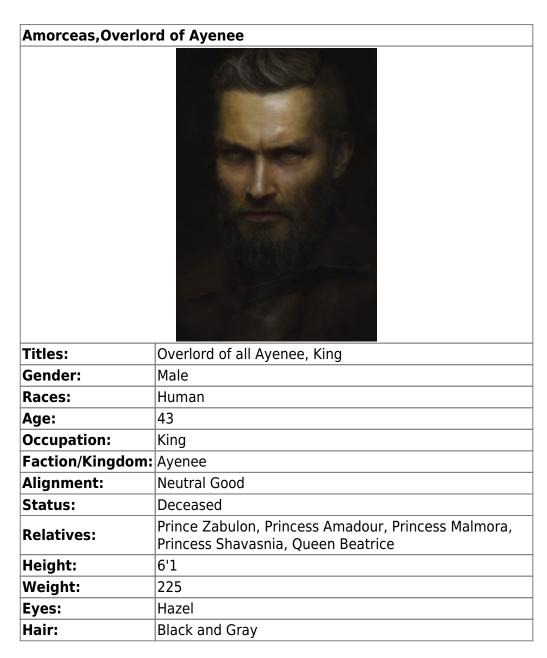
Amorceas Le Pontiantae, Former Overlord of Ayenee



Dark Days

Amorceas stood on the battlefield, rain pelting his armor, washing away the blood, gore, and mud. The tears of the sky father could not wash away what he had done here. The king, his best friend, and brother-in-law lay dead at his feet. His form lying bloody and broken. The two of them had once seen eye to eye on everything. Over the past two years, a rift had torn their friendship apart. He questioned if it were softly spoken whispers, like poison from the lips of vipers that had turned his friend against him? Maybe it had been him, maybe he had slighted him so badly that this was the only recourse for recovery?

Someone ran up and hoisted Amorceas's hand in the air and shouted, "The King is dead! Let his evil reign forever end!" Amorceas pulled his hand away and the noise of the battlefield seemed to drift away as the rain continued to fall. He stood there staring down at his friend's corpse. This was no

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victory, the only tales that would be told of this day were of the murder of a once good man. Amorceas couldn't tear his eyes away. Moments the two had shared, like brothers, passed before his stoic face.

The days passed by like a dream. He was supposed to abdicate the throne to house Shaerun. Instead, he didn't, the throne of Ayenee was his. He didn't trust the noble houses. He held the belief that the nobles had inspired this whole affair to further some plan of their own. Amorceas moved his wife and children from their lands in the West, to Central Ayenee with him. Today through a drunken haze he was sat atop a dais like some pagan effigy and lead through the streets in a parade. The world moved sluggishly around him, voices distorted. The sky was a deep gray and the air cold. Music played and black rose petals rained down from the buildings.

He had been called the black king, partly due to his black hair and partly due to the standard of his house, a black bear. The crowd cheered. He wore a sullen face, with dark circles under his troubled eyes. He could only think back in the past months that had lead to this moment. The comfort his family tried to offer him was in vain. It was as though he were frozen in a deep winter, while everyone else around him enjoyed the warmth of summer. Nothing could rouse him from his sorrows.

Today he sat upon the ornately carved throne of Ayenee. It was embellished with portrayals of mythical creatures, heroes, villains, gods, angels, and demons. The dark wood that it was carved from was as hard as stone. The carvings themselves were made by a master hand. His fingers glided over the depressions and curves, marveling in their smooth perfection. He has presented the sword of Ayenee. The high priest anointed him and then asked him to kneel. The priest touched each of Amorceas's shoulders with the sword and then presented it to him. He then turned and retrieved the crown then reverently placed the crown of Ayenee a top Amorceas's head.

The crown weighed heavy upon him. This piece of metal was once on his friend's head. Had it transferred some dark madness upon him? Would this crown do the same to him? The crown was a typical five pointed star crown, adorned with jewels representing the different colors of each section of Ayenee. A diamond for central, topaz for the west, onyx for the east, emerald for the south, and sapphire for the north. The sword of Ayenee was just as embellished at the everything else. The firey earth serpent ragnon coiled about the handle, the three headed hound of the underworld fenbrus's three heads represented the pommel, and the storm mother gaiden the phoenix had her wings outstretched on the guard.

The three represented the fairy tales of the old world. In the days when Ayenee was a dark place filled with superstition. The pagan trinity as they were commonly known. The first king of Ayenee had them represented in this sword to unify the people behind him. There were no cities then, only a ramshackle village and warring tribes. The first king was called the unifier, every king after that was given a moniker of some variety. The last king was known as the stern, he wondered what he would be?

He was broken from his thoughts over ancient kings and master craftsmanship by a shouting outside. Behind the throne, there was a balcony that opened up to a view of the fountain square where the four roads of Ayenee met. The fountain in the square had statues pointing to each of the four corners. The statues were of famous heroes in Ayenee's history. The four roads formed a circle about the fountain before going their separate ways. It made the center of the city into a cross, their red cobble stones unique to them alone. The rest of the city streets were made with white cobblestones and were contained to the city itself. It was an idea by an engineer to have all roads lead to Ayenee Capital.

In the West, the roads ended at the Great Western Wall which weaved through the mountains to

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create a barrier. In the East rumors of dark lands, vampires, and witches prevented the road from being finished. It was the same in the North only it was the weather and tales of fearsome creatures that hindered the work. In the South, the roads went as far to the coastal kingdom of Velusia, nestled beneath the great world tree. Amorceas wondered if the great roads would ever truly be finished? Should he attempt it? The clamor of the city streets again broken him from his thoughts.

"You rotten dirty mongrel! The king is a murdering pig, a back stabbing bastard who lays with other men's women!" Amorceas had heard the rumors all too often these past months. The king always drunk and away in battle or hunts, the lonely queen, a bastard child. These rumors poisoned his friend, they made him grow to hate him. Amorceas had comforted the queen, yes. He had never had any illicit affair with her and though she did have a child that was not the king's, it was not his. Leo was someone else's bastard. Amorceas had simply been used as a scapegoat by the nobles. He had been a pawn and so had the king.

"You there! Stop spreading slander about your king! Guards! Guards!" Amorceas halted the chancellor's demands and spoke towards the man in the crowd. "If you believe such things then perhaps you would like to apply to be my court jester because you sir are a fool." The man laughed, "the only fool is the king lying dead in the crypts for believing you were his friend!" Amorceas flinched, he could smell the stench of Ayenee's noble houses behind this. "How much did they pay you?" he yelled back at the man. "How much did who pay me? What are you an egg short of a dozen?" Amorceas waved his hand dismissing the man and began to turn around.

"I see how it is. You pretend to be a friend then plow his wife and now you plow his kingdom, sod off you degenerate!" Amorceas frowned and turned around. He was hit in the face by a rotten tomato. The royal guard moved in shielding the king as individuals in the crowd began to throw items at the balcony. "Have that man arrested!" Amorceas wiped the tomato from his face and stormed off. If these nobles wanted to cause him grief then he would do the same for them. There were three houses behind all this. Shaerun, Luskan, and Whitehall. Each would pay for turning friend against friend.

Amorceas dipped his hands into the basin and cupped his hands bringing the cool water up to his face. His hand rubbed his face feeling the stubble. He reached over to the bedside table in his chamber and brought up a mirror. He looked over the haggard appearance that had become his face. "What has become of you?" The door to his chambers squeaked and an answer came, "Why you have acquired the burden that is being the king." It was his wife Beatrice, sister of the former king. Amorceas groaned and walked over to his wife as she wrapped her arms around him. He rested his head against her shoulder. "I am sorry that I brought you here. I know it must bring you hurtful memories." He said the words in a whisper, almost as if to himself.

"It is alright dear. You are not at fault for what happened to my brother. You are a good man and he was once a good man. I fear that whatever dark treachery that was at work here took what was good in both of you and tainted it. I hope you can overcome this weariness that I have seen in your eyes the past couple of days." She told him this as she smoothed out his hair. "You should get a nice hot bath and maybe shave, sleep would be good also." She smiled and the two shared a laugh as he nodded in agreement with her remedy for his troubles. "I will see to it they pay for what they did my love", he said. The words were full of bitterness and hatred, but simply saying them seemed to lift a bit of the weight on his shoulders. She smiled and nodded, "I know you will" was her only reply before ushering him off. As he strode off he thought to himself that he would be known as the king that put all of Ayenee back under one rule.

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