

Chapter Summaries (Dregs of Empire)

Spoilers ahead, proceed with caution

This novella is expected to be read after [Ashes of Man](<https://www.suneater.wiki/books/ashes-of-man/page/publications-ashes-of-man>), and as such, the summaries below spoil that book.

Chapter 1: The Prison Planet

Locations

Unknown > [Belusha](#) > Unknown > Unknown > Hightower

Characters

- [Lorian Aristedes](#)
- Tollak (prison guard)
- Prem (prison guard)

Plot Summary

Four guards beat [Lorian Aristedes](#) in a white-walled room of the hightower above [Belusha](#), which broke at least one of Lorian's ribs. Reeling from the pain, Lorian recalled his sentencing on the part of [William Caesar](#) for high treason for helping [Hadrian Marlowe](#) escape from the brig aboard the [Tempest](#) with the help of [Bassander Lin](#) and the Prince of Jadd [Kaim du Otranto](#).

““How do you answer these charges?” Caesar himself had asked the question, seated on the camp stool they had set out for his makeshift throne. Lorian had answered with his customary lip. “Unrepentantly, Honorable Caesar.” That had sealed his fate.

On a floating chair passing from medica to his cell, Lorian looked out on the planet Belusha more than a mile below. The frigid surface of the planet was dotted by oil rig towers in a frozen plain with ice-crowned mountains in the middle distance. In the sky, a lattice work of mirrors reflected the light from a sun onto the surface of Belusha, where he could barley make out the prison camp of Downwell, his final destination.

Chapter 2: The Duke

Locations

Unknown > [Belusha](#) > Unknown > Unknown > Downwell

Characters

- [Lorian Aristedes](#)
- Duke
- Bhaskar

Plot Summary

A boot belonging to a dark-faced man named Duke jabbed at Lorian's broken ribs, jolting him awake the next morning. Duke helped Lorian get up and confirmed that Lorian has two broken ribs on his left side. Lorian shared his history as Hadrian Marlowe's commander, but was met with a shake of the head and no recognition of the Hadrian's name from Duke.

“Call me Lorian,” he said. “I was a commander in the [Imperial Red Company](#), under Hadrian Marlowe himself.”
Duke only blinked at him.
“The Hero of [Aptucca](#)?”
The other man shook his head. “We don’t get word from outside.”
“The [Halfmortal](#)?”
Nothing.

Attempting to get a sense of time, Lorian asked what year it is only to learn that prisoners are never told the year, although Duke did confirm that [William Caesar XXIII of the House of Avent](#) was still emperor. Duke then led Lorian down some white-walled halls to a locker room with thermal suits colored prisoner scarlet, which he helped Lorian don. Duke taught Lorian how to use the rebreather system as he told him of his prison assignment in the motor pool.

The two exited the locker room onto the surface of the planet, into the average low temperatures of -16 centigrade, where Lorian remarked again on the mirrors redirecting sunlight to the surface, the so-called *Emperor's Eyes*. His gaze then turned on the orbital lift tower stretching from the surface into the upper atmosphere where he had been the prior day in medica. Lorian dreamed of climbing its nanocarbon cables hand-over-hand to escape the prison planet, a feat he knows is impossible.

In the motor pool, Duke introduces Lorian to Bhaskar, a mechanic with a grizzled beard. Bhaskar asks Lorian why he is on Belusha, perking up the heads and ears of three others in the motor pool. Lorian tells him "High treason," which elicits laughter from Bhaskar and the rest of the motor pool. Lorian presses in, saying he was the tactical officer aboard the [Tamerlane](#) under [Captain Otavia Corvo](#) and [Commandant Lord Hadrian Marlowe](#), whom the motor pool mechanics call a myth and propoganda. A klaxon wails signaling a shift change, and Bhaskar and his pod leave for meal time.

Chapter 3: A Man's World

Locations

Unknown > [Belusha](#) > Unknown > Unknown > Downwell

Characters

- [Lorian Aristedes](#)
- Gowan
- Hari
- Urgo
- Duke
- Daud

Plot Summary

Lorian continued his work in the motor pool and recalled Duke telling a story of a group of prisoners from 2,000 shifts (approximated to be 10 years) ago who found weapons on their salvage run. They staged an insurrection of Perigee camp, only to be carpet bombed by the guards. Lorian started a conversation about the possibility of escape to which all the motor pool workers scoff.

Gowan and Hari, two of the motor pool workers, struck up a conversation about Outborn, prisoners who had left the camps to live in the barren frozen wilds of Belusha. Hari exclaimed that Duke believes they are real, but the others were non-plussed. Digging in his heels, Hari asked if the others heard about an attack on Farside that killed more than 30 Martians and took all the women from the camp. Gowan believed the story to be a falsehood. Hari turned to Lorian for his opinion, to which Lorian said he'd never seen them.

Tensions rose among the crew as insults began to fly. Hari threw a spanner that missed Lorian's head, and Hari referred to Valka as an extrasolarian machine-witch. Lorian corrected him that she was Tavrosi, which sent Hari into another disparaging insult about Valka.

“Tavrosi?” Hari spat. “That’s twice as bad. Always wondered why His Radiance didn’t burn those fuckers off the map. Can’t imagine being so desperate for ass I’d fuck a machine!”

Lorian launched a spanner hitting Hari in the face, adding fuel to the fire of argument. Hari said he'll kill Lorian just before Duke stepped in to end the fight between the two of them. Duke told them he'll string them up naked in the cold if they don't stop their fighting while on the clock.

The next day, Lorian volunteered to take Hari's turn to clean-up the shop, which smoothed things over. On a later shift, Daud, a rig crew member, requested that Lorian repair his crawler by the next day, a timeline Duke told him is too ambitious. Daud told him to take it up with Damian, and he and his crew leave. Duke rallied the team for double-time repairs and told them to organize who is getting food for the long night ahead.

Chapter 4: The ParaCoita

Locations

Unknown > [Belusha](#) > Unknown > Unknown > Downwell

Characters

- [Lorian Aristedes](#)
- Duke
- Gowan
- Callum
- Tamara

Plot Summary

Lorian and his crew began work on Daud's crawler, having identified it had a broken fan and cracked radiators the needed replacement. As a result of this radiator issue, damp air made its way into the air ducts and formed into ice in Belusha's harsh conditions over time, and now the vents required welding on the inside. Due to the tight space, only Lorian was large enough to do the job.

Crawling through the air ducts, Lorian dropped kicked open a vent and dropped into one of the crew dormitory chambers. Looking back up at the vent, he recalled his time crawling through the ducts of the [Tamerlane](#) to reach Hadrian when he was under isolation during an Inquisition during events found in [Demon in White](#).

Broken out of his trance, Lorian heard a banging noise, as if someone were trapped somewhere in the crawler. Following it to a locker room, and carrying the arc torch he was to use for welding the vents, he cut off the padlock sealing one of the lockers. Inside, he found a young girl, no more than 15 years old, who was bound at the wrists and feet with tap covering her mouth. Lorian immediately knew she had been raped repeatedly and brutally.

Trying to reassure her, Lorian cuts off the binding around her ankles, but the girl kicks him. She tried to run but fell to the floor, clearly weakened by her captivity. Lorian removed her gag, introduces himself and learns that her name is Tamara. She told him her mother sold her to the crew and that even the Martian guards were complicit in her captivity, a story that also confirmed for Lorian the existence of the Outborn. Filled with ire toward the crawler's crew and its Martian guards, he told Tamara he would go find help, but by the time he returned with Duke and Gowan, she was dead in the crawler where he had left her.

Chapter 5: The Way of Things

Locations

Unknown > [Belusha](#) > Unknown > Unknown > Downwell

Characters

- [Lorian Aristedes](#)
- Daud
- Duke
- Gowan
- Urgo
- Hari

Plot Summary

The overseer's took Tamara's body away and told the motor pool to get back to work. The crawler crew didn't even get a slap on the wrist, an injustice Lorian decided should be taken into his own hands. While continuing work on the crawler, Lorian detached a plasma cutter, and took a long thin driver with him into the crawler, giving the team the impression he was working on something to get it up and running.

Outside the crawler, Daud asked Duke about the progress on the crawler. Duke explained that the girl that was discovered set them back, and Daud's rage began to rise. Meanwhile, inside the crawler, Lorian finishes his modification of the plasma cutter while muttering a prayer.

“ Lorian offered a whispered prayer as he crept from the ladder into the hold. “I invoke the universal sound and the One Pure. Grant me courage and clarity, that I might know right conduct. Unite my deeds with Wisdom. I offer this prayer to the Knight Galahad. I invoke ...”

Daud commented that Wormy, the nickname he has given Lorian, wasn't supposed to go in the crawler and says he'll kill him. From the top of the ramp on the crawler, holding the plasma cutter, Lorian provoked Daud to come closer to him rather than Duke. Once in range, Lorian pointed the plasma cutter at Daud and pulled the trigger, unleashing a violet lance of plasma that cut Daud's legs out from under him. Lorian stepped forward as Daud writhed in pain on the ramp, and raised the plasma cutter to Daud's head. He fired one more time, exploding Daud's head.

Duke, Gowan, Urgo, Hari and the rest of the motorpool were stunned. Duke asked him why he did it and Lorian said it was for Tamara. Daud's men were enraged, but before any of them took action, a klaxon blared. Guards flooded into the motor pool telling Lorian to drop his weapon. Lorian obliged as they beat and bound him to haul him away.

Chapter 6: The Traitors

Locations

[Belusha](#) > Unknown > Unknown > Downwell


Characters

- [Lorian Aristedes](#)
- Vaclav Carter
- Lorcan Breathnach
- Sab

Plot Summary

Vaclav Carter, the highest ranking official on Belusha, asked Lorian if he denies the charge of murder for killing Daud. He said it was justice and did not deny it. One of the jurors called for him to be killed, but Vaclav examined Lorian's file, which directed that Lorian may not be executed or flogged for his crimes. In addition, the rest of his file was redacted.

Curious, Vaclav probed Lorian about his past and why his file may be redacted. Giving away little, one of the jurors, revealed to be [Lorcan Breathnach](#) called Lorian a traitor. Lorian explained how Hadrian Marlowe did not commit regicide, which fueled a verbal battle between Lorian and Lorcan, which Vaclav ultimately put a stop to.



Vaclav probed further, asking Lorian if he believed Hadrian is "the One Reborn," to which Lorian said, "No." The questioning, Lorian began to realize, was actually a trial for Lorian to join the jury and have a higher station on Belusha, but he would have none of it. Lorian continued to antagonize Vaclav while also explaining Hadrian's miracle on Perfugium in which he shattered the glass behind a Cielcin prince on a holograph, which ultimately killed the Pale creature (described in the climax of [Ashes of Man](#)). A hush fell over the jurors but Lorcan was nonplussed and continued his verbal rout.

Lorcan told Lorian that Hadrian has been found in Jadd and that he was "living the good life" with wine and women. This plunged Lorian into a sense of despair that his sacrifice to save Hadrian was for naught. As the exchange between Lorian and Lorcan peetered out, Vaclav ordeered Lorian to be put on ice in the Tower for a century before he is brought out to work again. However, Lorcan calls for Lorian to be placed in one of the other camps, either Snowhead or Farside. Vaclav obliged.

Chapter 7: Farside

Locations

Spur of Orion > [Delos](#) > Meidua Prefecture > Saint Maximus > The Mountain Church

Spur of Orion > [Delos](#) > Meidua Prefecture > Saint Maximus > The Rectory

Plot Summary

Chapter 8: Outborn and Misborn

Locations

Spur of Orion > [Delos](#) > Meidua Prefecture > Saint Maximus > The Rectory

Plot Summary

Chapter 9: A Friend

Locations

Spur of Orion > [Delos](#) > Meidua Prefecture > Saint Maximus > The Rectory

Spur of Orion > [Delos](#) > Meidua Prefecture > Saint Maximus > The Mountain Church

Plot Summary

Chapter 10: Of Vultures

Locations

Spur of Orion > [Delos](#) > Meidua Prefecture > Saint Maximus > The Rectory

Spur of Orion > [Delos](#) > Meidua Prefecture > Saint Maximus > The Mountain Church

Spur of Orion > [Delos](#) > Meidua Prefecture > Saint Maximus > The Church Yard

Plot Summary

Chapter 11: The Cold

Locations

Spur of Orion > [Delos](#) > Meidua Prefecture > Saint Maximus > The Church Yard

Spur of Orion > [Delos](#) > Meidua Prefecture > Saint Maximus > The Church Catacombs

Plot Summary

Chapter 12: Princess of Thieves

Locations

Spur of Orion > [Delos](#) > Meidua Prefecture > Saint Maximus > In the Village Proper

Spur of Orion > [Delos](#) > Meidua Prefecture > Saint Maximus > The Mountain Church

Plot Summary

Chapter 13: The Subterrane

Locations

Spur of Orion > [Delos](#) > Meidua Prefecture > Saint Maximus > The Mountain Church

Spur of Orion > [Delos](#) > Meidua Prefecture > Saint Maximus > In the Village Proper

Plot Summary

Chapter 14: Strategy and Tactics

Locations

Spur of Orion > [Delos](#) > Meidua Prefecture > Saint Maximus > In the Village Proper

Spur of Orion > [Delos](#) > Meidua Prefecture > Saint Maximus > The Church Yard

Plot Summary

Chapter 15: The Dregs of Empire

Locations

Spur of Orion > [Delos](#) > Meidua Prefecture > Saint Maximus > [House Orin](#) Starship

Plot Summary

Chapter 16: Knocking on Heaven's Door

Locations

Spur of Orion > [Delos](#) > Meidua Prefecture > Saint Maximus > [House Orin](#) Starship

Plot Summary

Chapter 17: Tower of the Gods

Locations

Spur of Orion > [Delos](#) > Meidua Prefecture > Saint Maximus > In the Village Proper

Chapter 18: To Crack the Sky

Locations

Spur of Orion > [Delos](#) > Meidua Prefecture > Saint Maximus > In the Village Proper

Dramatis Personae:

Lexicon: A Note on Translation

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