



# TEUTOBURG 9

By: K. Kallisto Esbriar

A THELETOS CASCADE Short Story

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Schizopunk Media

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*The Tale of a Stranger out of Time*

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# THELETOS CASCADE





# The Hospitaller

~~A Beach Near Saint-Jehan-d'Acre  
The Occupied Kingdom of Jerusalem  
Autumn, 1191 AD~~

One moment - The pristine and bright shores of the Holy Land.

The next - Some damp and dreary forest unknown.

Where am I? What happened?

Was I slain? There was no battle near me in those last moments on that beach though.

I do not feel particularly different at all, and if this were... *what comes after*, I am not sure this is what I had hoped and fought for my whole life. Unless I had done something wrong.

I look around at the strange new location trying to get my bearings. No. Surely I'm not dead.

How much time could have passed... Strangely I don't feel as if I had been unconscious for a long period.

I still seem to be wearing my armour and holding my shield, even my sword is still sheathed on my person.

So it's not like I was seized or robbed, at least not obviously.

In fact, there were no forests like this anywhere near the Holy Land. It is weeks by boat to the nearest wooded areas of Europa - at the very least. For all I know, this could be anywhere from Eastern Hungariae to Northern Svealand.

I will not get any answers standing here. The fog within the forest is quite dense, yet I must pick a direction and start walking. Hopefully I can find a waterway of some sort, I will see if I can find any elevation too, or better yet - a village or encampment. Though I have a feeling it will be quite empty for a ways.

I stow my shield on my back, and begin making my way through the most dry section of the woods that I can find. There seem to be no paths anywhere, only a lot of mud due to the dampness.

Must have rained last night.

\*\*\*

I have been walking for quite some time now. There has not been much change in scenery, only a gradual thinning of the fog. Just to reveal even more deep forest.

My legs ache. I am quite worn as it was already the late afternoon of a rather arduous day of organizing when I had... relocated? For lack of a better word. We were to be marching South soon on our quest to retake more of the occupied lands of Christendom.



I pray I can somehow return to assist my brethren in the likely to be many coming battles. However I have a looming feeling that this will not be the case.

I fear I may not see my people again.

This thought causes me to stop a brief moment to think, as I had been focused on simply finding someplace safe to rest and *then* re-evaluate my situation.

I shrug off my shield, pull my sheathed sword from my belt, and set them against a tree in front of me. While doing so, I kneel on a dry patch of grass next to the tree and pull the thin Rosary dangling from my neck. I grip it tightly. I then begin to pray quietly.

*“Oh Lord God in Heaven, in the name of your Beloved Son  
Jesus Christ - Forgive me, a lowly sinner.*

*I do not have the right to, as simply a man who fights in your name - but why have I been brought to this mysterious place? Is this a test of my faith? Is it some sort of punishment? I tried my best to lead a good life and fight for you, but if I've erred in some fashion, please allow me to do penance and cleanse me of my guilt. If not the case... I beg of you to show me a sign of some sort for what I am to do here.*

*It had been very troubling times for us all as your followers, the Crusades have so been long and grueling... so full of misery and death.*

*I ask of you to please keep my family and my warrior brethren safe in all of their endeavours. I just hope they will all prevail in my now-absence.*

*Forgive me again for selfish requests... Amen”*

I continue kneeling in silence, internally praying some of the Rosary for a short period. When suddenly I feel a presence in the bushes behind me a few paces away. Is this the sign, Lord?

Without turning around or making any clear movements, I cautiously stow my Rosary. Did a predacious animal approach me so stealthily that I only noticed at this distance? I suppose I'll have to be more alert than I thought in these woods.

The barely audible snaps of twigs and moving of leaves as it approaches leads me to believe it will attack since my back is turned. In the blink of an eye I lunge for my shield and spin around just in time. The beast had leapt at me in the same instant and made a loud clang against my shield. I was still on one knee with the shield over my head and shoved it back as hard as I could, pulling my sword from the scabbard with my free hand a second after as I stood.

I lower my shield to my chest so I can see what had attacked me, only to be taken aback. I see what appears to be a man only wearing trousers and a boar-faced headdress, covered in mud and some sort of green dye to blend in with the scenery. He had fallen back and was quickly getting to his feet while pointing a spear in my direction.

He did not say anything, only glared at me with wild and piercing blue eyes through the mess of mud and dye on his face. Appears to be some crazed hunter or wild man of some sort. What in God's name is going on?

“Why did you attack me!” I shouted at him in Francien, while getting into a more defensive pose. Though I have the strange feeling a wild man such as this would not speak the language.

His expression changed for a brief moment, from that of ferocious rage to confusion. Now standing, seeming ready to attack again. His expression quickly reverted though and shouted something back angrily, gesturing at me with his spear.

I do not understand him. I then shout back the same question in Breton. Again, he gives a strange look, yells something again before lunging at me with his spear. I manage to slam it out of the way with my shield with another loud clang as I raise my sword to him.

“Stop! You fool! You wear no armour, do not make me slay a peasant madman!” - This time I say it as clearly as I can in Latin as a last ditch effort to get through to the man.

His tone, clearly more focused and threatening now as he says something else, I realize now it resembles Germanic somewhat, but incredibly archaic. The only term that stands out The only term that stands out in his string of strange words is “Rūmō”.

He reacted negatively to Latin. Does he think I am a Roman? The Romans mostly speak Greek now though. This madman must be lost in the grand stories of the past. Dressing like some Barbarian of Old, attacking random strangers in the woods.

The madman lunged with significantly more murderous intent pushed into his spear. I once again block the spearhead with a crash, followed by creaking as the spear tip had gotten stuck into the metal Cross on the front of my shield.

The man realizes this error and tries to free the spear, but I react quickly and swing my heavy sword down onto the neck of the spear where he was holding it from. Another loud crack as the wooden spear shatters from the blow, taking one of the mans gripping fingers off in the process, leaving only the spearhead embedded as he stumbles back again.

He stares at his blood-gushing stump of a knuckle, must've broken the hand too as it is limp. I expect a cry of pain but the madman only shakes violently, gritting his teeth, eyes filled with an ancient flaming rage. He then paints a Rune over the length of his face, with the bleeding stump as if it where a quill with ink.

He pulls a hatchet from a loop in his trousers before shrieking like an animal and charges me once again.

"Enough of this. I shall free you of your madness." I say in Latin - the choice language in this place it seems.

I level my sword and raise my shield before lunging back at him, another crash as he hits my shield, the hatchet stopped over my shoulder as the madman is now frozen. The hatchet falls off and over my shoulder in a now limp hand. The man lets out a single gurgling wheeze. My sword had hit its mark.

I push the man off of me, an audible flesh cutting sound rings out as I retract the sword from his heart. He staggers for a moment, a glazed look in his eyes as they look at the now oozing fatal wound in the darkness of the mud on his chest. He then falls flat on his back with a wet thud. Dead.

“Christ have Mercy.” I stand there a moment, slightly shocked as the blood drips from my sword. What is going on? Have *I* gone mad?

As if to do the exact opposite of answer this existential question - suddenly there are shouts from deeper within the woods, coming from the direction the madman came in.

“Stop right there!” Shouts a man in Latin... In a strange accent. An *old* accent.

To my shock, as I had not yet processed what had just occurred, two men dressed as Roman soldiers of Old walk into the clearing, swords drawn and assessing what must be an incredibly strange scene for them as well.

Is this some sort of theater performance? It brings to mind the various tales and plays I had seen in my younger years about the Romans and Christ.

I level my blood stained sword once again in their direction, remaining on guard.

“Who are you! Where in God’s name am I?” I ask the men, not shouting but trying to assert myself.

They both look at once another, towards the corpse of the madman, and then at me. One of them lets out a sigh and lowers his sword. The other still clearly more on guard.

“Ah, he’s slain the barbarian, wonderful.” Says the more relaxed man as he sheathes his Gladius.

“Thank you stranger, he had been killing our horses and some guards here and there over the last few weeks. We had quite the trouble tacking him.” He says, the other man spits at the corpse without saying anything.

“You speak Latin? You are dressed as Romans, where am I!” I repeat again, the men still eyeing me strangely.

“You must be incredibly wealthy to have such intricate garments and gear, you have quite the odd accent too. If anything I should be asking you what *you’re* doing out here.” Says the first man, somewhat amused in tone.

“I am of the Knights Hospitaller of Saint John of Jerusalem. I appear to be lost in these miserable woods, I do not know how I got here.” I reply as clearly they will not be answering my questions right away.

The men look at each other again, the second lowers his sword and mutters something to his compatriot.

“Stow your weapon sir, we mean you no harm. I can see you do not seem to have any camp or supplies on you, come back with us to our encampment the least we can do is offer you some water and a place to rest for this deed you have done for us.” Says the man, gesturing to

the corpse as he speaks.

Still quite confused but growing too weary to make any demands, I wipe my sword of blood and sheath it back on my belt. Pulling the spearhead from my shield, tossing it towards the corpse and stow my shield on my back.

“I would be much obliged.” I say to the men, accepting my strange situation.

The second man walks up to the corpse, and swiftly cleaves the dead man’s head off, bundling it in the boar pelt and swinging it onto his shoulder.

“What was the need for that?” I ask him, though I can garner some reasoning as to why.

“Proof.” Is all the man says in a flat tone before he starts walking back the way they had come from.

I raise my arms in a questioning shrug towards the first man.

“Pay him no mind, he is upset at being stationed in a dreary place such as this. He had hoped for a comfortable guard duty in Hispania.” Says the man in what I can assume is a mocking tone of the other man, while gesturing for me to follow them.

“Again, what is this place?” I try once more, beginning to follow them.

“Welcome to the frontier of the recently established

territory of Germania Inferior.” Says the man waving a hand towards the forest.

“Is this... The land of the Romans?” I somewhat hesitate to ask.

He does not answer. Which says more than any verbal acknowledgement would. As if to say *Obviously, you fool, can you not see and hear us?*

I’ve definitely gone mad.



# The Legions

Military Outpost, Eastern Germania Inferior  
Frontier of the Roman Empire  
Autumn

We had walked for some time, eventually cresting a large hill overlooking a clearing. In the center was a rather expansive Encampment filled with rows upon rows of tents. Surrounded by large wooden walls on all sides with fortified gates at either end. With lookout perches at the various corners and midsections of the walls opposite the gates.

Populated by a sea of more Roman soldiers of Old.

This is too much for simply a Theatrical ruse. Not when we have a war to fight back home.

I trudge along behind the two Soldiers as we make our approach to the camp's main gate. The late evening setting in as various campfires are beginning to billow smoke up and over the walls into the cloudy sky.

The chatter of soldiers can be heard as they are getting ready for a meal, banter, shouting, some singing - from the sound of it, some men are already quite drunk. Once

again, I am able to discern that they are in fact speaking some fashion of Old Latin.

We arrive at the gate where some guards are standing, they greet the two I have accompanied, before staring past the men at myself with curious but wary looks on their faces, fingering the pommels of their swords in their belts.

“Who is this stranger with you? A prisoner?” Asks one of the guards while staring at me, but clearly speaking to the more courteous of the two men. Seems that even they know the silent one to be quite abrasive.

“A guest!” Boasts the soldier in response.

“He slayed that elusive beast of a barbarian who had been attacking our horses and patrols - the one who we had been tacking for a while now.” He continues as the abrasive man raises the head in the boar skin to the guard, two others lean in to look at it and back towards me, whispering to one another.

“Is he a barbarian? He does not dress as us, I don’t believe mercenaries are even employed out this far, nor is there need for those such as them.” Questions the guard, gesturing in my direction.

“We aren’t sure, he speaks Latin as we do but in a strange manor, though it is not a Germanic accent.” Replies the soldier.

“You, stranger, where do you hail from? What are you doing out here?” Asks the guard, now addressing me

directly. The small group of "Romans" are all looking at me strangely.

"I hail from the Duchy of Brittany, under the English Crown." I reply to the guard, straightening my tired posture.

"In all honesty, I do not know how I got here." I follow up with after a brief pause.

I am met with a look of confusion from the group of men. Before the guard speaks up.

"I have not heard of such places, which means you must be from quite far. Judging by your attire you must be very wealthy though. I mean, white and black robes? Such an ornate helm... and that sword! It has to be the largest I have ever seen! No barbarian wields such weaponry." The others nod in agreement They have said this twice now, though I am no noble. I will not inform them of that though.

"I believe the Governor would be quite interested in meeting this man. Though not this evening as he has some important things to attend to from what I heard." Says the guard to the group.

"He shall join us for dinner this evening, as he seems to have had a long journey. He can regale us with tales of his homeland and battles!" Announces the soldier. Clearly eager to get to the wine and minimize the endless questions that will arise here with these guards.

Satisfied, the guards step aside, still eyeing me as we

enter the camp. The abrasive man walks ahead, wandering off with the head out of sight. I follow the courteous soldier further inside the walls.

This strange feeling arises as more of the soldiers in the camp stop what they're doing and stare as we walk deeper in. We even seem to pick up the odd soldier or guard following us from a distance, until a reasonably large group has formed around us, shuffling along as I follow the soldier to where I assume his tent is. Looking around at the tailing group, I see soldiers of vast ages from war-scared veterans to fresh-faced and optimistic youth.

I appear to stand out immensely here, with my mostly white cloak, black and white robes covered in a checkered pattern of crosses. My white shield with a black cross in the center and longsword clearly not of this era, especially my full-faced helm. Aside from these superficial strange items, I also appear to be nearly a head taller than most men nearby with my helm included, I had not noticed in the woods as the terrain was quite uneven. How odd.

We arrive at a tent, the large group still in tow. The courteous soldier starts to shoo away the others, explaining something that I cannot hear to them. Hm, I thought he was just an average footsoldier, but he seems to have quite the sway amongst these other men around here. A commander perhaps? He comes back over after a brief moment, gesturing to the tent.

"You can rest here the night, we will be getting another fire going nearby and cooking some food if you wish to

join. I'm sure the others are quite eager to know more about your escapades. Tomorrow, you will meet with the Governor." He says, before walking in the direction that the men had gone off in.

I let out a tired sigh and sit on the lone cot inside the tent, setting my shield and sword down next to me. Knowing I must still be in shock at the strange turn of events, I am unlikely to ever get an explanation as to how I ended up here. I suppose I must make do and offer my services to these "*Romans*"... better off than being attacked by madmen in the woods. Lest I go hungry and without pay.

I look around the tent a moment, absentmindedly as my eyes fall upon a small table in the corner with some items resting on it. I get up and walk over to inspect it - mostly to waste time, as I need to try and collect myself before going over for a meal and likely be berated with many questions from the soldiers. I furrow my brow as I pick up a small figurine from the table, no. An Idol. Pagan. Mars perhaps? Mostly recalling some artistic depictions from old historical texts found in my Uncle's Library. It was surrounded by unlit candles and other small offerings of coins, dried meats and fruit, and a small dish of red liquid, a faint vinegary smell comes from it, likely stale wine that has been out some time.

*Pagan* Romans? They still worship the *gods* of Old too, accurately matching with their accents and appearances... How incredibly odd. Have I somehow found myself in the time before Christ? Under normal circumstances I would call these men Heathens. However, they simply do not know. They will not know

for some time perhaps, but they will. matching with their accents and appearances. How incredibly odd. Have I somehow found myself in the time before Christ? Under normal circumstances I would call these men Heathens. However, they simply do not know. They may not know for some time perhaps, but they will.

I will try and prod some of the men to garner when exactly this might be. *If* in fact I do find myself in the distant past, if not I pity the stranger who would go to these lengths to make me question my sanity, for... Amusement? Revenge? Who is to say.

If my being put here was sanctioned by God's Will, I will do my best to fulfill my duty to Him as a man, and as a warrior.

\*\*\*

The crackling fire flickered across the faces of the many men who sat around it, spewing quite a large column of smoke, likely from the damp wood from this damp place. We were now sharing some incredibly awful sort of wine that seems to be all the soldiers get to drink, what I assumed was spoiled wine in the offering dish was in fact just this terrible 'Posca' as they call it, but it is better than nothing I suppose.

I had expected to be bombarded with questions but it seems the 'Commander' had quelled the men's curiosity, for now. So we sat and we drank, the men shared stories of their battles, of their pursuits in romance, - along with more vulgar things as soldiers do, told jokes, and other vaguely familiar sorts of things. Reminding me of the

men I serve - served with. Strangely I do not feel so alienated despite my odd situation as I had anticipated.

One thing I learn rather quickly from these tales and intoxicated ramblings - the Emperor is currently the legendary *Augustus* himself.

After some time of this, I still get many strange and curious looks, so I decide to get ahead of things. I stand upon a tree stump nearby, all of the men almost immediately go silent. I hold my arms outstretched.

“Hello gentlemen, I suppose now is as good a time as any to properly introduce myself. As you’ve all clearly been quite curious of my rather out of place attire, among other things.” They seem to become captivated just as quickly as they had gone silent.

“I will be honest, I have no idea how I got here in these lands that you call Germania, but trust in me. I am no enemy, I have come from very far, and I believe I am here for a purpose. I will assist you all in any way that I can as a fellow soldier!” I am greeted with a mix of expressions now, some confused, some captivated, others laugh, and some with very intense looks in their eyes.

“Tell us a story strange man!” Shouts someone in the large group, tossing some bread in my general direction.

After a moments pause, deciding on something to tell the men, going back in my memories of the many stories I had read in my youth in that familial castle that seems do distant now. It comes to me.

“Gladly sir!” I shout. “I bring you a glorious tale from the future of Rome! I ask you all to bear with me and listen close, the story begins in a dark and bloody place, filled with despair...” This gets their attention, an almost mystical silence befalls the group of Legionaries around me as they lean in closer.

Over the next few hours I proceed to tell them the tale of the future Emperor Aurelian - *Restitutor Orbis*. The Tale of the Divinely blessed Emperor who saves the Empire from the brink of collapse after decades of strife and struggle. Of his glorious battles, reconquests and political maneuvering. Of his uniting of the World against misery and shame.

I did not tell them of his tragic end however. These men could use a story of hope and redemption. Not that of the endless cycle of betrayal, greed, and collapse that followed. The men laughed, cheered, booed, and expressed all sorts of other emotions throughout my telling of the tale.

Looking around at these ancient men, I am overwhelmed with a bizarre realization that despite a millennia, nothing has particularly changed amongst our type of people. We still fight in endless wars seeking glory, riches, fame. A grand purpose - we all need something to fight for in this world. It would seem this is where I will find such purpose.

Once I've finished entertaining and clearly gaining favour with the men with such a “creative and unique” tale. I step off into the crowd, I need rest. Despite the calls for more of these wonderful stories.



“Another night I shall continue then! It has been an immensely long and odd day for me, I must rest.” I tell the various legionaries around me who are patting my shoulders and trying to get me to drink more with them.

As I scan the crowd once again, I notice the “Commander” is no longer around. I hadn’t noticed him taking his leave it would appear.

“Where has your Commander... I think? - gone, the one who brought me here. I would like to thank him again for the hospitality he has shown me before I retire for the evening. I do apologize as I had not gotten his name from him do to the hectic nature of the evening.” I ask one of the Legionaries next to me, who happens to be one of the gate guards from earlier.

“Hm, that is a good question. I also did not see him leave, perhaps he retired early.” He replies.

“Anyone seen Commander Arminius?” He shouts into the drunken crowd who’ve now broken out into song of some sort. To no avail.

“Must’ve went to bed, I’m sure you’ll see him tomorrow. Rest well *storyteller!*” He slaps my back and wanders off with some others.

I end up wandering back to my tent, taking glances around at the camp as I do, too tired to think of much. Catching glimpses of some Legionary banners hung on posts, the head of the man I’d slain was now on a spike along with some others, under a few banners fluttering in the darkness. The few torches in the area illuminating

the numbers XVII, XVIII, and XIX in gold lettering on them.

When I finally go into my tent and take off my gear. Laying down on the cot and finally realizing how truly tired I am. This single day has felt akin to an entire decade, and I have not fully processed the insanity of my circumstances. Though I will not think of it anymore tonight lest I not sleep.

Yet, just as I am about to fall into a deep slumber. Something clicks in my mind.

Arminius. The Commander. The attempted Germania conquests during the time of Augustus.

Surely it is not *that* Arminius.

...Lord Have Mercy on us.

# A Warning

Vetera, Eastern Germania Inferior  
Frontier of the Roman Empire  
Autumn, 9 *aAD*

The following morning I was awoken suddenly from a quickly blurred dream, to the sound of horns blaring in the camp. It must be to wake the Legions for the incoming arrival of the Governor who had supposedly been traveling from another outpost after a delegation was held with some senior officials in “Gallia Belgica”. As I was *repeatedly* informed by plenty of the men last night.

What an awful headache. All of my muscles are incredibly sore as well. Though I had been *asked* to come meet the Governor with... Arminius. So I will abide by the request.

I have not had enough time to contemplate the facts of my situation so I will not let my assumptions cloud my judgment until I have pieced more things together. I sense today will bring full clarity to exactly *when* I am.

I pull myself from the cot and put on all of my kit and gear once again. As I go to grab my helm from the small table, I glance down at the small offering pile, my eyes

trace back over to the figurine of Mars. A small flame of anger crackles within me and without another thought slam my helm down onto the figurine and through the table, destroying the entire setup and sending the little offering bowls and piles all over the ground with a crash.

I look down at the crumpled table and demolished figure of a long dead Pagan god resting at my feet. I kneel down, pick up the pieces of the figure in a small cloth, and hide it away under my belt. I silently place my helm over my head, do the sign of the cross, and walk out of my tent.

After a small, quick breakfast with some tired chatter amongst the soldiers about what is to come today, a small commotion erupts at the camp gates, before they swing open and Arminius barrels through on horseback. As he approaches the center of the camp, the exhausted expression on his face becomes quite clear. He dismounts, and asks if the Governor has returned yet only to be met with some tired and half-hearted variations of "No" and "Not yet". He appeared to deflate a bit before walking back to his tent without saying anything else. No one seems phased by this, from what I can tell, this sort of thing happens from time to time.

"Germans." Says one of the men quietly to those around him - or something close to that from what I can tell. This garners a stifled laugh from a handful of them before one of them hushes the group and they go back to their morning duties.

Sweet Christ. This is indeed Hell, I have surmised. I am being punished for something. Though until I know exactly what for, I will not go along with what is to come - without a fight.

\*\*\*

I spent a decent portion of the midday wandering the camp, speaking with various soldiers that I vaguely recall from the blur that was last night. Mostly asking simple things, about what their duties entailed, what they did on their downtime, their opinions on things such as the barbarians and how life was in the Empire proper. Returning in kind with responses to the variety of inquiries into my armour, my kit, my allegiances. Well, as best I could without giving much away.

While doing this, I decided, it was useful to whisper here and there about the “violence” and “awful things” I had seen out in my time in Northern Germania. Of course, not my own experiences but things I recalled from the Histories I had read. This did not matter, I needed to sow the seeds of deeper resentment and distaste for the barbarians in them. I am sure many already had such feelings, but many had yet to see *real* combat. Not against men. Combat against *monsters*. These are the ones who needed such visceral reminders through awful tales.

Surprisingly, the stoic man who I had met with Arminius yesterday in the woods had joined me at one point. I learned that he went by “Atrius” as he started telling his own tales of his awful experiences out on patrols to myself and the men I had been speaking to.

Despite being caught incredibly off guard by him saying anything at all, they still listened intently and shared their sentiments. There happened to be some converted Germanic soldiers in the camp, but they mostly kept to their own little corner, not paying much attention to the discussions of the others.

I did however, inform the men to keep quiet around some of the higher ranking Germans who were around as to not cause any scenes, but to be wary of them out here regardless. I found myself framing weaving these tales almost akin to old folk tales and superstitions, it was doing the job. Though there is still more to be done.

Based on some reports from the gate guards, “Governor Varus” and his caravan had been delayed until the late evening due to paths being quite muddy on the way here. That settles it. The final confirmation to my suspicions about this strange time. Something must be done.

\*\*\*

I went on my own to speak to Arminius later in the day. His exhaustion seems to have mostly passed, keeping up his amicable demeanor from yesterday. I did not ask of what this morning’s scene was about. I simply made idle chatter about my thoughts on my interactions with the other soldiers, my *predicament* in being lost, and how I am unsure of who to trust in such a bizarre situation. I also made passing mention of the hatred men seem to have for the peoples of the North, how they are seen as less than human. I added a small “distraught” half-truth about how my family were of Gaulish descent, and that

the Romans had done the same to them decades before, wiping them out or assimilating them.

Arminius was listening intently at first, making some comments on the men, as well as mentioning some things of his own past. As he heard my tale about the Gauls and their subjugation by the Romans, his expression shifted. It became darker. A look conveying some sort of understanding or pain. He then stands from where he had been seated, walks next to me and places a hand on my shoulder, looking past me out at the camp.

“I understand your plight, more than you know. We shall speak again on the matter after our meeting with Varus this evening.” He says in a low tone, without looking at me, and walks off.

I stand in place a moment, unmoving, and gaze up at the the darkening cloudy sky. I am reminded of... something. I'm not even sure what anymore. My past feels so distant and faded already, yet I've only been in these lands over a day. It may as well be a lifetime.

A few 'plinks' and 'tinks' can be heard as I continue to look up.

It begins to rain.

\*\*\*

The caravan happened to arrive in camp just as it began to rain. A few hours passed as the new group of higher ranking Romans settled back into their own tents that had been left vacant. What seemed to be allied German

Chiefs who were with them began to settle in as well. Some others from the caravan went around camp to check on the men and spread word that the Governor had arrived, as there had not been time to make a proper announcement before the downpour. They were told they would be addressed in the morning with news on various developments in the region.

We gathered around the table within Varus' spacious command tent. The new group of Advisors, Centurions, and Chieftains were even more confused and baffled by my presence than the Legionaries around camp had been. Many are whispering to one another and looking over my attire with mixed expressions. A few others among them however, looked more agitated and distracted, as if they wanted to get the pleasantries and meal over with to discuss important matters, but didn't want to seem rude.

The Romans for the most part sat on one side of the table, I was seated next to Arminius among them, nearby to some of Varus' advisors, with Varus himself to be seated at the head of the table. Across from us sat a mix of Germans and others in similar positions as Arminius, which made it somewhat tense. They did not seem to like him very much. Though he did not seem bothered at all by this and kept up his usual demeanor. Talking to many of the "new" arrivals of how their travels went, what sorts of business they became involved in, gave them updates on how the men in the camp had been fairing. A wide variety of superfluous things.

We began eating after Varus entered and everyone stood to salute the Governor. I did my best to mimic the



others to show respect before we had all retaken our seats. During the meal I was asked various questions in between the chatter, similar to what all the others had been asking. I kept my responses the same as they had been, and decided to begin expanding upon them with even more tales of adventures and battles across the lands. Interestingly, this seemed to ease the tension in the room, most gathered here had been tired of so much political talk and maneuvering that had consumed their recent weeks away.

Much wine was to be had, and the large selection of food was delightful. A large jump in quality from the average soldier rations I had eaten before I arrived in this place. The relatively good spirits continued for some time, before Arminius stood to speak suddenly.

“Governor Varus, Sir. Pardon my interruption of the festivities, but I have had urgent news to tell you. It cannot wait any longer. I would have informed you this morning had the caravan not been delayed.” Arminius said in a very formal tone.

Varus set down the cup of wine he had been drinking and looked over at Arminius.

“Well? Out with it if it is so urgent.” He said, in an unexpectedly relaxed tone, no hint of discontent at all in his expression or voice.

“I received word late last night from a contact from one of the northern tribes. There appears to be rumor of rebellion out further in Germania. Whispers of plans to come pouring into the territory from the East and North

with upwards of 30,000, potentially up to even 100,000 Barbarians." Arminius said to everyone gathered around the table.

"I say we must get ahead of this and go North. Wipe out every unallied village we can to quell any such ideas. I know it may take a day or two to prepare the men for the march. I ask that you allow me to travel ahead, I will leave tonight to scout a path and reach out to some allied contacts to help with counteracting this brewing revolt." He was looking directly at Varus now, whose expression changed to a grimace.

"You're certain? Is this 'revolt' to happen soon?" Asked Varus.

Before Arminius could respond, there came some shouting from outside the tent. The sound of a scuffle could be heard before a man came running into the room, chased by two disgruntled guards, all were drenched in rain and mud. Must have slipped trying to stop the man - clearly a German - from entering.

"Governor Varus! Do not listen to that man! He lies! He wishes to betray you!" Shouted the frantic German, as the guards tried to seize him to drag him back outside, apologizing to the room.

He was pointing at Arminius.

The people at the table looked at him strangely, and then to Arminius.

"Segestes! How dare you so rudely interrupt this

dinner!" Varus raised his voice at the man.

"And you insult the loyalty of an Eques of Rome! For shame!" He clearly ignored the accusation, and the others turned their attention back to the Chieftain being dragged away, still shouting his dire warning of treachery and slaughter.

Segestes. I must speak to him after this.

"Apologies Arminius, yes you may travel ahead. I will spread word for the men to prepare the long march in the morning." Varus said, taking his wine again and drinking it in large gulps.

"Take this stray with you as well, perhaps he can prove some use to us." He continued, gesturing at me.

Arminius clenched his jaw ever so subtly before he replied in agreement.

"Meet me at the gate in one hour." He said to me, before thanking Varus and the other men. I nodded and stood with him, doing the same. I stepped over to Varus as Arminius quickly made for the exit, I leaned down and very quietly whispered so only he could hear.

"Segestes speaks the truth. I shall return." I stood, and left while placing on my helm. Not taking the time to observe his reaction.

Arminius had vanished into the dark and rainy camp. I quietly asked the miserable looking tent guards where they had taken Segestes. One of them pointed directly across from the tent, where the Chieftain sat in the mud,

a furious look in his eyes.

Quietly. I squatted in front of him. He did not look at me.

“I know you speak the truth. Get back on your horse right now, and ride ahead of us on the trail. I will need your assistance dealing with him. I leave with him in an hour.” I said. Pulling him up out of the mud.

“You will be rewarded.” I said before heading off into the camp.

Nothing but the rain could be heard as I walked, but a brief moment later I could hear the splashing of someone running in the opposite direction towards where the horses were kept through the mud.

I joined Arminius an hour later at the gates after acquiring a horse myself. He was in full Centurion garb, with a hooded cloak draped over him. I could not see his face in the void beneath the hood. He nodded at me, or what I can assume was such in the dark and rainy night.

We rode off into the darkness.

# Teutoburg

Fringes of Teutoburg Forest  
Frontier of the Roman Empire  
September 5th, 9 *aAD*

We rode through the dark forest for some time.

The rain - now a thunderstorm - makes it even harder to see in the darkness. It appears we both were used to this sort of travel at least, and the narrow path was clear enough to keep a quick pace despite the weather.

After approximately an hour or so, as it was difficult to really tell in the blur of the night, Arminius had gotten a decent distance ahead of me while I had not noticed, until he vanished a moment into the swirling wet darkness of the path ahead. I called out to him, but could not be heard above the thunder and wind.

When suddenly, as if my horse sensed something amiss, it ground to a halt, sliding in the mud and I nearly got thrown from the saddle. I chastised the creature a moment before dismounting to see what had caused it to do this. When I noticed just ahead on the path - now thanks to the light of some sort of sizzling and smoky flame - I realized there laid a massive tree that had been split and destroyed by lightning, and now blocked the

way. It was charred and on fire, though the rain was keeping it low and smothered. I glanced at the ground and saw the other set of horse tracks in the mud belonging to Arminius and his steed, leading directly for the tree. I slowly circled the massive smoldering tree and ahead laid his horse, it had not stopped in time and tumbled over the obstacle violently, and seemed to have been impaled by multiple charred branches.

I approached closer and saw Arminius had been thrown a few feet from the horse, laying on his stomach in the mud. He remained there unmoving. I went over to him and knelt down, rolling him onto his back. Interestingly, due to his cloak, I had not noticed he had a Centurion helmet with a face plate smithed in the image of the stoic face of a man. Looking something akin to a Greek marble statue, had it been moulded from dark iron instead. I went to remove it to see if he lived, when he violently jolted and grabbed my wrist tightly, and twisting it away.

I moved back and stood, staring down at this strange man who changed the world, or is yet to. The things he does to those men, the ungodly barbarism, the horrors. With the Lord as my witness, I cannot let this come to pass.

I will slay the *Daemon of the Rhine*.

It seemed Arminius had some inkling of hostility, or he was rattled from the hard fall, I could not tell through the unmoving metal face with hollow black eyes staring back at me. But his movements however, did show this, they were cautious, he did not look away from me. Even

as a particularly explosion of thunder occurred in the sky above us. He slowly pushed himself to his feet, and lowered his hood, further revealing the full headpiece he wore. I lowered mine as well, the heavy rain making quite the cacophony on the cool metal of my own Helm.

We both stood in silence for some time in that storm, unmoving.

Arminius broke the silence first.

"The horse is dead." He spoke.

"It would appear that way." I replied.

"I know these forests, I shall take yours and travel more quickly." He continued.

"I apologize Arminius, but that cannot happen." I said flatly.

Silence.

"You side with Rome?" He asks.

"I side with God." I reply.

Silence again.

"Jupiter." He states, a hint of some long suppressed distaste.

"No."

I drop my shield from my back into the mud with a wet

clang.

“Must we do this? Can we not part ways and allow fate to decide our ends on the battle field to come? What loyalty do you have to those men?” He asked in a much colder tone.

“My loyalty is to God, to those who fight against barbarism and savagery. *Fate* is why I am here in your way.”

Loud thunder booms again.

I pull my sword from the scabbard and drop the scabbard near my shield.

Arminius picks up his gladius from in front of him without looking away.

I raise my sword in the air a moment with both hands, before leveling it and widening my stance.

To my not-so-surprise, he gets into a more low, open stance, with his arms out in front of him, Gladius in hand. The animalistic, vicious pose of a wild man preparing to fight for his life, rather than a more noble Roman combat style that I would've thought to be a better match.

In an incredibly swift moment, he is charging at me. Completely silent but for the mud, wind, and rain. The disparity of his emotionless faceplate, barely lit by the smoldering tree and intermittent lightning, and roman garb, with the wild unpredictable German movement is



quite a strange sight.

I brace myself and lean into a large swing of my great sword to where he is about to be, but he dodges wildly. Going to his knees and sliding in the mud from his momentum, leaning until almost on his back and glides directly under my swing. Immediately trying to swing his Gladius for my knee, but I let the momentum of the swing pull me instead of stopping, just enough to spin me an extra quarter turn, and I lift my boot and kick him in the chest down into the mud, halting his slide.

He made no sound as he unbuckles his legs from under him and swings for my leg again while trying to roll back. I step back and turn, swinging my sword down in his direction but he slides again. This time jumping into a crouch and jumping as my sword slams into the mud in the place he used to be. He lands next to the sword and swiftly lands a blow to my helm with the Gladius, causing a great and awful ringing in my head, stunning me a moment.

I stagger and he jumps again, kicking me in the chest with both feet and sending me to my back having knocked the air from my lungs. My sword stayed stuck in the mud where I had been standing as I tried to regain my breath.

He did not wait and stabbed at me where I laid, but I managed to roll multiple times as he also tried to slash and stab multiple times, missing me by a thread each time. My cloak now weighing me down immensely, being water and mud-logged.

Arminius dove on top of me and I struggled, punching him in the chest and stomach with my right hand and stopping his arm from bringing the Gladius down with my left. I reach out as he pushes both of his hands down on the pommel of the sword, putting his weight into it and kneeing me in the side. Apparently we'd gotten much closer to the smoldering tree where my right hand grabbed a burning splinter of a log. I rammed it with all my might up under his armpit where he lacked chainmail.

He made no sound as his left arm went completely limp and blood started pouring from the wound. Making a hissing sound as the burning splinter was extinguished, smoke now rising from under his arm. He staggered, falling off of me onto his back as I gasped a moment, staring up and the crackling, dark sky of this foreign place.

My head ringing and filled with fog from the heavy blow I was dealt prior. I made my way to my feet, tearing off my burdening cloak, wincing in pain as I realized he must have damaged a rib or two with that kick and the kneeing as well. I made my way for my sword that still stuck out of the mud nearby.

As I placed my hands on the handle and pulled it from the mud, my rattled state had caused me to lapse in my attention to my opponent. I felt a sharp and deep pain in my foot, which now had a Gladius stabbed down to the guard into the mud beneath it. Plunged in by a now crawling Arminius, who had followed my paces and collapsed to his knees where he had stabbed me.

In the same instant I reflexively brought my great sword down and cleaved his working arm off just above the elbow.

He made no sound.

He simple knelt there next to me, his stump spraying blood into the mud, his limp arm resting in his lap.

He was staring off into the dark and deep woods of his homeland. Unmoving.

The only sign of life was the cloud of breath coming from the mouth of the metal mask in the cold rain.

I staggered a moment and struggled to rip the Gladius from my foot, which was now oozing blood. I dropped my great sword and stood a moment, holding the blood soaked gladius.

“Forgive me.” I say.

A long silence.

He turns his head from the forest, to myself . The black void of the mask’s eyes staring at me, the wet metal reflecting the lightning flashes.

“*Wōdanaz Weljan Ne*” He says faintly, something in an old Germanic tongue I do not understand.

I pull out my Rosary, looking at it a moment, saying a silent prayer within my heart. I then wrap it around my fist, before lifting the Gladius over my head.

Arminius turns his head back to face the dark forest one last time as I bring the blade down swiftly.

\*\*\*

Strangely, the storm had stopped.

I was watching the pyre I had made after wrapping my injured foot, I had wrapped the headless body in my ruined cloak and hoisted over the smoldering tree, resting more branches and logs upon it from nearby debris of other fallen trees. Despite how damp the wood all was it burned fiercely.

Caught deep in thought as I watched the smoke rise into the night sky above.

Just then I hear a noise from the path behind where I had been tending to my horse and preparing to travel back to Vetera.

I drew my sword and shield, staggering to gain footing without making the pain unbearable. I took a stance in the center of the path, when out of the darkness, into the firelight, rode Segestes on his horse who came to a stop when he saw me.

My body relaxed and I lowered my sword.

“Apologies sir, I had hoped to be ahead of you but this horse got frightened by the intense storm and I needed to pull off the path a ways back until it subsided.”  
Segestes spoke, seemingly out of breath.

“I am glad I made it to you at least, is the deed done?” He continued, dismounting his horse and approaching me, glancing past me towards the pyre.

I did not respond and stowed my shield, turning back to my horse to place my sword back in its scabbard and fastening it to the saddle.

I then observed as he walked right up to the Pyre and spat at the corpse before turning back to me.

“You have done me a great service, I shall reward you with anything you desire when I am made Reik of all the tribes for this.” He said, sounding like he is already taking credit for this and wishes to keep the perpetual cycle ongoing.

I did not reply, I simply stared at him.

“When we return to Vetera, if you just let me do the talking...” He trailed off, before gesturing to his horse.

“I have water if you would like... Seems you need it.” He changed his tone again.

I nodded barely and slowly followed him over to his horse, where he was rummaging around in a sack.

Without hesitation, I pulled Arminius’ Gladius from under a fold in my tunic and lunged at him.

\*\*\*

I arrived back at Vetera some time later, still in the dead of night, much to the surprise of the gate guards.

“Wake the camp! It is urgent!” I shouted at the guards, not dismounting my horse as I approached quickly.

Having recognized me, they immediately opened the gates and sounded a horn, a different pattern than I had heard prior. I rode on, quickly into the center of the camp nearest I could to Varus’ main tent.

The soldiers hurriedly rushed from their tents to see what all the alarm was about and began gathering around. A few shouts asking what had happened and some others shouted for a medic or something of the sort as they had noticed my wrapped foot and how I was drenched in mud and blood.

I dismounted the horse, and limped over to where some building and repair materials were, and grabbed two sharp stakes, walking back in front of the main tent, and ram them both into the ground next to one another, with the pointed ends up.

The crowd grows larger. The murmur of voices and clamour of soldiers flow through the camp like a wave.

I get to my horse and pull a wrapped sack I had made out of a cloak from the saddle, and stand before the stakes. I reach within and slam the heads of both Arminius and Segestes on each stake. I then step next to them, reaching into the sack and pulling Arminius’ helm

from it and hoisting it over my head to show the crowd.

Some gasps and confused shouts and cries come from the crowd, some leaning closer to see. My sway on them appeared to be pulling their attention in even more.

I remove my own helm and set it aside, noticing from the corner of my eye that Varus had emerged from his tent to the site before him, appearing shocked and quizzical.

“What is going on here?” He asked, looking from the severed head, back to me.

I limped towards him and held out my hand, in it, a small cloth with the shattered figurine of Mars within.

I raise my voice so the crowd can hear.

“These treacherous Barbarians had been conspiring with the Tribes of Germania and other Chieftains in secret! I know you all respected and trusted Arminius... but it appears he had been fooling you all along. He attempted to sway me to his cause on the road! This rebellion he spoke of which was refuted by Segestes at dinner was partially true!” I glance at Varus as I say the last part.

“However! No tribe is truly allied, they had all plotted to ambush you all on the narrow pass into the dense Teutoburg forest! Arminius wished to run ahead to rally the Barbarians against you all! Somehow, Segestes had gotten ahead of us and when they both could not convince me - as I was not intended to be with them. Thankfully! Your glorious General had the foresight

to send me with them. I discovered their plot! They attempted to murder me to keep the truth from reaching you all!" I turn and look at Varus again, he seemed deep in thought, staring at the remains of the figurine in his palm.

"You speak the truth?" He asked quietly. A tired but stern look on his face, hiding his frustration.

"They cannot be Romanized sir. They are brutal, traitorous animals through and through. You cannot send these men to march into Teutoburg in the morning. I swear upon..." I point at the figurine in his hand. Clenching the rosary in my glove tightly as I do so.

The men started shouting more, enraged that they could be betrayed in such a way, they believed my tale. Calling for the heads of all Barbarians, among other violent and angry cries.

I held out Arminius' Gladius to Varus.

"An Eques... He was not worthy of such a title. I apologize." I tell him in a low voice.

He stared at it for a long moment.

"Keep it, at least someone more worthy deserves it." He waves his hand and turns to the crowd.

"Men! We will not be marching in the morning! Get your rest and train up. I will send word to Emperor Augustus in Rome! I shall inform him of this conniving treachery and request more supplies. We shall commit



to a properly organized Invasion to crush this barbaric threat to the Empire! These beasts cannot be reasoned with!" He shouted to the camp.

The men cheered and all of them saluted in unison.

He turned back to me, gesturing to the Gladius in my hands.

"Will you assist Rome in this endeavour? Your skills seem unmatched, to fight those two and live is quite the feat. There is a place for you here should you chose. Once you are healed from your battle of course."

I thought deeply for a moment, glancing off into the woods beyond the camp's walls. A flash of lightning streaks across the sky once again. I suddenly see 3 figures standing in the darkness of the woods, illuminated by the flash for but a moment. Then nothing. An impression of unease yet fiery determination and purpose fills me. Unsure if it was the injury to my head. Regardless I respond.

"I will." I say, before turning to the crowd and raising the Gladius in the air.

They cheer again, raising some of their own swords and some with their torches.

I look up at the dark sky, the clouds now dissipating.

A glowing Full Moon hangs high in the sky over the forest.

I silently thank God within my heart for sparing me and giving me a new purpose in this strange place.

I will do what I can to continue this fight for a righteous cause.

This world will soon see the light.

***FINIS***

## A Statue

In the City of Varium - located in the modern day Provence of Germania Minor, there lies a set of historic monuments.

One, depicting Publius Quinctilius Varus (for which the City was named), carrying a Roman Aquila while leading 3 Old Roman Soldiers Each with XVII, XVIII, and XIX engraved on to their helmets meant to represent Varus' Legions and their great victories against the disorganized barbarian tribes that sought to destroy the civilized world.

Across the square from it lies a more odd statue. It depicts a strange armoured man with flowing robes covered in crosses, 6 angelic wings sprouting from his back - holding the severed head of a man, and a large Holy Cruciform of Christus towering behind him. A plaque lies etched into the base of the stone monument to the stranger.

The Plaque Reads:

*St. Hospitum*

*Slayer of the Barbarian Traitor Arminius*

*Saviour of the Legions of Germania*

*Bearer of the Icon of the Cruciform*

*September 6th, 9 AD*

It was based on a smaller stone carved figurine of the man, held with some historical writings in Roma.

The statue initially began construction in 1545 AD and was completed in 1575 AD.

The statue was modified sometime before 1820 AD during the “Grand Sanctification of Heroes of the Empire” by a particularly extreme Iconodulist Pontifex Maximus.

It is said hundreds of new Saints were anointed, with many statues commissioned or modified during his long Papacy.

In the Year of Our Lord 1898 AD, the statue remains.

Albeit rather worse for wear, as Varium has experienced some significant decline in recent years.

It is still unknown who the cross-covered man depicted really was, or *if* he even was. Some argue he is just a manifestation of the fighting spirit of early Romans in Germania.

Regardless, his mysterious legacy remains sculpted in stone.





# TEUTOBURG 9

By: K. Kallisto Esbriar

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