

Charoth, the Corruptor

Deity

- Domain:** Trickery, Knowledge, War
Pantheon: Other Powers
Alignment: Neutral Evil
Symbol: A golden crown slowly tarnishing to black

Worshippers

Sincere idealists whose good intentions have been patiently redirected. The highest-ranking among his followers have generally stopped believing they are working toward anything good. The lowest-ranking rarely know what they serve.

Charoth is not simply a god of evil. He is the god of good things going wrong -- the principled leader who becomes a tyrant, the protector who becomes a conqueror, the reformer whose ideals curdle into dogma. His most effective work is done not through malice but through sincere, patient persuasion: he finds people who genuinely want to make the world better and guides their good intentions toward destructive ends.

He is old. Older, some scholars argue, than the Empire of Venn itself -- though the records that would establish this were lost in the Time of Nightmares. His followers fought and were fought across all of Venn's history, and Zebadiah Zorandor's family alone claimed to have waged war against him across generations.

Methodology

Charoth does not recruit villains. He recruits reformers. The pattern is consistent across documented cases spanning millennia: he identifies a genuine grievance or a sincere ideal, finds the people most passionately committed to addressing it, and begins the patient work of guiding their commitment toward conclusions they would have refused if shown them at the outset. He never moves faster than his subjects can rationalize. Every step feels like a reasonable response to circumstances. Every compromise feels necessary. By the time the damage is irreversible, the people who did it often believe they had no other choice -- and sometimes they are right, because Charoth is patient enough to arrange situations where the destructive option is genuinely the best available one.

His most sophisticated operations run for decades. The Maygus -- the faction of Imperial Advisors whose ideological civil war collapsed the Weohstannuk Empire -- is the clearest documented case, though the Orders of Wizardry do not publish this assessment. The Maygus began as sincere reformers with legitimate grievances about the Orders' treatment of draconic-bloodline sorcerers and the empire's concentration of power. Their ideas spread, their definition of necessary compromise expanded, their inner circle embraced methods their founders would have condemned, and an empire fell. No single person involved decided to destroy an empire. Each person decided, individually, that one more concession was justified by the greater good they served.

The High Elves of the Elysor Reaches identified this pattern in the Maygus's development while the Weohstannuk Empire was still standing. They warned the Imperial court and were not heard. They sealed their borders and waited. The Halvaen think in centuries; they had seen the shape of Charoth's work before, in histories the Time of Nightmares erased from human memory.

The Imprisonment

Approximately fifty-one centuries ago, around the time of the Weohstannuk Empire's founding, the Orders of Wizardry, the Clerics of the major gods, and the Warlocks of Venn worked together in a unified purpose unprecedented before or since. With the aid of Solgarde and Malachar -- the rival kings of Light and Trials, cooperating exactly once -- the three factions built a prison capable of containing a deity. The condition for sealing it was a mortal soul willing to stand in opposition to Charoth and complete the seal from within.

The warlock Zebadiah Zorandor, whose family had fought Charoth for generations, chose to enter. With his willing sacrifice, the prison closed.

The prison's key was paradoxical by design: only someone with no desire to free Charoth could find it. The builders believed this made escape impossible in perpetuity. They were almost right.

The Present

The prison is empty. Someone unwittingly found and turned the key -- a person with no desire to free Charoth, exactly as the builders had specified, which is why the safeguard failed. Charoth walks Kyrell again. His imprisonment has not diminished him in any way that those who know his history find reassuring.

Zebadiah Zorandor has awakened from the prison. He is diminished -- his own words describe him as a shadow of his former self -- but alive, oriented, and aware of what has happened. He has one purpose.

Charoth's first months of freedom have been quiet, by available accounts. This is consistent with his methodology. He does not announce himself. He finds the sincere and the committed and he begins the patient work. In a world where the Maygus Thralls still wait in cities and ruins for commands from masters whose fate is unknown, where the eastern peoples have no unified ruler and a powerful artifact of rulership waits in an unfound tomb, where the Spirit Dragons are not dead but only withdrawn, and where the Orders of Wizardry are the dominant power in a world that has just changed in ways they have not yet publicly acknowledged -- in this world, Charoth has no shortage of sincere ideals to find and no shortage of time in which to work.