



I'd like to take a moment to talk about events at the most recent court. At that gathering, I had the displeasure of meeting the individual known as Jumble, who asked me an important question – what has Prince Magnus Burton done for us?

It's easy to ask this about leaders. It's easy to speculate that kindred would act in the interest of the Domain even without the direction of a Prince. It's easy to identify threats and challenges that the domain has faced and pin them on the Prince, claiming that if he were stronger or smarter or more proactive then this problem or that problem just wouldn't happen at all.

But Prince Magnus *is* a good leader, and he does so much for us. He is strong, wise and quick to act when action is needed. And he demonstrated this excellently at the last court when he personally took action and destroyed a threat to our Domain: a Sabbat infiltrator in our midst, the individual known as Jumble.

Wherever Jumble is now, I am sure that he must be deeply satisfied with such a clear and direct example of Prince Magnus' proactivity, efficiency and power.

And you know me. I always feel the need to compose a limerick for situations like this, so here you go –

There once was a fellow named Jumble
Who was apt to blunder and bumble
But Burton spotted the traitor
And said "smell ya later!"
So think twice if you fancy a grumble!

Travis Moon

The Night's Dominion by Icarus

- A Critique

As a critic, it is not uncommon to find the use of my particular talents to be undervalued by my peers. An artist puts effort and heart into a piece and may find the experience of having that piece criticised to be emotionally challenging. When faced with criticism, they may find themselves flying to the usual defence mechanisms of feigned offence or outright anger to avoid engaging with the critical process. So let me make it clear here that I do not do this for the simple joy of tearing things down. Art is communication, and without criticism that ability to communicate will remain poorly developed. With that in mind, I would like to consider the piece in last month's dark times by our esteemed seneschal: The Night's Dominion.

Firstly, I would like to congratulate Icarus on the completion of this piece. The creation of art is a process hinging on the judicious application of will. Poetry is the creation of something from nothing, a summoning of art through the medium of language. Simply finding the time to create such a piece is a laudable achievement, particularly considering that the poet's clan does not place a great deal of value on artistic work.

With that said, the work in question is not great. There is a skill here that can be developed, but evidence of a lack of basic knowledge of how poetry functions. I have often been accused of having a mechanistic approach to poetry and it is true that I have a preference for the theoretical in this field. I enjoy strong rhymes and consistent rhythms as opposed to the more free wheeling stylings of free verse. When talking about poetry, this is often a challenge my criticism faces: "Poetry doesn't have to rhyme, it doesn't need a consistent metre." So for the sake of completeness, I am going to point out how Icarus' piece is clearly attempting to use these techniques and failing. Let's get technical.

The Night's Dominion is a 16 verse poem of 8 distinct stanzas, with every two stanzas forming a quatrain, in the metre of Iambic Tetrameter. That's a

whole lot of jargon to throw at you at once, so let's break down what is meant by that. A verse refers to a single line of poetry. It can also refer to multiple lines, or indeed, the poem in its entirety. Language is stupid. A stanza is an individual section of the poem, usually separated by a line break. In the case of Icarus' work, the first stanza is:

*"We are the lords of whispered dread
The hands that shape, yet go unseen."*

With me so far? A quatrain is a collection of four lines that rhyme. Usually these will be contained within a single stanza, but in this case Icarus has chosen to split each quatrain into two stanzas. The quatrain takes an ABAB structure, meaning that the first and third lines will rhyme, and the second and fourth will rhyme:

<i>"We are the lords of whispered dread,</i>	A
<i>The hands that shape, yet go unseen.</i>	B
<i>A shadow's touch, a word unsaid,</i>	A
<i>The rulers where no light has been."</i>	B

I described the meter earlier as Iambic Tetrameter, so I should explain what that means. Tetrameter refers to the amount of syllables in each line, 8. Iambic refers to where the accent falls on those lines. Iambic refers to a rhythm where the second syllable is stressed. "daDUM daDUM daDUM daDUM"

<i>"We are the lords of whispered dread,</i>	A
<i>The hands that shape, yet go unseen.</i>	B
<i>A shadow's touch, a word unsaid,</i>	A
<i>The rulers where no light has been."</i>	B

Now, I know this is a lot of theory to have thrown at you to begin with. I wanted to start by demonstrating that, whether consciously or not, Icarus is engaging with these structural rules of poetry. The structure I've laid out above is continued throughout the poem, with the only lines that break from them feeling awkward and difficult. The fifth stanza for example:

*"Steel may falter, thrones may rust,
Kings will kneel and empires fade."*

Suddenly, we are not in the same meter. The accent is on the first syllable rather than the second, and each line is only seven syllables. This could be an interesting shift, but nothing within the text of the poem has prompted it. Consider how much stronger the poem would read if these lines began with the words For and The. The meter would be maintained and the line would sound so much stronger. Things fall apart even more in the second half of the quatrain.

*"Yet we endure, for blood is trust
And power never yields - Only trades"*

In the first line, we return to iambic Tetrameter before completely losing the rhythm in the second. We get six syllables that fit, then another group of three to make a line of nine syllables. Further, the emphasis shifts from "daDUM daDUM daDUM daDUM" to "daDUM daDUM daDUM DUMdaDUM." Now, this could be a clever subversion of the meter as the piece moves into its second half, however if that was the intent, you would want to repeat the subversion later on in the piece. Structured as it is, this simply reads as a mistake.

The final two stanzas of the poem feature similar flaws, but I will only quickly summarise them rather than going in depth, as we have other things to discuss. The first line of the seventh stanza has the same issue as the lines in the fifth. It is one syllable shorter than the others and starts on a stressed syllable. The final line of the eighth also starts on a stressed syllable, though in this case the eight syllable rhythm is maintained. Much like the fifth stanza, these issues could easily be fixed by adding So to the start of the phrase raise your glass, and instead of saying save for going with all save.

Additionally, the rhymes of the poem must be addressed. The rhyme scheme of the poem is extremely simple as I've pointed out above: ABAB. However, this is not kept consistently. Firstly, fade and trades don't rhyme. Neither do dream and schemes. Secondly, in the final quatrain, Icarus appears to fully abandon the A half of his rhyme

scheme, ending the first and third lines with head and must. Now, if I am being particularly generous I might try and theorise that the poet is attempting to call back to the rhymes of the first and third quatrains. If that was the intent, it is a laudable idea, but it simply hasn't worked. The lines otherwise are too consistent with the rest of the poem, so again, it doesn't feel like a subversion as much as it feels like a mistake.

On a final note about rhymes, barring any of the mistakes I have pointed out earlier, these are functional but unimpressive. Each line ends with a single, monosyllabic rhyme. Dread, Said, Seen, Been, Glow, Know, Might, Night. Icarus may benefit from a rhyming dictionary, certainly one that features rhymes of more than one syllable. It's also worth pointing out that you can put rhymes at other places than at the end of a line. You can have multiple rhymes in a single line.

I could go on, of course. There are additional techniques that could enhance our dear Seneschal's work, but my goal here is not to advocate for the kind of poetry I want to see written. I have been deliberate in only discussing the poem as presented because I intend for this to be constructive criticism. It is my sincere hope that Icarus will not take this as an attempt to discourage his work, but rather to demonstrate an understanding of what he was trying to achieve and where he may have gone wrong.

-Christopher Napier

It seems that some Kindred, like kine,
Are quick to forget.
They assaulted a culture that made a river of blood
out of self defense.
We are not the rock to their hard place.
We are the cliff, to their demise.

Thoughts
By Sabastian Greene

Creation for creation's sake.

The Night's Dominion

We are the lords of whispered dread,
The hands that shape, yet go unseen.
A shadow's touch, a word unsaid,
The rulers where no light has been.
The stars above may feign their glow,
Yet know they yield to deeper might.
For we are those whom time must know,
The heirs eternal to the night.
Steel may falter, thrones may rust,
Kings will kneel and empires fade.
Yet we endure, for blood is trust,
And power never yields—only trades.
Raise your glass and bow your head,
To those who walk where mortals dream.
For all shall pass, as all things must,
Save for the Kindred and their schemes.

Icarus

Firstly, it should be said that this work reminds me strongly of the work of Arthur O'Shaughnessy, named simply Ode. Perhaps he too wanted to mark the work of those of us who have chosen to truly live and not just survive a temporary existence spent scraping by in whatever mortal coils the current era chooses to entrap its contemporaries in.

Stanza 1 of Ode:

"We are the music makers,
And we are the dreamers of dreams,
Wandering by lone sea-breakers,
And sitting by desolate streams;—
World-losers and world-forsakers,
On whom the pale moon gleams:
Yet we are the movers and shakers
Of the world for ever, it seems."

I write this article as part of a bet with a toreador, Chris the Critic. I am not here to write a complicated breakdown of whether Icarus follows a pentameter or whether his words could have been chosen more

carefully, instead I am going to give a reminder to those who consider art academically.

Art is creation.

We live in a society which has placed our ability to create under the control of our betters. Our bodies have frozen that which would give us the simplest creation humans have always sought. What do we have left then? In our control? In our ability?

We have joy. Expression through art is a joy, and while not everyone may share the same perspective of that joy it does not strip away the value from its creator. We should celebrate it, especially when it comes from unexpected sources.

Icarus is Ventrue. We expect tailored suits and cold calculations. Ventrue are creators of wealth and express themselves in artistic politics. Their skill is recognised across the camarilla and Icarus is one among many of those skilled creators of tableaux of power and yet here he chooses another art form.

Another expression of creation. He does it, as he does all things, with dignity and charisma. And yes I am aware that there are many in the court who may choose to interpret this as some kind of fawning but my argument is simple. Criticism is not due here.

Icarus is not an academic of poetry, he creates simply because he can and that deserves respect and admiration. Not criticism just for the sake of criticism.

Creation needs no improvement. Joy should be shared and that is what Icarus has done.

Nathaira,
Primogen & Elder of the Ravnos

Tall, dark, Occitanian gentleman seeks dusky Iberian companion for long walks in the night and verbal (perhaps literal) sparring. T, mon cher ami, we will always have Paris. Please do get in touch about your lost property issues.

Deacon.

From a fellow Kindred,

I am excited I have to admit, a kindred i have spoken to of which most of you might know has granted me permission to Bare his Glove which he claims can harness the impossible, i am skeptical but also curious, i don't expect anything to happen but i have been assured that it can do remarkable things which i can only imagine, The price for his generosity is that of a simple feather of which i have carved into a Quill,

A Fist Bump with said Glove Sealed the deal.and i now await the pleasure of wielding this powerful gauntlet & who knows, maybe i can use it on myself and unlock the mysteries hidden beneath,. What could I do with it? the possibilities are endless... I've always wanted to time travel but I doubt that's a thing... Anyway, no matter what I think this experiment is going to be fun...i will try and keep it under the radar but i couldn't keep this to myself.. I want to reveal its secrets.

Quid pro quo
Alex

Kindred of Glasgow

Due to the matters my clan is facing at this moment in time, I will be taking a step away from court for the time being

If you ever find yourself I need of myself or my services, you should know where to find me

Kind regards
Sylas

Kindred of Glasgow,

I am assembling a Coterie to locate any Childer or Associates of the deceased Percival Silito.

Should this matter be of interest to you, kindly contact me at Court or via letter delivered to the Dunsirn Mansion.

Evan Dunsirn

From the desk of Draven Southsea

Independent Clans of Glasgow, I have a business proposal to make, I shall explain further at Court.

A Topical Tale

Most of you will be aware of the tale of the story of the Fall of Troy, most famously told by Homer in his Illiad and Odyssey. Later in Virgil's Aeneid, more favouring the Trojans, it details the final damming act of the King of Troy, Priam.

The clever Odysseus, realising the Greeks would never breach Troy through martial might, concocted a plan. Knowing of Priam's piety, he constructed the infamous wooden horse. He and elite greek warriors hid inside. The greek army then left their camp and feigned retreat across the sea.

Upon discovering the wooden horse, Priam and his counsel saw only a gift for the gods.

Only a single wise priest, Laocoon, warned his King against possible treachery and urged the Horse's destruction. Upon raising his objections, Laocoon was killed by serpents sent by the gods.

This was misread by Priam as a sign that the Horse was sacred and the gods did not wish it harmed. He, of course, ordered the horse drawn inside the city.

The rest is well known. Priam himself is slain by Achilles' own son, Pyrrhus.

While Odysseus' cunning is commendable, it is only due to the utter blindness shown by Priam that Troy fell.

He wrongly believed his enemies defeated. He wrongly believed that the gift left for him was in earnest. Most crucially, he wrongly believed that outside mythical and fickle powers were on his side.

Always look a gift horse in the mouth.
(Anonymous submission - Ed)

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