of

the situation and whilst not strictly speaking wrong I would like to describe a few of the more common pitfalls.
Firstly the danger of owing to many boons. If you owe boons to many people you have too many masters. No-one can be certain that you will actually be able to reliably deliver as you might well try to pay off other debts at the same time. No-one wants to have a puppet and share the strings and whilst often you accept that someone else needs to be considered when using your tool, if it becomes more effort keeping track of the other debts they owe rather than the service they can deliver the debt becomes worthless and hence the individual becomes worthless.

Next lets speak about the other extreme, owning debts above your station. If you hold, say a major boon over your prince, you suddenly become an important figure in the political landscape. You could force the prince into a position he really doesn't want to be in. You might foul plans of other elder or princes. At this stage things become interesting and dangerous. If you can be controlled somehow, for example through a major boon over you, you are extremely useful to your master. If a rival manages to control you though, you are extremely dangerous and so in many people's mind you are suddenly worth more dead than alive. The prince himself might simply kill you and suffer the damage to his reputation for having someone slain who he was indebted to. Even on a smaller scale, if you hold debts over people who can bring about your removal from the scene they might. It might be easier to plant enough evidence that you have broken a tradition and owe the prince a smaller favour to act swiftly and decidedly on that information rather than allow you to hold all the strings over them.

Lastly I'd like to mention never owing anyone. Whilst often heralded as the ideal situation to have others owe you and you don't owe anyone, ever, it is also detrimental to your standing. In our society you want to be seen as someone who does favours and seeks them out. You want to at least give the impression that should someone really require your service, they can obtain one of your debts and use that as a starting point. If you never openly owe anyone, people will believe that behind the scenes you are entirely in someone's pocket and with them not knowing who that someone is, they will likely not deal with you.

Breaking a boon.
You might think, what do I care, I can promise the world and then when it comes round to my turn to deliver either fail entirely or simply halfheartedly work on the fulfillment of my debt. You might think that even though you have agreed to secrecy the worth of the information you learned might be worth the risk of begin discovered and let me tell you, it is not. Failure to deliver on even a single debt, failure to keep your end of the bargain in a single transaction can spell your end in our society. No one will deal with someone who is boon broken. All debts you hold over others instantly become worthless as no-one will work on behalf on someone who does not honour the system themselves. You will become a pariah, a non entity. The prince cannot afford to have someone like that in their employ and so you will likely loose all offices and privileges. Others seen dealing with you will be associated with you and so would become outcasts themselves.

It is important though to understand that you only break a boon if you have agreed to terms and fail to deliver them. No-one can simply hold two of your minor debts and force you to commit to two mutually exclusive actions. If you cannot deliver something a debtor asks of you, you are perfectly within your rights to tell them that you are unable to perform the service they have asked of you and the reasons why, remembering not to break any confidentialities you have already agreed to. Do this too often though and you will gain a reputation for being unable to deliver to on your debts.

Uses of boons
Firstly let's speak about patronage. If you owe someone a debt it is suddenly in their interest for you to do well. A debt over a primogen, council member or holder of certain other positions is clearly worth a lot more than a debt over a nobody. At the same time they have a stated investment in you, and anyone plotting against you is potentially damaging that investment. It is therefore often of benefit, especially to younger members, to be indebted to more powerful members. It is also a mechanism by which those in power stay in power, by holding debts over those who are coming up in the ranks.

Mutual trust. The exchange of mutual boons if often used a sign of trust. If you are forming a partnership sometimes both parties exchange a sizable debt. That way both party have recourse should the other betray them or the secrets of the partnership. Usually the debt is granted under the proviso that it does not crystallise as long as you uphold the agreement of partnership and hence the one who breaks it first loses their debt over the other person.

Conditional boons
Before I reach the final section I would like to mention conditional boons. Boons are agreements and so it is not surprising that often they come with provisions and conditions. The two most common of those are secrecy and the inability to trade the debt. Both of those cannot be traded to a third party. The secret boon is kept confidentially between the kindred who entered into the agreement until one of the sides feel the other has broken the agreement. Remember that secrecy does not (unless specifically otherwise stated) end at the point where the debt is repaid.
Boons which cannot be traded are clearly worth less than a boon which can be traded. Other conditions might include the boon cannot be used to affect a certain change, use a specific resource or the like. Delays are other often added clauses. I will owe you this boon but you may not use or trade it this decade. Lastly the specified service. Often instead of owing a traditional boon both sides will agree to perform a specified service. This trade is still a boon trade and failure to deliver on your word will still bring the same consequences upon you.

Disputes
Sooner or later there will be dispute about a boon. One party will claim one thing, the other party another and all attempts to solve the matter privately have failed. At this stage you need to find an impartial arbiter agreed upon by both parties. Should no agreement on an arbiter be reachable you can always have the prince of domain or those who speak with his authority settle the matter. A dispute is a serious matter as usually one if not both sides get found in breach and will suffer all the consequences described above. Likewise anyone who is found trying to influence the arbiter is also subjected to the status of boon broken. The arbiter will hear both sides, conduct as much or as little of an investigation as they see fit and then pronounce their judgment. They will then use their own name and standing to publicise their findings.

This is my rough and ready discourse on boons. It scratches the surface of one of the central institutions of our society and hopefully will give those new to it a good starting point. It is not meant to be comprehensive and if you wish to discuss any omission or anything I have mentioned then please seek me out at court.

Julius Montgomery
Baron of the South of Glasgow

Travel News – November 2010

Rosina Provanzano-Giovanni

Glasgow airport won the top national award for Best Airport as voted for by the Airport Operators Association at their annual ceremony in London. The airport faced some difficult operational challenges this year but the success was all thanks to the superb effort put in by all the airport staff on a daily basis.

Strikes by refueling staff in France caused havok this month as airlines were recommended that their flights carry enough fuel for the return journey. Half of flights in and out of Paris were canceled. Further industrial action is expected to affect rail travel.

And finally, did you spot the undead on the streets of Glasgow on Hallowe'en? This years Zombie Walk was limited to the town centre but the turnout was higher than expected considering the risk of violence on the streets. The shambling hordes concluded their excursion at Sloan's bar on Argyle Street where a series of horror movies was being shown.

By Rosina Provanzano-Giovanni

mailto:giovanni.airports@googlemail.com

Great Britain By Night

Margery Houndsworth-Stone, Clan Toreador, Ancilla, Harpy of London

October saw the return of her majesty Queen Anne, Queen of (*most of*) England, elder of the Camarilla to the public scene. Her first court, held in Kensington on the night of the 15th, was extremely well attended. Queen Anne was accompanied two of her closest supporters and advisers the elders Aldworth and Bassingthwaite. Her childe and seneschal Sir Gillespie Wright acted as the master of ceremonies for the court.

During the court itself a number of interesting things got announced or discussed. Firstly elder John Houblon, childe of Harderstadt, has been announced as taking over the role of Seneshal from elder Gillespie Wright starting from November the 1st 2010. Elder Wright will join elder Bassingthwaite as part of London's primogen council.

This is big news as elder Wright, queen Anne's own childe had held his position since Anne's rice to power back in the late 40ies. Houblon, who has up until this point mostly focused on his banking empire and the isle of man, has for the first time taken an official office in a Camarilla city. The timing of these changes on the return from her absence from the public eye brings up many questions. Just like her disappearance did. No answers seem to be forthcoming though as Queen Anne did not mention the reasons for the hiatus. Yet again it feels like the balance in politics is going to shift and anyone who can predict the outcome will stand to make significant gains.

In other news you will all be glad to hear that I have received my invitation to Edinburgh's Winterball. Once more no news about the theme of the evening and the invitation itself does not give much away. I did hear though that it is meant to be quite different from the last few dozen affairs. That is all for now.

Let is be known that Laurance Redwood, sheriff of Edinburgh, elder of the Camarilla has repaid his debt to Lynn Ferguson, of Edinburgh, ancilla of the Camarilla.

Let is be known that David Stone, of York, ancilla of the Camarilla, has traded his debt over Tarquin DeJulianne, of Liverpool, neonate of the Camarilla to Sir John Houblon, Seneshal of London, elder of the Camarilla.

Let it be known that Alexander Jones, of Birmingham, ancilla of the Camarilla is further indebted to Julius Montgomery, Baron of southern Glasgow, ancilla of the Camarilla.

Dark Times is accepting submissions.
Send in writing to the address below:

Chateau Auzepy
Monsault
Ile De France
34882
FRANCE