

“I hope the elaboration has been helpful. Theoretics aside, it is of course obvious that the true test of this method shall be in practice. I have already had quite a few striking successes myself, as mentioned previously, but I am telling you all of this technique for a reason. I hope to see experiments along this line, and if we may meet in our success. Thank you for your time, Brothers and Sisters.”

Silas finished up his talk with only a few beads of sweat present on his brow. The ovation from his fellows Adepts at the Khuit lodge was reassuring, but the experience had still left him exhausted. Thus, he was among the first to leave the small lecturing room once discussion began and solemnness drifted away into the secular.

One noticed when he left.

Ricardo was, by all accounts, a newly-minted Adeptus Minor. He had joined a couple of years ago and had passed through the elementary grades in a breeze. A prodigy, some would say, or simply one skilled in practical magic and examinations. The man himself was the one who knew the true reason, and the reason why he was now staring at Silas as he exited down one of the lodge's halls.

Ricardo was, in fact, only a member of the Occulted Order of the Golden Dawn in name, and not in spirit. Golden Dawners were of course dime-a-dozen, Ricardo often smugly reminded himself. But he was a magician, a magician who had studied under the tutelage of the A.A. and who was involved with the OTO on the side. The two magical lodges were not exactly cordial with one another, if mostly because every (rare) student who took up training at one would deprive another of useful dues. In traditionally convoluted and asinine magical politics, he had been sent to “study” at the Occulted Order of the Golden Dawn as a plant, and having already attained adepthood, found the task laughably easy. What was important however, was that he be in a position where he could monitor the activities of the Inner College. Little lectures and seminars like this could hide portentous secrets.

And one such secret that he had witnessed was really quite boiling his blood. For the reason why Ricardo had paid so much attention to Silas was because the man had described a novel method of consecrating pentacles, one that involved pathworking and Enochian calls. A more direct method, he had said. What he had left out was that that was the exact technique one learned in the grade papers of the Adeptus Major back in his branch of the A.A. It seemed as though the Golden Dawners had the same sort of scheme up their sleeve.

Ricardo did not act then, because he was professional. Instead the man simply loitered around the discussion room before leaving for his car at an appropriate time. He thought, briefly, whether he should contact his Superior before making any moves. He dismissed this thought quickly, as he thought his Will dictated. No, this was personal now.

Once Ricardo had arrived home, he quickly took to his temple and prepared the preliminary rite. The occultist drafted up a sigil with the correspondences for the Path of Gimel and placed it in focus upon his altar. With lit candles and flipped light switches, he then began to fix his gaze upon the icon with effortless one-pointedness. It was hard to implement secular remote viewing protocols when you were your own tasker.

He was looking, of course, for some hidden weakness of this Silas fellow. Not enough to ruin a career but certainly enough to keep a mouth shut. Luckily, most people had such secrets in ready supply. Yet when the glimpse of Silas' sanctum and soul finally came, around 10 minutes in, Ricardo couldn't have said that he expected it.

Children, yes. But how was that enough to blackmail someone?

...

Oh.

Oh this was going to be fun.

Silas felt a vague unease as he scrolled away at his computer, but it really only made sense, he thought to himself. He had always been a little paranoid about people staring at him while he was using the contraption growing up, and it certainly made sense for that fear to resurface given what he was planning...

Silas clicked away at a few more links. He briefly felt his heart skip a few beats but he continued nonetheless in writing down locations and dates.

It was a little ridiculous really. A fully-fledged adept who had been able to shake himself from the morass of mundanity that most people while away their lives in, of piercing sight and indefatigable will, *still* being scared to go to one of these things. He didn't even have (justifiable) spiritual paranoia as an excuse for postponing it, anymore, not when he casually used practical magic for wants and recalled the rather worldly lives of other adepts throughout history. It was really just that he was scared of meeting up with other people who liked to act like little kids and wear diapers...

Silas got up from his desk in an instant. The man walked out from his room as if in a more mundane trance, and trundled on towards the storage closet. Flicking on the switch, he was confronted with his stash.

The man had the information, and so he began to prepare.

Granted, the preparation was strictly necessary, given that the whole thing was tomorrow. And he didn't really *need* the living room for it, let alone as his workspace. But still the sorcerer found himself laying aside the things he would bring.

A vaguely little shirt.

A pair of shorts.

One of the few “branded” ABDL items he had, and as tasteful as one could get in the area.

Plushes and toys and the like.

A backpack, almost anti-climactically, but still adorably.

And of course, a small selection of diapers for the trip.

Silas brought along things and went through boxes and generally filled his living room up to the point where one could mistake it for the dwelling place of a child. Like a playroom..

Silas lost himself in a brief phantasy. After a minute of soft feelings and warmness and fog, he remembered the power betwixt Yesod and Netzach. Swiftly but unemotionally, Silas withdrew himself from mundane pleasure.

Staring off in the living room, Silas recalled some shopping that would be necessary. Plus some other things he might be able to finagle. Normally the man would not consider obtaining more, but really this was just for the trip. There was still a certain giddiness about him.

And so, the magician walked out into the world.

Ricardo, meanwhile, had been working a very strange and mundane will. Still rather confounded and enraptured by what his clairvoyance had conveyed to him, the man was planning out his first course of action. First things were always first; buffs and debuffs.

Ricardo slipped on an amulet of the cubical universe and Carcer that he kept for protection. And only for protection, because the Saturnian emanations of the thing were quite clearly not pleasant. But there was almost no doubt that Silas would attempt to counter-curse him. Speaking of which...

Ricardo drafted up a paper icon based upon the correspondences present in the holy Liber 777. Mostly martial and of other such things. He took the paper and wrapped it around an old black iron nail. Walking out of his house, Ricardo took a little while in searching for an intersection where no-one was looking. Once had had found his target, he buried the nail by the crossroads and returned home.

Silas barely felt his phone when it vibrated in his pocket. Once he had checked it, he was immediately glad that he had caught the text for once.

Hannah: dropping by your house for the saw. Don't worry, already got the keys

Silas felt a terrible feeling grip his chest and thought of the Sun for recomposure. He had borrowed the thing around a week ago for some implement construction and had completely forgotten to return the thing. His sister also *had* a spare set of keys for his house that he had approved of in a terrible lapse of judgment. More worryingly though, the saw was inside the house, and not in the backyard. And she'd no doubt pass by the babified living room in the search for it.

Finally, when it came to her things, she did not take no for an answer.

There amidst the stew of confusion Silas felt something briefly then, fleeting but unmistakable. Like an oily tendril or a sudden piercing eye in darkness. Yes, this was all too suspicious to be happenstance. Magical attacks were always so fucking lovely...

Silas remembered his phone and realized that a minute had passed. She could really be there any second, now.

The magician thought to himself. Spells? He didn't have the time. Talismans? He didn't have any magical objects prepared to pull off such a specific action. Spirits? Again, he couldn't evoke anyone in time.

Wait.

Who said he would need to evoke one?

He did have a familiar, yes. A god that he had been flabbergasted to have “obtained” when he first evoked one of the Olympic Spirits. They had cultivated a good relationship over the years of work together, surely, but it still retained solemnity and professionalism. It wasn't like he could exactly ask a deity to distract his sister from what-could-not-be-named...

But...

Ah, damnit.

In his mind Silas called up Flores and the shining image of the god appeared with a strength that was more than that of imagination. He bid Flores to a strange duty using thought and emotion rather than words. And in an instant the form of the god was gone from his mind. Bound for the course of action, Silas knew, but the occultist hated how he hadn't been able to discern the being's thoughts on the matter.

Silas continued in his drive and tried to forget about what he had just done. A minute later Silas got another text from his sister, stating how she had forgotten about something and would be “swinging by later.” Silas made a mental note of that fact and continued on home in silence. Upon return, the man packed away all of the things that he had prepared along with some of what he had bought. It was all neat, and ready to be quickly taken come the morrow, but firmly out of sight and mind. Silas then prepared a ritual bath in the evening and donned a robe of pure white once he was clean. He offered silver and ginseng to the god who had assisted him at an altar in the creek, burying both of the offerings. After his sacrifice, the man prayed and read the Corpus Hermeticum and Tattvartha Sutra for the rest of the night, foregoing dinner. When the man remembered himself during these hours, he also remembered how his hidden desires and mortal mind seemed to stain the purity of his every last experience.

Thinking on the soft touch of reeds, Silas bid himself to bed.

When Silas got up the next day, he was pretty pissed.

A magical attack, it undoubtedly was. And one he could think of now that he had made privations to the spirits and his soul. This matter had to be settled, and Silas was almost a little fearful in wondering about how he would settle it. But that would come in time.

The first question was who had done it. The man didn't remember any enemies at the lodge, and such a move would be risky in any case. Independents were more likely, but all the old magical battles he had been involved in had long since blown over, back in his more youthful days pre-adepthood. A rival lodge? If that were the case, Silas wasn't sure about why he would have been chosen in particular.

Silas mused and stewed for a while with himself, but came to no clear answers as to the source. Divination would likely be necessary, and Silas didn't count himself the best at it.

Then there was the other question: why? He didn't really make waves. Or cast curses on others that would lead to reciprocal action. If anything this was question was just as difficult as the first. And yet, when he could bring himself to think about it, the curse had had a very specific effect...

Ah, but that was ridiculous...

It was probably just one of the easiest ways for a general curse to manifest. Not specifically intended, and just a way to deal social damage to someone, as curses could easily end up doing. It was really doubtful that the magician had known anything about his...thing.

But, still...

Really, who would it be then? A hidden wizard on an ABDL account that he *might* have pissed off? Some peeping Tom who really had no more grudge on him than *this*? It was all just very ridiculous to consider.

Gradually, Silas pushed the thoughts aside. He recalled that today was the day and that the time was approaching fast. He could get to protection and counterspelling and all of that afterward, he supposed.

Still rather disgruntled, Silas got together his things for the trip. As soon as all the clothing, toys, miscellany, and diapers were packed up in the trunk, Silas began the drive down towards the house wherein the party was hosted. Even there on the road, his thoughts strayed from the matter, though in a nicer way. The weather was lovely.

Finally, Silas spotted the place that the address had had received corresponded too. After internally laughing a little at the linguistic connection, Silas found himself a suitable parking spot and began to get out of the car. There was trepidation, but surprisingly little in comparison to confidence.

As Silas was greeted at the door and breezed through the pleasantries as though this hadn't been the first real-world ABDL interaction he had had in his life, another man made his way down the street unobtrusively. He saw Silas' parked car and felt satisfaction well-up within him. Most of his actions were now just from the excitement of it.

Looking around, Ricardo saw no-one outside and quickly ducked toward the side of the house, where the tall wooden gate-door rested that would take him to the backyard. The stealth would only work on those who were *not* Silas, after all, and the magician was not eager in any case to pretend to have a predilection towards diapers.

The man's ears were readied as he dashed across the frontyard after watching the windows for a while. The gate itself was a bit loud to open, but when he held still after making his way through, he didn't hear any commotion from inside, or otherwise. Sighing in relief, Ricardo then prepared a tool whose mundanity matched that of the operation; a camera.

All while this was happening, Silas felt himself as though transported into another realm. There were other ABDLs and they were talking and some were even *dressed*, but the world kept going on and reality had not yet returned to its unmanifest state. Not to say that it *didn't* feel like a dream that could not quite connect with the rest of reality, but still Silas enjoyed the touch of a fairyland that he thought might vanish into the air come the day's end.

Of course, poetics aside, Silas assuredly loved things.

The other people there wore him down slowly; the host was genial and not at all pushy, but some of the others who were more properly babies kept egging him on, and whenever Silas would acquiesce, the

host would say not a word. It was after an hour that the group had convinced Silas to dress more kiddily, and after another couple that they convinced him to get diapered. By that time he had mostly been distracted from “adult” conversation by the opportunity to play with those dressed similarly to himself. The little tempters thought that they might be able to work him towards wetting by the afternoon.

Ricardo saw Silas' trips to his car to get supplies and was equal parts fascinated and horrified by what he could assume that man was doing, and annoyed by how long it was taking him to do it. He knew he had to get a good shot, and a decently damning one. If they were just hanging around and talking about whatever those ABDL people did, it wouldn't exactly look convincing on a photograph. And getting him in a *diaper* would really just be icing on the cake. But a place in-between was fine. Really the man has little intention of leaking this information out significantly, but the man would not admit that to himself and in either case he wanted to see Silas squirm greatly. His respect for Silas' adeptness did not cover what the man did in his secular life.

Every so often Ricardo would look through a window into a cozy bedroom he had spied Silas move into. The man's apparel and actions tended to provoke smirks.

At some point in his playings – at a point where the man had long since lost track of time – one of Silas' friends had mentioned something in his slurrings about a ball that was outside. The friend asked Silas if he could bring it in, and in an eagerness that had encaptured his world, Silas eagerly nodded his head in response. Swiftly but awkwardly, the man toddled off out the door and down the steps into the backyard, warm glances falling onto him from the adults that were inside the house. Paying the rest of the world no heed for now, Silas simply walked along the grass towards where the blue ball he had been told of rested. Out there in the sun, and feeling as though in another world, Silas' mind rested in a place he had always heard of in fantasy, but never really thought he could enter. It was really rather difficult for him to even conceptualize it as that, for were once rested words and abstractions there were now colors and sensations and a dizzyingly wide-world to the mind of a child. The magical part of him wondered, briefly, if that was part of the allure of incarnation, down into this sickening world of manifestation. But he knew he could not reduce the problem down to just that. Not that he felt guilty for the thought, though.

Silas picked up the ball once had reached it at the far end of the yard. Gripped by a sudden emotion, Silas squealed and hugged the ball for a few moments, rolling around in the grass. He was so happy and lost and in such a haze that he did not think to open his eyes for quite a while.

What he saw upon opening them immediately brought him to lucidity.

Click.

Ricardo snapped away with the camera. The lens was pointed directly at him. He had somehow rolled toward the side of the house, where grass gave way to concrete.

Instantly Silas felt something beyond thought click away in his mind. Fear and confusion and anger and thousand more emotions gave way to the power of the soul within a single incandescent instant. Though Silas had not consciously formulated any magic in his mind, he knew what would await the man not a second later.

He did not want his picture taken.

“What the hell?!” Ricardo practically shouted. There, on the screen where the image gallery was supposed to be, there was only a message telling him no memory card was inserted.

Frantically, Ricardo opened up the flap and ejected the memory card. Silas took the opportunity to begin to recollect himself.

When Ricardo was finally able to get out the memory card, he found the copper lining from where it was read badly scratched. And the thing as a whole almost cut in half.

Before Ricardo could formulate any words, Silas the magician had returned with an alien coldness.

“Ricardo, would you mind explaining to me what you're doing here?” Silas asked, but not as a question.

Ricardo just stared at him blankly for a few seconds, before he managed a line.

“I might ask why you stole magical material from the A.A. when you can apparently call upon psychokinesis on the fly!” Ricardo shouted, but Silas could tell that he was still mainly shell-shocked by his magical feat. Really, the magician himself was amazed by it when he was able to work through his anger.

Then Silas cognized what Ricardo had said.

“Wait...what are you talking about?! I've never taken a look at anything of theirs that wasn't published on the web. And *why* would a Minor such as yourself know of that? You've never been initiated into...” Silas' came to a realization, and visualized sigils of Saturn onto the form of Ricardo with feverish fury. The magician felt most of the hits go towards his amulet, though was feeling a bit weary anyway. And regardless, he was beginning to hear stirring from the house...

“So, care to tell why you falsely presented yourself before the Occulted Order, *huh?* If you come clean now, you might be able to escape with only an expulsion. I trust that you won't like more of my curses, fool.” Silas spat.

Of course, he had said this whilst wearing overalls, but Ricardo knew that it would not be best to mention that part at the moment.

“That is besides the point. What *is* relevant is that you stole information on the consecration of pentacles through the medium of pathworking and the Enochian arts. I don't think attempting to expose what you do in your private time to your colleagues is any worse than blaspheming the holy mysteries for the approval of your peers.” Ricardo worked up his own evidently righteous indignation. Concurrently, he shot a few of his own Martial curses towards the man in his mind and under his breath. Lacking a talisman, Silas found himself far more wobbly.

By this time, a small crowd had begun to form in the backyard. A few of the children clutched their toys and looked on awkwardly, or gawked, while those who were lucid and with their adult faculties just looked on in utter confusion. The host in particular was the most exasperated, though they held their tongue in waiting for Silas.

“*Blaspheming the mysteries?!?*” Silas spoke in an alien tone. “It is *you* who has raped them so!”

“Language.” the host said, unamused.

Silas just looked at them and toned down before continuing.

“I came up with the method on my own. Magic is an experimental art, after all. Objective truths can be reached by multiple individuals, which you would have recognized if you had thought for even a moment when I gave that presentation.” Silas spoke with a serpent's bite.

“Wait...magic?” one of the crowd spoke, and received no immediate answer.

“The method was plainly that which is revealed in Adeptus Major! You, you...” Ricardo shouted, and then went silent. Standing there at some random person's house, amidst people either dressed as babies or caring for them, he felt rather, ridiculous. After a moment's more thought, he realized that he had just revealed the secrets of the grade whose secrecy he had been so intent on preserving. He felt integrity and power leach out of his aura like blood in the water. He sealed the invisible gash with silence.

It was plain from the faces of the people, however, that such silence could not last.

What the hell had he gotten himself into?

Both wizards held in their astral battlements, a dizzying web of visualizations for protection and offense that each saw plainly in their own head and which they could dimly grasp from one another. Even the uninitiated felt some, strangeness to the environment, and to the obscure tension clearly between the two men.

“Is, are they glowing?” another one from the crowd asked. Someone else asked what he was talking about. Silas made a mental note to exchange contact information with the sensitive later.

“Hmph. So I suppose that I acted hastily.” Ricardo eventually made out.

“No doubt.” Silas' eyes narrowed.

“Hmm. Still. I suppose this hasn't been a waste. The fight was fun. And I won't have your little lodge on my itinerary anymore. I take it you know of my background, now.” Ricardo spoke.

“The A.A. Hadn't imagined spying you here. Really, I thought you might cut me some slack. I only have the Crowned and Conquering part of the equation to wrap up, now.” Silas added sardonically.

“Good joke.” Ricardo said with eyes that rolled. “In any case, I suppose I'll leave you here with your folks. Needless to say I won't be telling anyone, and perhaps we can be more straightforward in our conflicts from here on out. I must admit that I've always longed for a rivalry...”

“Wait wait wait...he *isn't* ABDL?” yet another individual from the crowd spoke, this time with utter exasperation.

“I never really thought about it, but now that it is here, I wouldn't mind for our relationship to continue



under those terms. Sharpen your sorcery, for I want to see good fights in the future.” Silas smirked.

“Same here.” Ricardo grinned.

“Homo est Deus.” both of the magicians stated firmly in perfect unison, with identical esoteric hand signs in tandem. And then the holy moment was gone, with both occultists walking off from one another with the beauty of Netzach, and the dignity of Tiphareth. Ricardo walked off out of the side alley and away from the house, whilst Silas took his place back in the crowd. A crowd he was beginning to consider peers.

Silas smiled at them all longingly then, before he realized what he would have to do.

“Care to explain, little boy?” the host looked on with an authority Silas could envy.

Silas looked up with hesitation.

And excitement.

Though many doubts raced through his mind; of bearing pearls before swine, of appearing like a weirdo to people he wanted to look normal to, of even coming here when there was magic to be done, Silas still found his answer simple.

“Well, I'm a wizard.”

First, silence.

Then...

“...THAT'S SO COOL!” from a kid in the back.

Though many other things happened on that day, when Silas went back on to a party that was even livelier and nicer to him than it was before the battle, that had been the only thing the man needed to hear.