

Unto His Grace, Archduke Alastair, Emperor of the Sardonyx Throne, through the agency of Dame Brionna of Stanway - Military advisor to the Throne and Captain of the Archducal Guard  
From Sir Derrick Brightspan, Field Marshal in service unto the Archduchy of Canberry, in the Light of Glor'diadel

Your Eminent Grace:

It is with a mixture of pleasure and sorrow that I write with a report on our progress.

The salt and swamp lands of Caldra are now again fully under our control, with the exception of two of the lesser salt mines – where bands of orc-kind are holed up with powerful troll allies, under the control of war-chiefs advised by shamans. Rather than assaulting these mines (which have very limited entrances and are defensively sound) I have sieged them. I have made this decision in the interest of limited casualties to my forces. With your grace's permission I will continue those two sieges until the invaders are starved out. We have buttressed our breastworks with stone and mounted siege powerbows to back our auxiliaries. When the creatures do try to break out – they will never crest the barricades before they are killed to a one.

On a much more troubling note. We have found few of the people of Caldra alive. While raiding orcs and their chattel and allies are always very violent, most are more likely to keep civilians as casual slaves, perhaps selling them to slavers later – and those that do not, normally kill them quickly and brutally. In this case, we have found significant numbers of villagers and freeholders impaled and crucified – while others were killed in a more traditionally haphazard fashion – neither I nor my advisors can determine any rhyme to the slaughter however. The only prisoners we have found were a few handfuls of females, who had been shamefully used, and a very few recently caught survivors who had not yet expired atop their stakes or upon their cruciforms.

Captain Gavin Shardgatherer, OKV advises that the women in question should be sent to the nunneries at the capital, which will be done, with your Grace's permission as soon as they are able to travel. I will send a light guard with them to assure their safe arrival. If you wish I will also send the small number of surviving torture victims as well.

I remain your willing and loyal servant,

Derrick Brightspan