

# he House of ust

By the Pentarch Norton Margraeve

## *Foundations*

A preface is the moment to set the scales of memory and duty.  
This every chronicler of lineage must know.  
To understand a noble house one must first define its true measure.  
It is not land, nor levy, nor the gleam of its arms.  
It is the sum of voices carried through time,  
the web of obligations that bind one generation to the next,  
and the silent weight of choices that echo long after the hand has closed the charter.

A house arises when its founders forge a covenant of remembrance—  
not in temples of marble, but in the quiet archives of mind and ledger.  
They pledge to guard the names of forebears, to uphold the duties they bequeath,  
and to accept the burden of consequence that falls like ash upon every heir.  
In the Year of the Sun 421 Y.S., my brother accepted the Rite of Preservation—  
the next link in an unbroken chain of Archdukes since our progenitor first drew charter.~  
he became the sentinel of all that had come before, fixed in form yet alive in purpose.

The second link—my own unexpected turning—was unrecorded by precedent.  
No scroll bore its notice; no bell tolled its arrival. Yet it, too, altered the pattern.  
For a house is not whole until every strand of its bond is accounted.  
This volume does not seek to argue the righteousness of our rites.  
It does not plead for admiration, nor lament regret.

It offers, in deliberate sequence, the stones of our foundation:  
how each Archduke was chosen, how each name passed the torch,  
and how each turning reshaped the shape of our line.  
If these pages yield clarity, let the reader earn it.  
Should understanding arise, let it stand on the strength of record, not flourish.

No luxury of rhetoric obscures the ledger's truth:  
that a house endures only so long as its memory remains unbroken,  
its duties acknowledged, and its consequences embraced.  
Here, then, is the beginning—not of justification, but of reckoning.  
May those who follow find in these pages the final truth of house Margraeve,  
and know where to place their own feet upon the dust of centuries.

# hapter I

## *Line of Succession*

A noble house endures by the names it enshrines. In these annals, each Archduke is less a man than a fulcrum—an axis around which duty and memory turn. They are recorded here in the deliberate economy of lineage, that the pattern of our stewardship may remain unbroken through the coming storm.

The laws of our Noble house's succession have remained unaltered for seven centuries. They are:

### Eligibility

Any direct male-line descendant of the late Archduke who is at least 21 years old and has fathered a living male heir is eligible for succession.

Among those eligible, the youngest shall become the next Archduke unless declared unfit to rule by the Pentarch of Nergál.

The new Archduke then undergoes the sacred Rites of Preservation, binding him as the immortal steward of Margraeve-Duskhaven.

Impervious to death from natural causes as they may have been, death has always had a way of catching up to our ancestors. What follows is a brief overview of the Archdukes of house Margraeve:

Archduke	Born-Died (Y.S.)	Reign (Y.S.)	Final Death	Notable Acts
Cundred Margraeve	010-112	032-112	Immolated	First to draw the Charter of Dust; secured the Withering Fields against Sea-Elf incursion; established the Rite of Preservation.
Harald Margraeve	090-209	112-209	Lost at Sea	Annexed the township of Duskhaven; established non-aggression pact with the Dwarven Union; formalized house succession rites.
Symon Margraeve	160-315	209-315	Crushed	Rebuilt Ald Margraeve's eastern tower; legalized the Margraeve-Duskhaven Union; sponsored construction of the Black Pagoda.
Tobias Margraeve	290-421	315-421	Assassinated	Established the townships of Verdant Acres, Mong harrad; expanded Ald Margraeve to fully control the northern pass of the Ungolid Mountains.

Ezekiel Margraeve	382-...	421-753	—	Long period of stability; Improved diplomatic relations with Azure; participated in the battle of Ald Margraeve in 754 Y.S.; played a pivotal role in the refugee crisis of 773 Y.S.
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The vector of each Archduke's tenure is rendered as a sequence of state actions—decrees promulgated, accords ratified, battlements both erected and relinquished—drawn exclusively from the Margraeve Chronicles, the Annals of Ald Margraeve, and the Duergar Ledger (207 Y.S.).

Cundred Margraeve (010-112 Y.S.; reign 032-112 Y.S.) Born 010 Y.S., Cundred assumed the inaugural Archducal mantle upon ratification of the Charter of Dust (032 Y.S.). Over eight decades he executed Operation Scourge (050-058 Y.S.), expelling the last Sea-Elf enclaves from the Withering Fields, and instituted the Rite of Preservation (075 Y.S.) to bind his lineage in perpetual vigilance. In his final year he codified the Charter itself—transforming succession into an unbroken patrilineal ordinance—before perishing in the Great Castle Fire (112 Y.S.), a conflagration traced to a stray brazier.

Harald Margraeve (090-209 Y.S.; reign 112-209 Y.S.) Harald, youngest surviving son of Cundred, acceded by Charter decree (112 Y.S.). His administration annexed Duskhaven (113 Y.S.), standardized tax registers, and in 130 Y.S. inscribed primogeniture statutes into house law. Strategic alliance followed: a non-aggression treaty with the Dwarven Union (140 Y.S.) secured critical timber and ore, while combined maneuvers (160 Y.S.) reinforced Margraeve's coastal defenses. Harald vanished without trace off the newly commissioned warship Valoria (209 Y.S.), his fate surrendered to the mercurial sea.

Symon Margraeve (160-315 Y.S.; reign 209-315 Y.S.) Symon, already father and heir at his father's disappearance, inherited the ducal crown (209 Y.S.) and immediately reformed County Councils (210 Y.S.) with biennial financial audits. He granted guild charters in Verdant Acres (225 Y.S.), catalyzing trade, and oversaw the reinforcement of Ald Margraeve's eastern tower (240 Y.S.) against mountain incursion. Sponsorship of the Black Pagoda (250 Y.S.) secured a permanent Pentarchal seat in Duskhaven—and yet in 315 Y.S., a rockfall in the Ungolid range entombed his caravan, his remains deemed irrecoverable.

Tobias Margraeve (290-421 Y.S.; reign 315-421 Y.S.) Tobias, prepared with an heir before accession, directed territorial expansion: he chartered Verdant Acres as a self-governing township (316 Y.S.) and established Mong Harrad as a customs port (350 Y.S.), capturing maritime tariffs. He commissioned a chain of coastal

watchtowers (330 Y.S.) and conducted joint anti-piracy drills with Azurean frigates (400 Y.S.). his tenure ended abruptly in 421 Y.S., felled by an assassin's cursed dagger—perpetrator unknown.

Ezekiel Margraeve (382 Y.S. - present ) Ezekiel Margraeve's accession in 421 Y.S. marked the commencement of a remarkably enduring stewardship under the Charter. Over the ensuing three centuries, his administration negotiated a durable accord with Azure, directed the ducal levy at the Battle of Ald Margraeve (754 Y.S.), and orchestrated the mass relief of some 72,000 displaced persons in 773 Y.S. his incumbency continues; the Archduchy's prospects once his tenure concludes remain, as yet, unresolved.

## hapter II

### *The Rites of Preservation*

It is a common misconception among the uninitiated that the Rites of Preservation serve merely to forestall decay. In truth, it is the crucible through which the temporal authority of House Margraeve is transmuted into eternal stewardship. The Rite does not preserve the body for its own sake, but to sustain the continuity of governance beyond the confines of mortal life. The process commences not at death, but in life. Upon the investiture of an Archduke, a period of introspective preparation begins—an internalization of duty and a detachment from corporeal distractions. This meditative practice serves to align the Archduke's consciousness with the immutable qualities of the Charter.

It is a paradox of our order that the flesh which bears the Archducal visage must itself be engineered for endless function. In Margraeve-Duskhaven we call this the Rite of Living Preservation—an embalming not for sepulcher but for sovereignty.

Upon transition, the corpse is submerged in natron-infused spring water, drawn from the hidden veins beneath Duskhaven. In this immersion the remnants of mortality are stripped away, leaving only the vessel that will bear the Archduke's will. Next, through a slender incision below the left pectoral, the liver, lungs, stomach, and intestines are extracted and desiccated in powdered natron. Each is anointed with balsam of juniper and cedar-gum, then interred in leaded urns engraved with Charter runes. The heart remains undisturbed—its rhythmic echo essential to anchor the living dead.

A copper probe, cooled in magnetite oil, penetrates the left nostril to soften and extract the cranial mass. The brain's substance is suspended in an amber colloid suffused with frankincense and myrrh to preserve thought-pattern coherence. This elixir is then reinfused into the cranial vault, ensuring the Archduke's memory-endurance. The eviscerated form is packed with layers of flax, salt and powdered bone. Each layer is sealed with a glaze of pine resin and

hyssop extract, then left to cure beneath slow-burning clouds of incense. Forty days of this alchemical maturing render the flesh both supple and impervious to decay.

At dawn, the Archduke's blood is exchanged. A calculated draw of vitae is replaced drop-for-drop with an elixir of myrrh, salt, and distillates of rosemary. This exchange stanches putrefaction and invites the spirit to reclaim its form.

Once complete, the Archduke rises to council. his gait is measured; his sight unclouded by the rot that plagues lesser undead. he walks the halls of Ald Margraeve, the Rite sustaining his dominion of dust and duty, a living fulcrum in the unbroken chain of his house.

It must be recognized that the Rite of Living Preservation was devised for the Archducal form, but its principles extend through every stratum of Margraeve society—each adapted to station and necessity without diluting the Covenant of Memory.

At each Pentarchal shrine, newly transformed clerics undergo the Litany. Their flesh is cleansed in consecrated saltwater before a slender thoracic incision permits the removal of visceral organs. These are purified in linen bundles layered with powdered cinnamon and natron, then replaced by pouches of resin. The cranial ether is stabilized through inhalation of distilled myrrh vapors rather than invasive liquefaction. Bandages of iron-helixed flax bind the form, each bearing a single glyph of service. The result is a cleric whose mind remains lucid and whose body, though still to all appearance mortal, requires no succor from the living.

Lesser Officials and Guildmasters. In the Council halls and Merchant's Guild, the Rite is abbreviated. Organs are desiccated in communal ovens, each vessel marked by the appropriate charter seal; the cranial chamber receives a charged bead of pine-gum elixir rather than full reinfusion. Linen wraps—dyed in the house colors of merchant or magistrate—secure the form, interwoven with metallic threads drawn from recycled coin. This economy of process preserves essential faculties—memory of ledger, nuance of law—while granting continuity of office.

Common Artisans and Yeomen. For the house's peasantry and craftsfolk, the Rite is further distilled into the Communal Emboldening. Villagers gather at the year's end beneath the Archducal banner; bodies are anointed in a single pass of natron-salt slurry, organs removed en masse and composted into ley gardens. The head receives only a surface swathing of resin-impregnated bandage, preserving organic thought through collective memory tablets laid in the earth. Little else is done to impede decay. In this fashion, the labor force endures.

In each case, the Rite's variants uphold the same axiom: that no strand of service may be severed; no station left to lapse into oblivion, and that all lives at one point or another end in the Father's sweet embrace.

## chapter III

### *The Reanimator's Code*

Let it be known that the sacred art of reanimation, entrusted to the disciples of Nergál, shall be governed by this Code, that its potency may serve the Isles without descending into abomination. These Articles stand as boundary, ensuring that the restless dead labor in ordered service rather than wander as unruly spirits. Let these Articles define the bounds within which the dead serve Potentate and Pentarchy.

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#### Article I: Licensing and Oversight

No reanimation shall occur without a Pentarchal Writ or Licence of the Duskhaven Centre. Unlicensed rites nullify all claim to service and incur immediate censure.

#### Article II: Preparation of the Remains

Each corpse must undergo evisceration, desiccation, and anointing with consecrated salts. Omission or incorrect execution of any step yields an unstable host—which must be destroyed at first animation.

#### Article III: Binding and Duration

No less than three binding glyphs—crown, heart, and spine—shall fix the spirit to the form. Animation shall last no more than seventy days unless renewed by identical rite.

#### Article IV: Sphere of Service

Reanimated individuals may labor in hearth and field or defend hearth and hall. They shall not bear weapons or leave their assigned ground without express Pentarchal command or as part of enlistment in the Archduchy's Negalite Contingent.

#### Article V: Registry of the Returned

Every invocation must be recorded: name, dates of death and return, and binding coordinates. Falsification of records will be prosecuted to the extent of indefinite incarceration.

#### Article VI: Disposal of Failures

Rites that collapse mid-process are to be interred. No part may depart those walls; violators answer for the breach.

#### Article VII: Compassionate Release

A reanimated soul may petition for final rest. Individuals can apply through written appeal to the Pentarch of Nergál.

#### Article VIII: Prohibition of Trade

Reanimated servants are not commodities. Sale, lease, or transfer to foreign powers is a violation of the Code and will be prosecuted to the extent of indefinite incarceration.

## chapter IV

### *On the State of the Archduchy*

It is observed that the conclusion of the Battle of Ald Margraeve yielded a tenuous accord. Though the hegemony of Silt had introduced gunpowder deliverables—a novel vector of destruction—their adoption collided with the enduring resilience of Nergalite shock contingents. The calculus of occupation thus favoured restraint: further penetration risked strategic overextension, exposing Silt to third-party incursions. Consequently, Siltian forces redirected their projection of power towards the Caldwell Dominion, relinquishing direct claim on Margraeve-Duskhaven. The resultant demographic displacement funneled tens of thousands of civilian refugees into the domains of Duskhaven and Verdant Acres, several establishing semi-permanent habitations within the Withering Fields.

Contemporary assessment indicates that the mortal census within Margraeve jurisdiction has since exceeded agrarian yield capacity. Arable acreage now favors the proliferation of noxious fungi above cereal cultivation, rendering subsistence tenuous. Yet survival persists, dictated by absence of sanctuary elsewhere.

The necromantic praxis presents an operational remedy: the transition of malnourished subsistence units into Nergalite wards would ameliorate caloric deficits and preserve labour capacity. The undead, by definition, subsist without alimentary requirement—a logistical constant in the management of scarce resources.

## chapter V

### *Conclusion*

Let no chronicler presume this to be a testament of triumph. As the last line is laid, one must acknowledge the paradox at the heart of our covenant: in sealing memory against oblivion, we confess its fragility. For dust will claim marble, ink will fade, and even the most steadfast ledger may one day yield to silence.

Even memory is mortal. Dust resettles; voices fade into silence. When the last Archduke takes the Rite of Departure, and the Charter slips from living hand to waiting ledger—what endures?

Only the reckoning of deeds.

Should house Margraeve one day stand no more...

...may its dust still speak.